



# CAIRHE

CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND RURAL HEALTH EQUITY



## PRESENTS AND PRESENCE



Alex Adams

Like so many of us, I've been trying to get into the holiday spirit given the very intense semester we've had. But I've also been thinking about the importance of practicing *presence* and not just focusing on *presents* this time of year. This is always a moving target and may mean different things to you, but to me it means taking a pause, working to slow down, and actually seeing and being with what is happening around me.

For example, I often walk in the woods near my house, and I see many people walking with their earbuds in, looking down at the ground and missing the trees and birds or people all around them. Yesterday I was walking in the fields near my house and saw that a huge flock of Canada geese had settled on the turf farm near me. There must have been over 500 geese. Suddenly they all took off honking, and I could hear the wind moving through hundreds of wings. I stopped to look up and listen. I was so grateful they were there and that I could be there in that moment with them flying overhead.

Here are some things we can do to be present with all that is around us during this busy time:

*Set Intentions:* Start each day with a clear intention to remain present and mindful. It could be as simple as "I will be present and appreciate each moment today."

*Mindful Breathing:* Take moments to focus on your breath.

When you feel overwhelmed or stressed, pause and take a few deep breaths. This simple act helps ground you in the present moment.

*Gratitude:* Reflect on what you're grateful for each day. Consider starting a gratitude journal or verbally sharing moments of gratitude with family and friends. This helps shift your focus to the positive aspects of the holiday season.

*Savor Moments:* Pay attention to the small details, and enjoy each experience fully. Whether it's savoring a delicious meal, enjoying a festive decoration, or appreciating laughter with loved ones, consciously soak in these moments.

*Active Listening:* When engaging in conversations, be fully present. Listen attentively to what others are saying without planning your response. This fosters deeper connections and understanding.

*Embrace Imperfections:* Sometimes things might not go as planned. Accept imperfections and embrace the moment for what it is rather than getting caught up in idealized expectations.

*Cultivate Compassion:* Practice compassion for yourself and others. Understand that everyone experiences stress during the holidays, so approach interactions with kindness and understanding. And practice being imperfectly perfect, remembering to give yourself time to rest and recover from this semester.

Cultivating presence is an ongoing practice that we can never master but one we can allow to fill our lives with moments of grace and beauty, enriching our holiday and everyday experiences and our overall well-being.

Alexandra Adams, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director and Principal Investigator

**For Healthy Communities Under the Big Sky**



## RESEARCH

## CAIRHE COLLABORATES WITH UTAH CENTER ON CANCER RESEARCH

From MSU News Service

The Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity, or CAIRHE, in collaboration with a research center in Utah, has launched a new joint center that aims to address health in areas struggling with persistent poverty, including populations in Montana and other states. The work is supported by a \$9.6 million grant from the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health. MSU's portion of the award is \$2.4 million.

The new grant brings together the expertise of researchers at CAIRHE; the [Center for Health Outcomes and Population Equity](#), or HOPE, at the [Huntsman Cancer Institute](#); and the [University of Utah](#) to expand their impact through two primary research initiatives that address poverty as a fundamental cause of cancer-related inequities. The joint center is known as HOPE & CAIRHE 2gether, or HC2.

The grant is part of the National Cancer Institute's Persistent Poverty Initiative. As part of this initiative, National Cancer Institute program officers and staff scientists provide expertise, data, and other resources to assist the university research teams. The initiative's goal is to empower institutions, clinics, communities, and tribes to collaborate and develop a cancer prevention and control research program that focuses on and serves people living in persistent poverty. In addition to two primary research projects, the center



## CENTER FOR HOPE

HEALTH OUTCOMES & POPULATION EQUITY

maintains a pilot project program and an early-career faculty development program known as the HC2 Scholars.

The grant's co-principal investigators are **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., director of CAIRHE, and David Wetter, Ph.D., senior director of cancer health equity science at the Huntsman Cancer Institute and director of the Center for HOPE.

"The poverty level for a family of four is an income of \$30,000 a year or less," Wetter said. "Unfortunately, people living in poverty have a far greater likelihood of getting almost every type of cancer, and it's critical to eliminate this inequity if we are to meaningfully reduce the pain and suffering due to cancer."



