

# Indigenous Wisdom In Nursing Project

---

I-WIN Project:  
Continuing Efforts to Increase  
the Number of American Indians  
in North Dakota Healthcare Careers





# Continued Healthcare Shortage

---

A shortage in healthcare professionals continues to be a major concern throughout the United States. This is especially apparent in North Dakota, being one of the most rural and frontier areas of the nation. For instance, the population density average for the United States as a whole is 79.6 people per square mile, whereas, in North Dakota, it's 9.3 people.

Though urban centers of the state are experiencing major shortages in healthcare personnel, the problem is far greater in rural areas where it's difficult to recruit qualified health professionals. Even though North Dakota has experienced a booming economy over the past several years, health professional shortages continue to impact all facets of life. In fact, 92 percent of North Dakota counties have full or partial designations as medically underserved areas or populations.

Looking deeper into the state's healthcare statistics, in 2013 there were 13,387 employed nurses in North Dakota, but only 168 of these were American Indians. At only 1.2% representation of the overall state nursing population, the racial and gender composition of American Indian nurses in North Dakota fails to reflect the demographics of the nation, with 3% American Indian nurses. Furthermore, 47 of the 53 counties in the state are underrepresented by American Indian nurses, and this is especially apparent in counties that contain reservations. Compounding this issue are the significant healthcare needs of tribal populations throughout the state, and the preference of American Indian patients to be cared for by their own people.

# Indigenous Wisdom In Nursing (I-WIN) Project

With such an obvious need for culturally appropriate healthcare services for rural North Dakota populations and a diverse workforce to serve them, the North Dakota State University School of Nursing (NDSU SON) submitted a grant proposal entitled "Indigenous Wisdom In Nursing," or I-WIN. The grant was awarded and efforts began in July 2014 to implement activities prior to student induction for the fall 2014 semester.

The overall purpose of the I-WIN program is to increase the number of American Indians in nursing to provide healthcare services for underserved and/or rural populations. Through a number of unique objectives, the NDSU SON is striving to first increase the diversity among nursing students, which will, in turn, increase the diversity in the nursing workforce, therefore providing more patients with well-rounded, culturally appropriate care throughout the state.

## The I-WIN project had three major objectives:

- Objective 1:** Expand the infrastructure in the nursing programs to support a diverse student population with a focus on the American Indian population.
- Objective 2:** Develop recruitment initiatives to increase overall enrollment of American Indian students by at least 50% annually (2014-2017).
- Objective 3:** Implement initiatives to increase the retention rate of American Indian students to 90% (2014-2017).

The following is an overview of the project's activities throughout the span of the grant, from the summer of 2014 through the spring of 2017.





# Expanding the Infrastructure

---

The first objective of the I-WIN project was to expand the infrastructure of current nursing programs to support a more diverse student population, specifically focusing on the American Indian population. NDSU SON focused on developing a more inclusive environment to support and respect diversity.

Fundamental to this end, the SON hired staff to support all facets of the program. This included a full-time project coordinator, full-time student mentor and quarter-time graduate teaching assistant to offer face-to-face, online or telecom support.

For those already employed by the SON or students within the department, it was determined that their better understanding of the American Indian culture would result in a higher level of student support, and thus more success in converting American Indian students into graduates. Therefore, a primary effort of the expanding infrastructure objective was to gauge faculty and student cultural proficiency and to engage in educational efforts to further their ability to support this unique community of students.

# Cultural Competence Surveys

To achieve the end-goal of enhancing nursing department faculty and nursing student understanding of cultural diversity to a high level, the effort first logically started by assessing what level of understanding they had at the beginning of the grant activities. This provided a baseline from which to determine the needs for intervention programs and the ability to do follow-up surveys to assess the effectiveness of such programs.

The surveys used for this exercise were derived from the conceptual model, *The Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Healthcare Services*. This was developed by Dr. Campinha-Bacote, one of the nation's most influential authorities on transcultural healthcare and mental health nursing.

