

Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribal Research Office

Current Research Projects on the Lake Traverse Reservation

1. **“The impact and challenges experienced by tribal governments’ implementation of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA)”**
Project PI: Melissa E. Riley, Ph.D.
Permit Expiration date: 2/16/2017
The purpose of the research is to inform SMART of the successes, challenges, and experiences of tribes who have successfully implemented, preparing to implement, or considering whether or not to implement.
2. **“Project Ina: Holistic Improvement of Maternal Health on the Lake Traverse Reservation”**
Project PI: Nivedha Kannapadi
Permit Expiration date: 6/21/2017
This study seeks to assess the climate of maternal health on the Lake Traverse Reservation during and shortly after pregnancy, specifically focused on the accessibility, significance, and socialization of information surrounding this topic. The data collected from this pilot study will be used to inform future studies and potential interventions based on sharing information about pregnancy.
3. **“A Community Readiness Assessment (CRA) as the First Stage of Safe Healthy Children: Improving Immunization Series Completion in Rural American Indian Communities”**
Project PI: Linda Littlefield, MSW
Permit Expiration date: 9/20/2018
This project seeks to improve the immunization completion and coverage levels in American Indian children in the Great Plains Area.
4. **“Dissemination, Implementation, and Evaluation of Native STAND in American Indian Communities”**
Project PI: William Lambert, Ph.D.
Permit Expiration date: 9/20/2018
This project will disseminate and implement an evidence-based culturally-specific curriculum to reduce high-risk behaviors in AI/AN teens.
5. **“Adapting and testing the feasibility of Tribal Head Start REDI with Native American children in South Dakota”**
Project PI: Janet Welsh, Ph.D.
Permit Expiration date: 02/26/2022
The Head Start REDI (Research based, Developmentally Informed) program was developed with the goal of improving the long-term success of at-risk children. The REDI program incorporates evidence-based curricula and professional development activities for teachers into regular Head Start programming.
6. **“Eat Smart, Play Hard—The Oyate Way”**
Project PI: Suzanne Stluka, MS, RD, LN
Permit Expiration date: 3/20/18
The overall objective of the Eat Smart Play Hard (ESPH) project is to test the efficacy of a 6-week nutrition and physical activity curriculum that is culturally relevant to South Dakota’s American Indian population in changing diet and physical activity knowledge and behavior.

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7. **“Preliminary study on the socio-economic factors affecting microbiome, nutrition, and health outcomes in American Indian population”**
Project PI: Joy Scaria, Ph.D.
Permit Expiration date: 7/30/2020
Disparities of health exist among the members of Native American populations. We hypothesize that health gradients are present among the members of the American Indian community in South Dakota and it is likely impacted by socio-economic status and dietary habits. Recent research on human gut microbiome reveals that the microbial diversity in the gut has profound effect on health. Our overall goal in this study is to analyze the relationship between socio-economic status and dietary habits and to determine whether this has an impact on digestive health measured using microbiome diversity in fecal samples. Data for the research will be collected through survey instruments and fecal sample collection. Findings from our research will influence the policy discourse on topics related to the economic and social well-being of the American Indian population.

8. **“Project Ina: Holistic Improvement of Maternal Health on the Lake Traverse Reservation (Phase 2)”**
Project PI: Nivedha Kannapadi
Permit Expiration date: 5/10/2018
This study seeks to understand if SWO pregnant women are able to use and benefit from the Project Ina mobile app, and, if so, how they benefit. To address this research question, the study is split into two parts: short-term co-design workshops and long-term (3 months) interaction with the mobile app. The co-design workshop, involving interactive generation of ideas for improving the app to best meet participants’ needs, will elucidate how the Project Ina app currently reflects the needs and desires of the Lake Traverse pregnancy community and how it can improve in doing so. During the long-term alpha test portion of the research study, data will be collected from a group of 20 pregnant women on the reservation over a period of three months that they engage with the Project Ina app. Data collected will help the research team to understand how, specifically, the mobile app is beneficial to SWO pregnant women and ways that it can be improved.