Emily Tomayko

Social factors, such as living in poverty, being uninsured, having unstable housing, or lacking access to healthy foods can put a person at a higher risk of getting cancer or lead to later stages of diagnosis with worse outcomes, Wetter explained.

Adams noted that the inequities for Indigenous communities are especially severe.

"Cancer rates in Indigenous communities

are extremely high as a result of multiple inequities in health care, income, and food availability, among other issues," Adams said.

One of HC2's research projects is led by **Emily Tomayko**, Ph.D., assistant professor in MSU's Department of Food Systems, Nutrition, and Kinesiology and a CAIRHE investigator. Tomayko leads a project aimed at lowering the risk of cancer in Indigenous populations across four states by studying the social factors that affect health and by promoting family wellness.

The project uses a culturally tailored, family-based wellness program called [Turtle Island Tales](#). Adams and her longtime research team, including Tomayko, developed the research-based program in partnership with eight tribes across the United States as a direct outcome of Adams's NIH U01 and R01 research grants. Tribal nations in four states, including Montana, collaborate with CAIRHE on the new HC2 project.

The second HC2 research project is led by Chelsey Schlechter, Ph.D., MPH, a researcher at the Huntsman Cancer Institute and assistant professor of population health sciences at the University of Utah. That project addresses the social factors of health related to tobacco use. Using tobacco greatly increases the risk of getting cancer, and its use is concentrated in areas where people are experiencing poverty and are medically uninsured, according to Wetter. CAIRHE's **Miranda Margetts**, Ph.D., serves as co-investigator on the Schlechter project.

Wetter noted that both projects will benefit from the Montana-Utah interstate collaborations.

"We have Montana experts involved in our Center for HOPE tobacco use project and Utah experts involved in the CAIRHE project," Wetter said. "Because of these collaborations, it gives us the opportunity to have a much greater impact with respect to reducing health inequities."

The Montana IDeA Community Engagement Core, led by **Ann Bertagnolli**, Ph.D., works with community engagement experts in Utah to provide support for research and pilot project leaders in both states. Meanwhile, CAIRHE investigator **Monica Skewes**, Ph.D., MSU professor of Psychology, co-leads the HC2 Developmental Core, which oversees the pilot project program. And **Nika Stoop**, Ph.D., assistant director of the MSU Center for Faculty Excellence, co-leads the HC2 Career Enhancement Core, which runs the HC2 Scholars program.

HC2 is funded by a five-year U54 grant (U54CA280812) that will conclude in April 2028. 🌸



Miranda Margetts



Ann Bertagnolli



Monica Skewes



Nika Stoop

## RESEARCH

## JOHN-HENDERSON AWARDED 2ND R01 GRANT FOR WORK WITH BLACKFEET

From MSU News Service

**Neha John-Henderson**, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Psychology and a longtime CAIRHE investigator, has received National Institutes of Health funding for a new phase of her ongoing research into the links among trauma, social connectedness, and health in the Blackfeet community.

John-Henderson, who is co-principal investigator for the new R01 grant study, said the work will build on that conducted under her ongoing four-year, \$2.18 million R01 grant she was awarded in 2021 (R01MD015894; see *Fall 2021 Newsletter*) to investigate dynamic relationships between social connectedness and health risk and resilience on the Blackfeet Reservation.

Two years into that study, which is following adults representing diverse segments of the Reservation's population, the first wave of data shows a correlation between varied degrees of loneliness and numerous health indicators such as blood pressure, sleep quality, and body mass index, John-Henderson said.

The next phase of work—funded with the new five-year, \$3.37 million R01 grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (R01HL163237)—will examine how Blackfeet adults ages 18-35 respond to challenges, and how those responses relate to historical and childhood trauma. This is important because patterns of responses to challenge have implications for mental and physical health, John-Henderson said.

"The new study is the first of its kind to comprehensively measure patterns of psychological and physiological responses to challenge in American Indian adults and to investigate whether these patterns are shaped by trauma exposure and indices of social connectedness," she said. "We predict that trauma may have implications for these responses, and that social connectedness may offset the health risks typically associated with trauma."

Annie Ginty, Ph.D., an expert in physiological responses to stress and challenge and an associate professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Baylor University, is the co-PI for the project. She and John-Henderson will travel to the Blackfeet Reservation frequently during the course of the study.