The *Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competency Among Healthcare Professionals – Revised (IAPCC-R®)* was one of the surveys used to assess the faculty and staff. There are 25 items on the survey, which measure the five cultural constructs of desire, awareness, knowledge, skill and encounters. Scores can range from 100 to 25, indicating whether a healthcare professional is operating at a level of cultural proficiency, cultural competence, cultural awareness or cultural incompetence.

A second survey, *The Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence Among Healthcare Professionals in Mentoring (IAPCC-M®)* was also provided. This measures the level of cultural competence among healthcare professionals as it relates to the mentoring process. With scores ranging from 36 to 9, again this would indicate whether a faculty member was operating at a level of cultural proficiency, cultural competence, cultural awareness or cultural incompetence.

The baseline survey packets were distributed to 80 faculty and 15 staff members during a college retreat in the fall of 2014. This included professionals in the departments of nursing, pharmacy, public health, allied health and the dean's office. Of these, 87 survey packets were returned, and 84 were usable.

Overall, cultural competence scores on both surveys were relatively high, with the majority of respondents falling into the categories of "culturally aware" and "culturally competent."

A follow-up survey was conducted in the fall of 2015, this time only including faculty and staff from the SON. All 38 survey packets distributed were returned and usable.

Assessing the results, overall cultural competence and cultural competence in mentoring scores increased, with the most noticeable improvements in the areas of cultural awareness and cultural encounters.

Furthermore, upon admission, undergraduate (pre-licensure), graduate, and LPN-BSN students completed a baseline self-assessment survey to measure their cultural competence. To date, four groups of newly admitted students have been surveyed: fall 2014, spring 2015, fall 2015 and spring 2016. Follow-up surveys were administered to the DNP and pre-licensure students before their graduation this spring to gauge potential growth.



## Community of Respect Training

To continue to improve inter-cultural competencies and provide hands-on strategies to assist participants in learning how to work more effectively with colleagues and students whose cultural backgrounds differ from their own, the NDSU Community of Respect (COR) training was offered to the SON faculty in both Fargo and Bismarck on October 29, 2014 and October 31, 2014.

The objective of the program was to teach participants about cultural differences and encourage them to think critically about the impact of their cultural values in their relationships with others. The curriculum consists of three modules, with distinct learning objectives outlined for each.







## Brown Bag Presentations

As a further effort to continue to increase interest and understanding of the American Indian culture, the SON also conducted several Brown Bag presentations during the fall and spring semesters of 2015 and 2016. Programs included the following:

- / ***Faculty and Staff Competency Survey Results***, presented by Center for Social Research (December 2015).
- / ***Decolonizing the Mind: Healing and Creating Wellness through Neurodecolonization and Mindfulness Practices***, presented by Michael J. Yellow Bird, Ph.D. (February 2016).
- / ***Are Our Students Culturally Understood?***, presented by Misty Condiff, Ph.D., RN and Jaclynn Walette (March 2016).
- / ***Educating the Next Generation of American Indian Leaders***, presented by Mato Standing High, South Dakota's Director of Indian Education; Tamsen O'Berry, American Indian student pursuing her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree and recipient of the Legendary Nurse: Rising Star Award; Megan Hofland, American Indian nurse and part-time student pursuing her bachelors of nursing degree; and Christy Goulet, an American Indian mother and grandmother pursuing her nursing degree (April 2016).



- / ***American Indian Boarding Schools: Policy of Cultural Genocide***, presented by Denise K. Lajimodiere, Ph.D. (November 2016).
- / ***Traditional Spiritual Care for Native American Patients***, presented by Willard Yellowbird (November 2016).
- / ***Maternal Outreach & Mitigation Services (M.O.M.) Program***, presented by Julie Williams (February 2017).
- / ***A Native American Psychiatrist Perspective of Mental Health in Indian Communities and a Culturally Sensitive Model in Delivering Health Care***, presented by Dr. Albert Allick (March 2017).
- / ***Providing Culturally Sensitive Academic Support to American Indian Students***, presented by Misty Wilkie, Ph.D., RN (March 2017).

