



CANCER PREVENTION AND CONTROL TRAINING FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: THREE DECADES IN THE MAKING

INTRODUCTION

Ashley Thomas, MPH, Thomas Becker MD, PhD, Linda Burrhansstipanov, DrPH, MSPH, Charles L. Wiggins, PhD, MSPH, Grazia Cunningham, MPH

- Project of the NIH-funded Northwest Native American Research Center for Health (NW NARCH)
- Addressing cancer disparities in Native communities by increasing the number of well-trained American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) cancer researchers
- Bridging the gap between health research and Native communities

PROGRAM AIMS

Aim 1: Recruit and retain qualified AI/AN researchers who seek additional training in cancer control research and in implementation of cancer control projects

Aim 2: Design and offer a tailored cancer control research curriculum using experienced and qualified faculty and consultants, leading to a capstone cancer prevention research project for each trainee

Aim 3: Provide follow-up support, including field support, distance learning opportunities, and mentoring after trainees complete the formal curriculum in cancer control research

Aim 4: Evaluate trainee progress and success in meeting benchmarks for the fellowship

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

TRIBAL RESEARCHERS' CANCER CONTROL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Increasing research capacities and build research skills among AI/AN researchers who will design and implement cancer-related research projects within their tribal communities. Cancer trainees with a demonstrated focus on cancer prevention and control are selected from across the United States.

Fellows attend two weeks of training in the summer to learn the foundations of cancer prevention and control and research design and grant writing.

Fellows return for one week in the fall to learn about specific cancer sites, their etiology, epidemiology, and efforts to address the burden of disease in Tribal populations.

Adaptive curricula to meet trainee needs. Emphasis on:

- study design
- IRB considerations
- database management
- successful studies in Indian country

KEY COMPONENTS

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Trainees design a protocol and apply for funding to complete a mentored research project. Since 2020, we have funded 18 projects. Trainees are responsible for their budgets, reporting, and dissemination of findings.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- Webinars with guest speakers
- Journal club led by faculty experts
- Travel awards to scientific conferences
- Writing workshops
- Mentorship

TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT

JO ANN TSARK, MPH (1999 TRAINEE)

25 years in cancer health disparities research

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Established the `Imi Hale - Native Hawaiian Cancer Network with NCI funding (2000-2018)
- Established the first community IRB in Hawaii (2000)
- In partnership with Hawaii's largest tertiary hospital, developed and established protocols for banked cancer tissue
- Director of Community-Engaged Research Core at University of HI (2013-current), bridging the gap between academia and community

DATA SNAPSHOT

To improve cancer rates and risks, we need a larger federal investment in well trained AI/AN cancer control researchers who can bring scientific rigor to studies they will implement in AI/AN populations.

169

Indigenous scholars trained from 1995-2024

53

AI/AN scholars trained from 2018-2024

\$558,759

in implementation funding awarded in the last 4 years

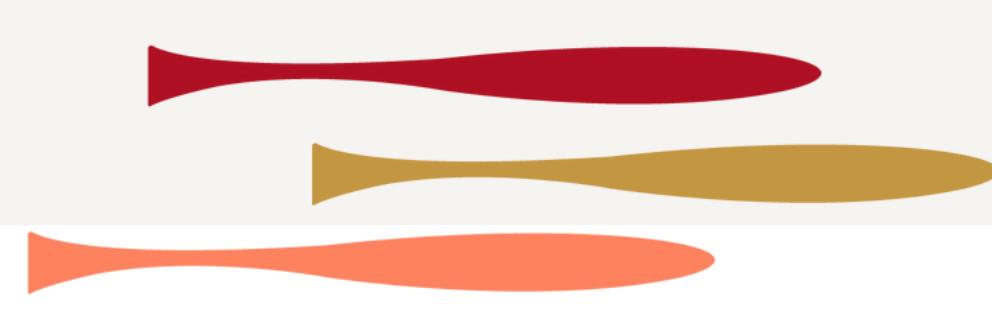
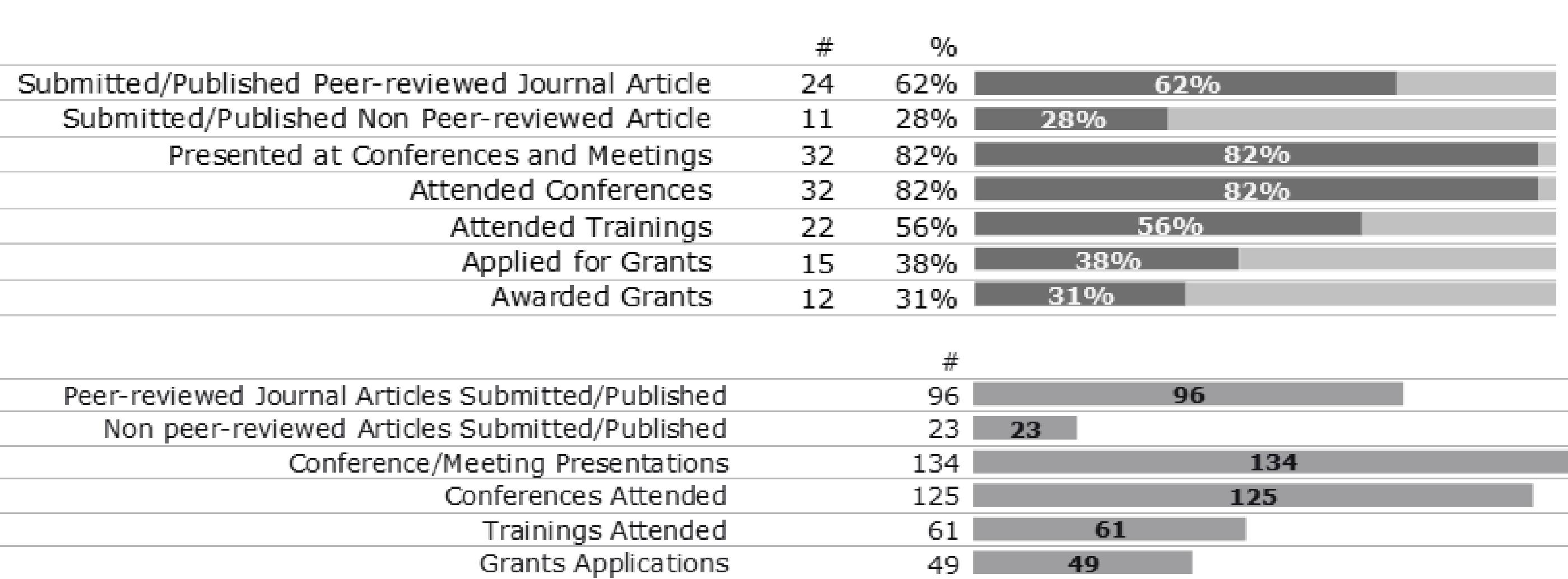
Project topics have included skin cancer disparities in tribal & LGBTQTS+ people, gut microbiome, environmental contaminants, tobacco use, prevalence of breast cancer in cervical cancer patients, hydroponics & cancer prevention on Navajo Nation, cancer education & prevention in those living with type 2 diabetes on Navajo Nation.

TRCCFP TRAINEE DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

SURVEY RESULTS 2018-2023

134 conference presentations

96 peer-reviewed articles submitted/published



NORTHWEST NATIVE AMERICAN
RESEARCH CENTER FOR HEALTH

A program of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board