Both NIH-funded studies build on pilot work conducted by John-Henderson on the Reservation between 2017 and 2019. This early work was initially supported by [Montana INBRE](#) and then expanded by two pilot studies funded by CAIRHE. John-Henderson found that community connectedness appears to offset physiological risk for disease, particularly among individuals who experienced high levels of trauma early in life. Those who felt lonely or less connected to the community reported more symptoms of anxiety and depression.

She also found evidence that frequency of positive social interactions was inversely related to blood pressure and that average perceived social connectedness was inversely related to levels of immune system inflammation. Adults who reported more loneliness across a one-week period also experienced worse sleep during that time.

To measure the degrees of loneliness and social connectedness, the researchers use the short loneliness scale, which is a subjective report of an individual's level of loneliness that takes into account the size of a person's social network and number of contacts within that network in a given week. The researchers also measure each person's social participation, or "attendance," in activities identified by Blackfeet community members, including church, powwow, or other traditional ceremony attendance. Participants also report how integrated they feel into the larger Blackfeet community.

John-Henderson said that her Blackfeet community partners indicated they want to avoid focusing exclusively on factors related to poor health in the community and instead investigate solutions; both NIH-funded studies were designed with that in mind. A Community Advisory Board composed of Blackfeet community members has overseen and informed the study design and continues to be involved in each stage of the research process. On-site data collection and lab work is supervised by Blackfeet Community College (BCC) faculty member Betty Henderson-Matthews and the project coordinator, Skye Gilham. Several BCC students and community members are also involved in data collection.

"Our work is inspired by a focus on resilience and understanding the psychological, social, and behavioral factors that help community members thrive and achieve optimal health despite challenges or adversity they may face," John-Henderson said. "We hope to use the data we collect to inform future research and to acquire funding to support interventions that work to reduce health inequities." 🌸



Neha John-Henderson



## CAIRHE IS ONE PART OF LARGE AHA GRANT EXAMINING RURAL HEART HEALTH

Researchers at the University of Washington (UW) School of Medicine have begun a \$20 million initiative aimed at better understanding and mitigating factors that negatively influence the health of rural Americans.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is funding the new study network, known as Rural PRO-CARE and composed of five major projects based in Washington, Oregon, California, North Carolina, and Ohio. CAIRHE and Director **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., serve as research partners on the Washington study, known as GROW-RURAL. Project and Data Manager **Eliza Webber**, MPH, also will contribute.

With distinct investigations at each of the five study sites, network scientists will address unique health challenges that face the 20 percent of the U.S. population that lives in rural areas. These people's challenges include individual risk factors, social determinants of health, and the lack of easy access to health care. People who live in the rural United States are 40 percent more likely to develop heart disease and have a 30 percent higher risk of stroke than urban-area residents, according to AHA data.

The UW School of Medicine is the coordinating center for the entire cross-country network. Its efforts will be led by Chris Longenecker, M.D., associate professor of medicine and director of the UW Global Cardiovascular Health Program. Longenecker also leads the UW project, GROW-RURAL, which is a shortened form of "A Global to Rural Innovation Network to Adapt Evidence-Based Cardiovascular Interventions to Context."

**Rural PRO-CARE: ReciPROcal Innovations to Improve Cardiovascular CARE in Rural America**



The UW project will study people with health challenges living in rural areas of the United States, including Indigenous and Latino populations. The team will look into how geography plays a role when long distances to the nearest doctor can limit access to care. They also will explore whether new ways of delivering health care in other countries may be adapted in the rural U.S. Their goal is to discover barriers as well as opportunities to improve heart health care and then let local health workers and patients design programs to test new innovations in their communities.

CAIRHE and Adams will lead Aim 3 of the project, which will adapt service delivery models for cardiovascular disease prevention and test implementation in rural clinical practices in Montana and other WWAMI states. That Aim will begin in Year 3, with a July 2025 start.

"Our network as a whole will generate evidence for strategies to reduce persistent rural health inequities in the United States," Longenecker said. "We'll use technologies like mobile health, drones, and artificial intelligence-guided heart ultrasound, and we'll build capacity among health professionals such as pharmacists, emergency medical service providers, and community health workers."

In addition to its role as a partner in the UW study, CAIRHE has agreed to host the second annual meeting of the entire Rural PRO-CARE Network in Bozeman in the Spring of 2025. MSU's Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing will also be involved in leading a rural nursing workforce development program during the event.