Overall, the responses to the Brown Bag presentations were very positive, with the majority of attendees evaluating them with high marks. Common comments from participants were they wished the sessions were longer and that they desired more information that could help them relate with and better support American Indian students.

# Developing Recruitment Initiatives

## Outreach Efforts

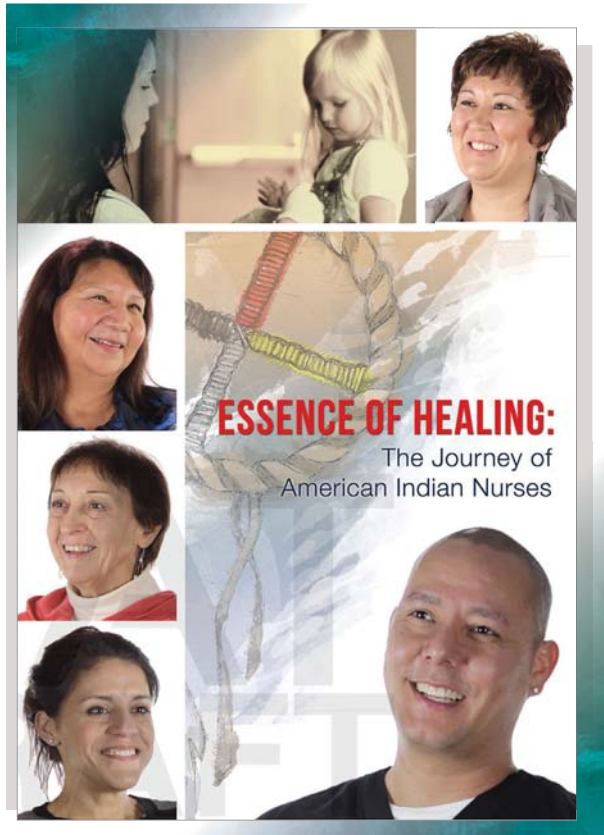
As with any new program, one of the primary challenges is getting the word out to the right audience. With I-WIN, the targeted audience is not only American Indian students interested in pursuing careers in healthcare, but also American Indian nurses who are interested in pursuing advanced degrees.

Much of this outreach has utilized the dedicated I-WIN staff to market details about the program to potential applicants using social media and mailings. The information provided outlines the basics: why the program exists, what it is able to do for students/nurses, and how students/nurses can take advantage.

One aspect of working with American Indian students with past grant efforts is that the most effective way to communicate any program is through face-to-face visits. This has as much to do with providing an individualized message to each interested individual as it does with meeting people on their terms. Part of the program recruitment efforts has been making the I-WIN staff present on the four reservations, not only setting up scheduled visits but taking part in events sponsored by the communities and tribal colleges in North Dakota and Minnesota.



# The Essence of Healing: Journey of American Indian Nurses Documentary



As part of an earlier grant, the Health Professionals Opportunity Grant (HPOG), a documentary entitled "The Essence of Healing: Journey of American Indian Nurses" was produced telling the story of American Indian nurses who overcame obstacles to complete nursing school and achieve success in healthcare careers. Many American Indians are first-generation students and are unfamiliar with the academic demands and culture of mainstream colleges. The goal of this documentary is to help establish effective role models. By highlighting success stories of American Indian nurses, the audience will be more apt to believe in their own potential success in a healthcare profession.

Though created within the efforts of the HPOG grant, I-WIN has taken this tool and promoted it further and at a higher level. Per I-WIN efforts, the documentary has been submitted and accepted by several film festivals.

To date, it has won awards at the Canadian Diversity Film Festival, the Chandler Film Festival and the Hollywood International Independent Documentary Film Festival.

Additionally, the documentary is being offered through several other channels for greater public consumption. On a state level, I-WIN offered the film to the North Dakota Prairie Public Broadcasting station, which was accepted to be included in its programming rotation. It is scheduled to begin airing in September of 2017. Also, the film is now for sale at the NDSU bookstore and the North Dakota Heritage Center Museum Gift Shop.