9. **“Impacts of Commercial Tobacco Marketing on American Indian Reservations – Tribal Retail Environment (TREE) Study”**
Project Co-PIs: Kristine Rhodes, MPH & Rachel Widome, Ph.D.
Permit Expiration date: 6/19/2018
The prevalence of commercial tobacco use among American Indian (AI) adults in the Upper Midwest has been estimated to be 60%; compared to the general population’s smoking rate of 18%. It is known that greater exposure to tobacco advertising, promotion, and certain retail practices increase the likelihood that adolescents start smoking, encourage continued smoking and lead to relapse among quitters. The goal of this project is to learn more about attitudes towards marketing and retail practices related to commercial tobacco via key informant interviews with up to 6 community members (at least one tribal leader, one person working in tobacco control, and one person who sell commercial tobacco).

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10. “Examining Matriculation, Transfer, and Capabilities of Tribal College Students in the form Educational Opportunities”

Project PI: Francis Arpan, Ph.D.

Permit Expiration date: 7/31/2021

The percentage of Native Americans with bachelor’s degrees falls way behind the percentage of people in the general population. The project will examine matriculation, transfer, persistence, and capabilities of Native American students in the form of educational opportunities. The research will also examine how students’ decisions in higher education are affected by barriers, motivating factors, and the educational opportunities available to them. The approach is concerned with social justice and working to increase individual and community capabilities and the proposed research, when finished, can be applied by Sisseton Wahpeton College as they work to increase student success and capabilities in the community. Within the framework of the proposed research project is a student research component that is designed to present SWC student researchers with the opportunity to gain knowledge in methods, analysis, and reporting.

11. “Ignite: Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Model in preventing overweight and obesity among 6th – 8th grade youth in low-income racial/ethnic communities”

Project PI: Kendra Kattelmann, Ph.D., RD, LN, FAND

Permit Expiration date: 11/02/2018

This project proposes to use a quasi-experimental design to determine the effectiveness of the CBPR Model to assist communities in identifying behavioral and environmental factors that influence overweight and obesity in 6th-8th grade youth in selected communities; and engaging selected communities to implement effective and sustainable strategies to increase dietary intakes of fruits and vegetables; increase the variety of vegetables in the diet; decrease dietary intakes of foods high in solid fats and added sugars; and increase physical activity among 6th-8th grade youth. One intervention and one control community were selected in South Dakota to participate in this project. An assessment tool was developed to help give a clear picture of the barriers to healthy eating and physical activity among 6th-8th grade youth.

12. North Dakota Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS)

Project PI: Grace Njau, MPH

Permit Expiration date: 5/07/2020

ND PRAMS is an ongoing, population-based surveillance system designed to identify and monitor selected maternal experiences and behaviors that occur before and during pregnancy and during the child's early infancy among a stratified sample of women delivering a live birth. It was initiated to help state health departments establish and maintain an epidemiologic surveillance system of selected maternal behaviors and experiences.

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13. “Effectiveness of Pregnancy Health Research Dissemination”

Project PI: DenYelle Kenyon, Ph.D.

Permit Expiration date: 4/05/2020

This study will evaluate previous work done through a partnership between Sanford Research and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) health education team. In 2015, SWO conducted a Pregnancy Health Survey and, recently, Sanford Research staff have been working with SWO to disseminate key findings to the SWO community through infographics. This study will evaluate these infographics and determine if the approach taken was effective in informing and educating the community. To do this, members of the SWO First 1000 Days Initiative Interagency Forum will be sent an online survey to explore their thoughts and use of the infographics in their work to educate women and men of childbearing potential. Additionally, two focus groups will be conducted with SWO community members to gain feedback on the infographics. The SWO health education team will assist with data interpretation once the analysis is complete and work with the research team to disseminate the findings through reports and infographics. The findings from this study will help inform SWO programs on effective ways to communicate with SWO community members. Additionally, the results may be used to inform future researchers on appropriate dissemination methods.