## ADAMS RECEIVES FULBRIGHT FELLOWSHIP TO NEW ZEALAND, BEGINNING IN JANUARY

CAIRHE Director **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., has been selected as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar in 2023-2024 for New Zealand. Adams received the notification from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Program in April.

Fulbright Scholar Awards are prestigious and competitive fellowships that provide unique opportunities for scholars to teach and conduct research abroad. Fulbright scholars also play a critical role in U.S. public diplomacy, establishing long-term relationships between people and nations. Alumni include 62 Nobel Laureates, 89 Pulitzer Prize winners, 78 MacArthur Fellows, and thousands of leaders and world-renowned experts in academia and many other fields across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

Adams has maintained research partnerships in Aotearoa (New Zealand) for years, including her Māori colleagues who visited MSU in October 2022 (see *Fall 2022 Newsletter*). She will depart for Aotearoa in mid-January 2024 and remain through May.

During her time there Adams will create a more regular exchange between Indigenous predoctoral and honors students at MSU and Māori students in Aotearoa. In addition, she will establish a *Climate Change, Indigenous Knowledge, and Planetary Health Summit* with her Māori colleagues.

A full story about Adams's experience will appear in this newsletter in 2024.

Adams is the second CAIRHE investigator to receive a Fulbright. **Elizabeth Rink**, Ph.D., was [named a Fulbright Arctic Initiative Scholar](#) in 2018.

## CAIRHE SUBMITS FINAL COBRE RENEWAL, WITH APPLICATION SCORE DUE IN MARCH

In September CAIRHE submitted its final renewal application for its Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) grant, which has funded the Center since its inception in September 2014. A third and final phase of the COBRE grant, awarded by the

National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health, would extend CAIRHE's NIGMS funding from 2024 through August 2029.

CAIRHE now awaits the review and score from the assigned study section, which meets on March 12, 2024. Provided that the score merits further consideration, the NIGMS Advisory Council would issue its recommendation in May, followed by an official funding decision from the NIGMS Director. The new P30 grant would begin September 1.

"We have every confidence that our application will be successful," said **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., CAIRHE's director since 2016. "Planning for Phase 3 and the application writing process itself have been important to our thinking about how to make CAIRHE sustainable for the long term. The next five years will be a transition period when we prepare for reliance on a whole menu of funding sources to keep our work going—not just one or two very large NIH grants. Donors and foundation funding, for example, will be increasingly important to the work we do."

COBRE Phase 3 has several important differences compared to earlier phases of the funding mechanism, Adams said. First is the fact that the grant itself is half the size, with the five-year award totaling "only" \$3.75 million. Multi-year research projects will no longer be supported, though CAIRHE will maintain its longtime pilot project program. That program's latest Request for Proposals has already been published (see p. 8), with applications due next April.

In addition, the Center's Advisory Committee will expand to include not only the external independent experts who have served CAIRHE for years, but also an MSU administrator and faculty member not directly affiliated with CAIRHE. **Elizabeth Shanahan**, Ph.D., and **Mark Quinn**, Ph.D., have agreed to serve in those roles.

"We have so much crucial work left to do in our state and region," Adams said. "Even though our primary NIH grant and our center structure will look slightly different, the community-based health equity mission of CAIRHE and our dedication to advancing our faculty investigators will be the same. It's our hope that an entirely new cohort of funders and philanthropists will see the importance of what we do and want to get behind us. We have a lot of exciting years ahead."

## CAIRHE PRESENTS SUCCESSFUL PIRL WORKSHOP IN NOVEMBER, ITS FOURTH

In November CAIRHE and its partners at Arizona State University and the National Institutes of Health hosted 15 investigators from across the United States at Promoting Indigenous Research Leadership, or PIRL, a three-day workshop designed to promote the research careers of Indigenous and other early-career faculty working with Native communities. The workshop was held in Tempe, Ariz., for the first time.

Faculty participants traveled from the East and West coasts, the Southwest, and the Midwest to attend the event, held November 13-15 on the ASU campus. Participants assembled each day in campus facilities of the Labriola National American Indian Data Center, located in the ASU Library.

Nine senior mentors from across the country—each with a track

record of funding success with the NIH and other agencies—gave presentations on various career and grant-writing topics and engaged in one-on-one and small-group mentoring with the investigators.