Nationally, several media outlets have written articles about the film, and it has received public acclaim from many well-known nursing professionals. GoodHealthTV®, an American Indian health and wellness network reaching more than six million American Indians annually, has taken the documentary and used it to create 25 public service announcements to help encourage its audience about the possibilities of healthcare careers.

On an international level, Alexander Street Press (ASP), a humanities and social sciences publisher, has licensed the documentary for distribution as an electronic resource to universities and libraries around the world as part of its Health Education series.



## Essence of Healing E-Campus Course

A further effort playing off the Essence of Nursing documentary, I-WIN has developed two e-campus Essence of Nursing online courses targeting 6-8 graders and 9-12 graders. Developed in cooperation with nurses from the four American Indian nations that share geography in North Dakota (Mandan, Hidatsa and Sahnish; Turtle Mountain

Band of Chippewa; Standing Rock Oyate; and Mni Wakan Oyate/Spirit Lake Nation), the course will exhibit these individuals telling their unique stories in the pursuit of nursing careers and how they led to practices that embrace their values, traditions and medical science to create a holistic approach to nursing care and healing.

**The course offers eight modules, each able to be completed in 30 minutes or less to keep the information relatively light, yet impactful. The goals of the course are to:**

1. Establish the need for American Indian nurses.
2. Evoke interest and excitement about the range of possibilities of a nursing career.
3. Emphasize the strong affinity between cultural values and the practice of nursing.
4. Inspire and instill confidence that a nursing career is within grasp.
5. Establish steps that can be taken now to prepare for a nursing or healthcare career.
6. Honor the legacy of American Indian nurses.

This online curriculum will be piloted in North Dakota, but the plan is to promote it on a national level moving forward.

# Recruitment/Retention of American Indians into Nursing Video

I-WIN has not only dedicated resources to further promote the documentary to wider audiences, it has also promoted another HPOG grant effort, the Recruitment/Retention of American Indians Into Nursing video.

This video identifies the great need for more American Indian nurses, especially in North Dakota, and identifies, through several interviews of actual American Indian nurses within the state, the many forms of support that are available to students.

Highlighting interviews of many American Indian nurses, both male and female, representing several tribal nations in North Dakota, such as Spirit Lake, Turtle Mountain and Standing Rock, is a great way to put other American Indian students at ease with a potential career path in nursing. If viewers see others like themselves who have had success in nursing, they are more apt to believe they can do it too.

The recruitment/retention videos can be viewed at [www.ndsu.edu/nursing/resources](http://www.ndsu.edu/nursing/resources).





# Implementing Retention Initiatives

---

## Scholarship and Stipend Support

Struggling with the financial aspect of pursuing a degree is a hardship that many American Indian students face when attending college. Therefore, a key component of retaining students in nursing programs is relieving some of the financial stress associated with this effort. That's why I-WIN established scholarships for tuition assistance as well as a stipend program to counter the expenses of daily life.

Based on student need, the I-WIN Program awarded American Indian nursing students up to \$10,000 in tuition assistance and up to \$10,000 in living stipends for individuals meeting the program and grant requirements.

Contingent on being accepted into one of the nursing programs (BSN, BSN-LPN, BSN-DNP) and demonstrating academic promise and a commitment to obtaining an undergraduate/graduate degree, students applying for financial assistance were first interviewed to assess their financial need. If a need is identified, students would receive stipends to cover living expenses, such as rent, utilities, transportation, child care, nursing supplies, groceries, etc. The amount of these monthly stipends are determined by each student's need.

When financial stresses are reduced, it contributes to the overall well-being of the students and allows them to focus on their respective nursing programs. In the words of one I-WIN financial assistance recipient, "I'm a single mom, so it was nice to not have to worry about more debt being laid on top of everything else. It kind of was a stress reliever for me...and it's going to help down the road."



## Dedicated Staff Support

One of the largest struggles American Indian students have with completing their degrees is the feeling of being outsiders. These students not only are dealing with educational challenges, but there are many cultural differences that come to the forefront because they are separated from their family, home and everything else that is familiar to them. Therefore, when these students first arrive at college, the need for personal mentorship and support are critical.

