

University of Washington Indigenous Wellness Research Institute

IWRI's Vision

To support the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to achieve full and complete health and wellness by collaborating in decolonizing research and knowledge building and sharing.

IWRI's Mission

To marshal community, tribal, academic, and governmental resources toward innovative, culture-centered, interdisciplinary, collaborative social and behavioral research and education.

Looking Forward and Looking Back: Lessons Learned from my Fulbright Fellowship in Aotearoa

by Karina L. Walters, MSW, PhD



Dr. Walters speaks to New Zealand reporters on the rights of Indigenous people

As I struggle to adjust to life here on Turtle Island (i.e., USA), I continue to be awed and humbled by my 9-month Fulbright experience in Aotearoa. It truly was a life changing experience in terms of my spiritual development, intellectual growth, and new friends and colleagues with whom I hope to maintain personal and professional collaborations for the rest of my career. I am especially grateful to the incredible warmth, graciousness, and intellectual support offered to me by colleagues at Nga Pae O Te Maramatanga as well as Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who initially sponsored my application.

Leaving my colleagues at the

University of Washington Indigenous Wellness Research Institute last September, I promised them and our elders that I would gather knowledge to bring back to our indigenous communities. As one elder admonished me, "Go and learn something new, or else what good are you?!" I set off to Aotearoa with this charge in mind. As a US Senior Fulbright Scholar with a lecturing/research award, I was charged with interacting with Maori communities, elders, and scholars to exchange knowledge regarding indigenous health concerns and research methodologies. A major part of my fellowship was to lecture across the country on topics such as historical trauma, microaggressions, community-based participatory research methods and indigenous health disparities. I was blessed with invitations to visit and speak from Ahipara to Wellington, meeting with many Maori researchers and community members along the

way. These included Drs. Cherryl Smith and Paul Reynolds of Te Atawhai o Te Ao, the beautiful Kuia of Whanganui, Leland A. Ruwhiu and Danny Hona's students at Manukau Institute of Technology, and Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, colleagues, community leaders, and students at University of Waikato. I even had the chance to travel to Fiji to lecture (on the beach!) to Fiji Institute of Technology students. In all, I participated in over 22 community presentations/lectures, 2 radio shows, and 17 community and university meetings. It was a whirlwind tour, to say the least!

The ferocity and passion of Maori intellectualism combined with the vision for future knowledge development has been inspiring to me as a Choctaw scholar. In many ways, this future-oriented vision—looking and moving forward toward a vision that is seen as achievable has been inspiring to me as a Native scholar on

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Research Methods Core Director Named- Welcome Cynthia Pearson!



It is with great pleasure and excitement that we welcome Dr. Cynthia Pearson as IWRI Director of Research Policy and Methods. Dr. Pearson has long been a white ally among people of color. She has 15 years experience working and volunteering with communities of color. This includes living and working in Africa, supporting refugee women efforts, and collaborating with Native Americans through her previous consulting and volunteer work with IWRI.

Her research agenda extends across a global community that addresses health disparities among underserved populations. She has worked as an investigator/co-investigator on extramurally-funded research projects since 2001 and her research program includes conducting empirical culturally-sensitive work with colleagues across disciplines

(health services, psychology, sociology, social work, and medicine); across national and international sites (i.e. Mozambique, China, U.S.-Mexico border); Among culturally diverse populations (Mozambicans, Chinese, Hispanics, Native Americans/Alaskan Natives, men who have sex with men, and the homeless).

Dr. Pearson is also a Research Scientist with the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute (ADAI). Working with ADAI colleagues, she is developing a community-based participatory research primer for collaborative research in drug abuse for American Indians and Alaska Natives in the Pacific Northwest.

Exerpt From the IWRI Student Lunch With Cheryl A. Metoyer

IWRI was honored to have Dr. Cheryl A. Metoyer, Associate Professor in The Information School, speak at our fall student luncheon. She described gifts and giving as inseparable components of Native ways of knowing and wellness, things she learned in her mother's house. Here is an excerpt from her talk.

"The educational process should be one of growth that enlarges the physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of our lives--those four domains so clearly representative of the four directions. To participate in this process requires energy---great and enduring energy. That is what we are concerned about -- energy to sustain wellness.

From where does this energy flow? I think it comes from giving. More precisely, I think it comes from recognizing certain gifts, appreciating them, and holding them in open hands so as to give them away. We know how to do this. As Native people, we instinctively know how to do this.

It is encoded in our very being. Maybe sometimes, in our struggles to survive, we forget or lose it for a while but it is always there---embedded.

So, what are these gifts? We have many, you know. But I want to talk about four gifts that I think relate to your work of generating and maintaining the wellness of indigenous and other people. They are reverence, strength, counsel and knowledge."

Dr. Metoya went on to describe these four gifts and ended with this advice; "These gifts..... bring energy ---energy that is benign, healing and transforming. I want you all to reclaim those gifts and pass them on. If you do, you will strengthen the academy, help our people and bring honor to your mother's house."

For a complete transcript of Dr. Metoya's address, please visit iwri.org - and follow the link.

Looking Forward and Looking Back:

Lessons Learned from my Fulbright Fellowship in Aotearoa ... *continued from cover*

Turtle Island. For instance, we have yet begun to dream of graduating 500 Indigenous PhD's in a single decade. Our focus -- and what we can contribute to contemporary indigenous scholarship has been the examination of historical injustices and ways they are manifested and literally physically embodied in the form of contemporary health disparities. Looking forward, envisioning and creating the future,

while simultaneously looking back, acknowledging and healing from the past may be a powerful combined effort. As a matter of speaking, we've "got your back." Whether the indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and Aotearoa are standing together back-to-back or looking out to each other across the Pacific, there is a shared history, sense of mutual protection, and admiration. I am deeply

honored to have played even a minor role in bringing the two together. My heart is full and I am truly grateful. Yakoke (thank you in Choctaw)!




