



CIRCLES
ALLIANCE

Newsletter

Spring 2024

Quarterly Notes from the Cultivating Indigenous Research Communities for Leadership in Education and STEM (CIRCLES) Alliance

CIRCLES Scholars Present Research at Tribal Research Summit

by Crissy Oliver

This March, University of Idaho CIRCLES Scholars presented their research projects at a Tribal Research Summit hosted by UI's Office of Tribal Relations. This event was attended by university leadership, staff, faculty, Tribal Nation representatives, and students. The research focus at this year's summit provided a platform for scholars to lead conversations about the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and engage attendees about how community learning and ethical partnering with Tribal communities contributes to rethinking how research can enhance social, environmental, and cultural well-being.



Poster session at the Tribal Research Summit at the University of Idaho. Photo: Crissy Oliver

Seven CIRCLES Scholars presented on the following topics:

1. Heewekse Wisdom: "CIRCLES Indigenous Evaluation Work"
2. Fredina Tapaha: "Challenges and Successes of an Indigenous-Centered Dual Credit Course"
3. Aldwin Keo: "Monitoring Translocated Pacific Lamprey, *Entosphenus tridentatus*, using Radio Telemetry on the Warm Springs Reservation"
4. Alie Minium: "Language Polarization; Reclamation of Arctic Identity"
5. Marissa Spang: "Immersive Virtual Reality for Language Learning"
6. Adamarie Márquez Acevedo: "Centrando voces caribeñas: a shift in the established dairy sciences paradigms through an exploration of the Slick-hair gene in Holstein dairy cattle"
7. Abigail MacKay: "Developing Kuleana and 'Ike Through 'Āina Education at Waihe'e, Maui"

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Reflections from the CIRCLES Evaluation Team

The CIRCLES Evaluation Team gathered in February 2024 at Acoma Pueblo to build relationships and reflect on their path forward. The team engaged in the Rose, Thorn, Bud, Roots process (RTBR) to identify the strengths, challenges, new ideas, and core values of our CIRCLES evaluation. An activity we have used with other CIRCLES teams, the RTBR process was developed and shared with our team by YAKANAL (www.yakanal.org) and honors the teachings of medicine plants.



Members of the CIRCLES evaluation team at their 2024 retreat at Acoma Pueblo. Photo: Darryl Reano

Rose

(Strengths & Gifts)



One key strength shared was around relationships and collaboration, including building deeper connections with one another and other Alliance team partners, and braiding worldviews. Other strengths included mentorship, shared learning, and personal growth.

Thorn

(Challenges & Lessons Learned)



Capacity and time constraints was a key theme in sharing how the evaluation team can be good relatives in supporting the larger Alliance. A clash of worldviews emerges between external timelines and budgets and community-centered evaluation processes. Challenges were also shared around how to best communicate our findings with Alliance partners and incorporate them into action.

Bud

(New Ideas)



New ideas were shared around cross-pollination, such as finding ways to honor this work outside the Alliance, encouraging teams to visit one another, and creating learning groups. Communication was another key theme that centered around more regularly sharing updates and being transparent about our evaluation team's processes.

Roots

(Core Values)



In this area, we discussed how we can strengthen the 7Rs in our evaluation. One theme was around cross-pollination and how we can support deepening and interweaving the "roots" of the state teams in supporting one another. Another theme was remembering lessons learned that have been encountered along the way and being sure to continue carrying these lessons into the future.

The CIRCLES Evaluation team includes: Native Pathways (Shelly Valdez, Geanna Capitan), Reimagine Research Group (Jill Stein, Keiko Beers), and the Oregon State University STEM Research Center (Ben Archibeque, Martin Storksdieck). Darryl Reano (Arizona State University) serves as our Evaluation advisor and consultant.

CIRCLES Alliance Completes Reverse Site Visit at NSF

by Elle Findlay

On April 15 and 16, 2024, CIRCLES Alliance team members were in Alexandria, Virginia for a reverse site visit with the National Science Foundation. The purpose of an RSV is to demonstrate to the review team, comprised of external reviewers and NSF program officers, that the project is progressing and is worthy of ongoing federal funding. The visit was also done in a hybrid format, which allowed for each state team and the evaluation team to be represented. Being able to bring our team together in this way helped us to create a sense of community that was there to support each other throughout this demanding time. On day one, the CIRCLES team presented on our Alliance's work, and day two was a Q&A session with the review team.



CIRCLES team members (from L) Ray Burns, Nichole Lumadue, Philip Stevens, and Dan Conn at NSF Headquarters

The questions that NSF gave us were positive and prompted us to think about how we can reach the greatest level of outreach and sustainability throughout our work. Being able to have part of the team in person allowed us to come together at the end of each day to reflect on the presentations, NSF, and the RSV experience. It also allowed us to unwind together at the end of the day with dinner and conversations that brought us all closer together. Being an Alliance that is extended into six states does not allow us much time together in person, so when we have the opportunity, we make the most of it. Overall, the RSV was a positive experience that has left us feeling hopeful for what is to come.

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Or learn more
about us on
our website:

circlesalliance.org



State Spotlight: New Mexico



A mentor leads a math card game at a Family STEAM Event as part of Farmington Municipal Schools' Native American STEM Festival on April 2, 2024. Photo: Jonnie Wood

This spring, the New Mexico CIRCLES team hosted four STEAM Family Events in collaboration with local communities, reaching hundreds of families with culturally relevant hands-on activities spanning math, science, and the arts.

Student mentors from the University of New Mexico, New Mexico Tech, and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute were a key part of the events' success. New Mexico CIRCLES team member Jonnie Woody offered this reflection:

“We are finding that recruiting our mentors is just as important as planning events. Our mentors make the events come together, and they fill in any knowledge, thought, or impression we forget in the process of planning. They are turning our activities into hands-on life lessons. Their ability to work with a range of students from pre-K to high school has been the most impressive quality about these events.”

Save the Date
for the
Annual CIRCLES Gathering
October 17-19, 2024
in Wyoming

Venue details, agenda, and travel and registration information will follow.

We look forward to gathering with you in person this fall!