14. “Will Tai Chi Decrease the Number of Elder Falls and Increase Strength in the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Elder Population?”

Project PI: Veronica Leaf-Bellile, BS

Permit Expiration date: 12/18/2020

Abstract: Local clinic data identifies elder falls as the number one unintentional injury for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate elders. This project seeks to identify two aspects of fall prevention efforts for tribal members: 1) the effectiveness of Tai Chi for Fall Prevention classes, measured by improvements in strength among class participants and by reduction in fall incidents; and 2) an assessment of existing services the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate offers (and opportunities for additional services) to assist in the prevention of elder falls. Based on data collected (through questionnaires and interviews) and analyzed, and a literature review of evidence-based practices for fall prevention, the project will include recommendation for enhancing existing Tai Chi for Arthritis for Fall Prevention classes, and recommendations for considering opportunities to address gaps/overlap for fall evidence-based fall prevention programs for the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate elder population.

15. “Relapse Factors and Prevention on the Lake Traverse Reservation”

Project PI: Alana Little Bird, AA

Permit Expiration date: 6/29/2022

Based on information that is available from the treatment entities that exist in our community, there is no current way to identify the leading causes of relapse. Our organization intends to use the research data to establish better strategies for people that are freshly discharged from treatment facilities. To accomplish this goal, we will use qualitative research methods, more specifically semi-structured interviews, which will provide a deeper perspective on which factors of relapse have the most impact on individuals. By seeking out individuals who have relapsed and who are willing to participate in the study, we may be able to obtain valuable information that will form the basis of an effective aftercare program.

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16. “Adapting Double Check for Teachers of Native American Students”

Project PI: Lora Henderson, Ph.D, M.Ed

Permit Expiration date: 9/28/2022

Through educator, parent, student, and community input via interviews and surveys, the Double Check professional development program will be adapted to increase the culturally responsive practices of teachers of Native American students. Stakeholder input and expertise will be used to adapt the intervention to include culturally relevant behavior management and pedagogical strategies for meeting the needs of Native American students. The adaptation will be an iterative process in which feedback from study participants will be used to constantly improve Double Check. Once all interview and survey data has been analyzed and used to inform the adaptation, it will be reviewed with educators for further feedback before piloting it. All teachers at Enemy Swim will have the opportunity to participate in professional development modules while a small subset will receive coaching as well. Teacher and student perceptions of culturally responsive practices and school climate will be used to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

17. “Strengthening and Encouraging Families (SEF)/Great Plains Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Rigorous Program Evaluation Plan”

Project PI: Christy Hacker, MPH

Permit Expiration date: 03/23/2022

The evaluation will explore the feasibility of a moderation model examining whether receiving home visiting services (as measured by the number of home visits received, connection to community resources, number of Family Spirit Lessons, social support, and recruitment and engagement efforts) helps buffer the relationship between parenting stress and parent self-efficacy. While this evaluation uses a non-experimental design, we can begin exploring this model using mixed methods to examine how exposure to home visiting supports families in addressing parenting stress and improving parenting self-efficacy. The qualitative component of our design will help further explore the processes by which home visiting can help to address parenting stress and self-efficacy. We will also examine whether previous findings from the literature suggesting there is a direct relationship between parenting stress and self-efficacy can be generalized to our tribal home visiting population.