Dr. Karina Walters is a William P. and Ruth Gerberding endowed professor and the director of the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute.

The UW Medicine Pathology Native American Education Outreach Program

By Steve Berard

Communications Manager, Pathology



In 2006, UW Medicine Pathology created the Native American Education Outreach Program to expose Native American middle school students located throughout the Washington, Wyoming, Arkansas, Montana, and Idaho region to educational and career opportunities in health sciences. Under the direction and generous funding of Dr. Nelson Fausto (Professor and Chair of UW Medicine Pathology) and his wife, Dr. Ann De Lancey, the Native American Education Outreach Program has attempted to address some of the socio-economic and cultural issues that adversely impact Native American youth from pursuing education and career opportunities at the University of Washington or any other academic institution.

Working closely with Polly Olsen from the University of Washington's Indigenous Wellness Research Institute, and partnering with local tribal educators, the program has hosted nearly 100 middle and high school students from Yakama, Puyallup, and as far away as Montana. Each on-campus visit features a series of interactive tours and activities with a wide range of UW Medicine departments, including Pathology (Gross Anatomy), MEDEX (physician assistant program), Laboratory Medicine, and Surgery with the Institute for Simulation & Interprofessional Studies (ISIS). Some of the program highlights have included hands-on tours of UW Medicine Pathology's Autopsy Facility where students examined over two dozen specially prepared organs depicting the various harmful physiological impacts of alcohol and drug abuse and smoking, and the ISIS surgical simulation area where students actively participated in a realistic operating room environment. Additionally, students also explored several UW Medicine Pathology research laboratories, including the Diabetes and Obesity Center and the Institute for Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine.

Representatives of Seattle's vibrant biotech industry located in South Lake Union have also contributed invaluable time and resources in support of increasing health and science education opportunities for the underrepresented youth participating in the program. Theresa Britschgi from the Seattle Biomedical Research Institute's BioQuest Academy has been a dynamic advocate of the program, enthusiastically demonstrating what really goes on in a lab environment, offering students hands-on opportunities to dissect mosquitoes and learn more about

malaria, one of the world's most widespread, infectious diseases.

Special attention and sensitivity has been paid to the cultural dynamic between modern medicine/science and Native American healing practices with everyone participating in the Native American Education Outreach Program. Staff members from the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute and UW Medicine Pathology ensure that Native American culture is embraced, celebrated and incorporated into the program's educational outreach activities. Each visit culminates with a ceremony in honor and respect of the Native American students' heritage, recognizing all those that came before them and that will follow afterwards.

Our hope is that we can partner with a Native American agriculture restoration project currently underway on the Yakama Reservation so we can examine both the physiological and cultural impacts of the project on a more personal basis. It goes without saying that our participation in the Student Bio Expo is not just a goal, but also the vehicle by which we can expose the students to potential career and/or academic opportunities in health sciences, and help establish more meaningful, long-term student/mentor relationships. Lastly, the program would not exist without the support of the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute, the Native American Center of Excellence, the School of Medicine's Office of Multicultural Affairs, and other University sponsored cultural support groups. All have been instrumental in the development and implementation of the program, advising program coordinators and students on educational and scholarship opportunities, the application process, career information, and support services while offering meaningful mentorship relationships.

The UW Medicine Pathology and Indigenous Wellness Research Institute members have and continue to provide leadership and mentorship support of the program.



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 Indigenous Peoples around the world
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Congratulations Karen Fieland, PhD!



Pictured: Karina Walters, Karen Fieland, Tessa Evans-Campbell

Working as a non-Native ally in urban Indian country with community members was the most meaningful and greatest learning experience of my doctoral program. The completion of my doctoral degree in social welfare reflects my relationships with many inspiring, generous, and good-hearted people who have contributed to this success. The research conducted toward the completion of my dissertation "Spirituality and Health among HIV-positive Native Americans" was possible because of all the participants in the Positively Native Wellness Study and the Honor Project who shared their experience,

insights and courage—and without whom this research would not have come to pass. Additionally I am indebted to my colleagues affiliated with the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute (community advisory board, staff at all study sites, investigators, consultants, and fellow students) for their camaraderie and support and for the opportunity to be a part of this community research endeavor. Thank you to all who have touched my life and guided my research.

As a teacher, researcher and social worker, I am committed to the health and wellness of indigenous peoples, including holistic approaches to wellness and health care. Academia and health care service systems have primarily functioned from a position of pathologizing individuals and groups, without valuing their lived experience. Holistic frameworks, including traditional

approaches of health and community continuity, which focus on wellness are critical to strengthening and maintaining community health.

I am grateful to have completed my program, and I intend to continue to work in ways that help recognize and value the diverse traditional, as well as innovative, ways that individuals and communities maintain and enhance wellness.

- Dr. Karen Fieland

The Indigenous Wellness Research Institute's film, "A Return to Wellness" was selected to screen at the 33rd annual American Indian Film Festival. As the nation's most prominent outlet for Native American films, the American Indian Film Festival premiered over 80 new feature films, shorts, public service, music videos and documentaries from USA American Indian and Canada First Nation communities.