As a key effort in acclimating American Indian students to college life away from home and the rigors of continuing education, the I-WIN program funded the hiring of dedicated personnel to provide support, including a project coordinator, program mentor, graduate teaching assistant and undergraduate students. Though making these resources available to students is the first step to success, it was found early on in the program that efforts would have to be made to intervene with American Indian students, as they were not comfortable reaching out for help.

A strategy was developed to approach students on a one-on-one basis to make them familiar with the people dedicated to helping them, and to establish a comfort level to encourage interaction. Building better relationships between the I-WIN staff and students resulted in a more open line of communication, which led to identifying challenges earlier on and allowing staff to intervene in a more effective way.

The program mentor is primarily focused on combating the feelings of isolation students experience by maintaining ongoing contact. As a former nursing undergraduate student herself, the I-WIN mentor is able to relate to many of the same struggles the American Indian students are facing and provide meaningful support. Though faculty advisors play a large role in guiding students in their academic



pursuits, many have seen the importance of the mentor when working with American Indian students. As one faculty member explained when dealing with a student who was struggling, "[The mentor] was able to talk to her, find out what was going on, so I could figure out how we were going to help her and say 'ok, we can give her a course extension.'"

Students have seen the great value the mentor provides as well. "My advisor and my mentor have group meetings with me when something goes on," said one I-WIN student. "They have e-mails that are shared with each other, so they know, hand-in-hand, if I do have an issue. It's like a group conversation."

On the other hand, the graduate teaching assistant serves more of a role in aiding the students with their specific studies, guiding them through coursework, assignments, time management skills and motivational support. Having a dedicated tutor

for the I-WIN students has been met with high praise. As one student commented, "I know that [the I-WIN tutor] is going to be available to me and she is going to help me with whatever I need. The door is always open and she said so, and that made me feel really good."

As the I-WIN program came to fruition, it was realized that breaking the barrier between students' discomfort in asking for assistance and giving the I-WIN staff better access to students needed further refinement. In response, a student lounge was created in the new SON location, not just for I-WIN students, but all nursing students. It provides a comfortable place for students to gather, study and learn from one another. Specific to I-WIN students, the lounge provides a gathering place where they know that I-WIN support staff is nearby, and it gives the I-WIN staff a more logical place to suggest meeting.



# Conclusion

---

Overall, faculty, staff and students have been very pleased with the I-WIN program. Each facet of the program has helped in creating a more nurturing environment for American Indian students to pursue healthcare careers and inevitably achieve their goals. Though the program has only been in action for a relatively short period of time, there have already been major success stories.

For instance, Tamsen Star O'Berry, an American Indian nursing student and I-WIN participant, was awarded the 2016 Legendary Nurse: Rising Star Award from the North Dakota Center for Nursing. She not only succeeded in her pursuit of an undergraduate degree in nursing, but she also served as president of the Student Nursing Association and vice president of the Student Nursing Association of North Dakota. Additionally, she started and served as president of the Multicultural Club in the School of Nursing. Today, O'Berry works as a nurse in the psychiatric unit at Sanford Health, Bismarck and is enrolled in the NDSU Nursing at Sanford Health Doctor of Nursing Practice Program.

O'Berry is just one of the several American Indian students who have benefitted from the I-WIN program. The goal now is to continue the efforts set forth by the initial I-WIN grant and continue to grow its participation and success, and further address the nursing shortage with a group that needs the support most of all.





The Indigenous Wisdom in Nursing (I-WIN) Grant is funded by the grant from the Nursing Workforce Diversity Program, Bureau of Health Professions Division of Nursing of U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, HRSA Grant #D19HP26974.

For information, contact Loretta Heuer, PhD, RN, FAAN at [loretta.heuer@ndsu.edu](mailto:loretta.heuer@ndsu.edu) or 701-231-8205.

North Dakota State University does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a U.S. veteran. Direct inquiries to: Vice Provost for Faculty and Equity, Old Main 201, 701-231-7708 or Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 102, 701-231-6409.

This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701-231-7881.

©2017 North Dakota State University