18. “Parallel-group Design Study Comparing Vaccine Hesitancy and Barriers for the Annual Influenza Vaccine in Individuals that Received the COVID-19 Vaccine”

Project PI: Ashley Lewis, BS

Permit Expiration date: 04/26/2022

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated in 2019-2020, the influenza vaccination prevented an estimated 7.5 million influenza illnesses and 6,300 influenza-associated deaths in the United States. The inactivated influenza vaccine has been available since 1945 and is proven to help prevent adverse health outcomes directly related to the influenza virus yet, many individuals currently decline the vaccination every year. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccinations are newly developed and have only been approved through the Emergency Use Authorization (BUA) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) since 2020. The COVID-19 vaccine was created during a coronavirus pandemic, which as of March 22, 2021 has resulted in over 29.8 million cases and 539,000 deaths in the United States. The American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population had a higher COVID-19 incidence compared with non-Hispanic Whites. In the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic the AI/AN population experienced a disproportionately higher mortality. The primary objective of this public health surveillance project is to examine the reasons that influenced individuals to receive or decline the influenza vaccine for the 2020-2021 season and the factors that led the same set of patients to receive a COVID-19 vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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19. “Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Youth’s Understanding of Sex Trafficking”

Project PI: Tracey McMahon, MS

Permit Expiration date: 06/29/2022

The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) Youth Department is conducting a study on SWO youth’s understanding of sex trafficking. The purpose of this study is to learn more about local youth’s understanding of sex trafficking. Information gathered from these focus groups will be used to inform the development and expansion of sex trafficking educational programming and victim services available for SWO youth.

20. “Tipsinna: A Significant Plan to the Dakota”

Project PI: William Crawford, BS

Permit Expiration: 11/5/2022

The native plants of the northern plains once grew in abundance, and edible plants were widely available for harvesting. The Dakota people have always had a strong connection to the land and the life that grows with it. However, within the past two centuries, tribal lands in the northern plains have decreased in size. Simultaneously, the availability of some native plants has also declined. This may be due to the lack of environmental policies to protect or sustain native prairie plants. There is an increase in cropland, which decreases the land available for native plants. In order to examine this claim, this research will investigate one native plant that is important to Dakota people: tipsinna in the Dakota language, or *Psoralea esculenta* (common names: prairie turnips, breadroot, scurfpea, and pomme de terre). It is culturally important for the Dakota people to determine the various causes of the decreased availability of this plant, whether they are human-related or climate-related. Another threat to this plant’s availability is overharvesting or improper harvesting, which can be an effect of a decrease in the transmission of traditional knowledge. In order to investigate this claim, this research will also look into the type of knowledge that is still held on the Lake Traverse Reservation of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate.

21. “Assessment of PFAS in Tribal and Rural Communities within North Dakota”

Project PI: Alexa Azure, MS

Permit Expiration: 11/5/2022

Poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as “forever chemicals”¹ are reported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be detectable in the blood of 98% of all Americans²⁻⁴. Recently the pervasiveness of PFAS on tribal lands was one of multiple focuses of a 2020 Webinar Series titled “Water in the Native World” that was hosted by University of Arizona Superfund Research Program⁵. The current health advisory limit established by the EPA is 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) + Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid (PFOS).⁶

To determine contamination within tribal communities, samples will be collected from locations of interest within the boundaries of tribal nations. The samples will be analyzed by Pace Analytics utilizing EPA Method 537.1. The relevant raw data for each tribe will be provided to each respective tribe. The sampling locations will be determined by the PI and the tribal Environmental offices.

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22. **“Tribal Justice, Tribal Court: Strengthening Tribal Justice Systems Using Restorative Approaches”**

Project PI: Lorinda Riley, SJD

Permit Expiration: 11/29/2022

This project proposes to study how and when the SWO Tribal Court uses restorative justice approaches in their tribal court decisions. The project will: 1) develop a culturally appropriate crime seriousness index; and 2) collect 30 public tribal criminal court records and analyze the documents in reference to the crime seriousness index. To develop the crime seriousness index we intend to conduct surveys using an online platform and conduct three to five interviews with tribal citizens who have specific knowledge of traditionally appropriate behavior. The court records will be categorized according to the crime seriousness index and then we will conduct a qualitative content analysis on the records to uncover emerging themes. Our goal is to better understand how the community perceives certain criminal actions and whether this impacts the use of restorative justice measures by tribal judges.

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