CAIRHE Director **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., CAIRHE External Advisory Committee member **Donald Warne**, M.D., MPH, and ASU's Angela Gonzales, Ph.D., served as the workshop's

# PIRL

PROMOTING INDIGENOUS RESEARCH LEADERSHIP

co-chairs. Warne is co-director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, and Gonzales is the interim director of ASU's Center for Indian Education. CAIRHE Program Coordinator **James Burroughs** is director of PIRL.

"PIRL has really become something special," Adams said. "By the end of the three days, there is such a positive feeling of belongingness and community, and the sense that these early-career scholars have finally received vital support and mentoring that many aren't getting at their institutions."

This year's participating investigators represented 12 different universities or research organizations, including ASU, the University of North Carolina, Johns Hopkins University, the University of North Dakota, Michigan State University, Lehigh University, and San Francisco State University. Among them was **Julie Gameon**, Ph.D., former MSU doctoral advisee of **Monica Skewes**, Ph.D., and now a research scientist at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

The workshop was made possible through generous institutional support from **Alison Harmon**, Ph.D., and the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development; the National Cancer Institute; and several ASU offices that provided hospitality funding. Six NIH



Participants and mentors at PIRL 2023 in Tempe, Ariz.



## CENTER NEWS

program officials and other personnel—including Shobha Srinivasan and Amy Kennedy from the National Cancer Institute, and Kathy Etz, Alexa Romberg, and Barbara Oudekerk from the National Institute on Drug Abuse—attended and served as presenters and mentors during the event.

“Once again, we couldn’t have staged PIRL in the way we did, where investigators aren’t asked to pay to attend, without the support from MSU, NIH, and ASU,” Adams said. “It really does show how committed MSU and many NIH program officers are to upholding Indigenous researchers and the important work they will be doing in Indigenous communities for the decades to come.”

In addition to Adams, Gonzales, and Warne, senior faculty presenters and mentors at the workshop included Julie Baldwin from Northern Arizona University (also a CAIRHE External Advisory Committee member); David Huh and Cynthia Pearson from the University of Washington; Lisa Wexler from the University of Michigan; Nancy Whitesell from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus; and Paul Estabrooks from the University of Utah.

PIRL 2023 was the fourth installment of the workshop presented by CAIRHE. The previous events were held in October 2022 in Grand Forks, N.D.; October 2021 in Bozeman; and February 2019 in Bozeman. Plans for the next PIRL will be posted in early 2024 on CAIRHE’s [workshop home page](#).

## CAIRHE RESEARCH IN PRINT

Here are select recent publications resulting from CAIRHE-supported research.

Van Rensburg, D, **Adams, Alexandra**, Perez, G, ... **Warne, Teresa**, **Whiting Sorrell, Anna**, et al. [Factors influencing COVID-19 testing among Native Americans and Latinos in two rural agricultural communities: A qualitative study](#). *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2023;11:1220052.

Gonzalez, VM, & **Skewes, Monica**. [Association of racism and substance use treatment with belief in the myth of an American Indian/Alaska Native biological vulnerability to alcohol problems](#). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. 2023 Jul; 29(3):339-347.



**John-Henderson, Neha**, White, EJ, & Crowder, TL. [Resilience and health in American Indians and Alaska Natives: A scoping review of the literature](#). *Development and Psychopathology*. 2023 Jun; 1-12.

**Thorsen, Maggie**, Harris, S, Palacios, JF, McGarvey, RG, & **Thorsen, Andreas**. [American](#)

As with past events, this year’s participants praised a forum where they felt valued as Indigenous researchers in a way that many had never experienced before. In post-event surveys, all participants reported they were “very satisfied” with the workshop overall.

“This is the best-run program I have been part of,” said one participant in an anonymous evaluation. “The mentors and NIH program officers really cared about the scholars and gave such amazing advice and guidance. It was so helpful!”

Said another: “This was such a wonderful opportunity that I am grateful for. It was so well-planned, thoughtful, and sensitive. I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of it, and I hope that through my future work I can be a success story for PIRL.”

## CAIRHE FEATURED IN APHA-TV FILM

CAIRHE was among 22 public health programs featured in short films produced for the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association (APHA) held in Atlanta on November 12-15. The association’s media marketing arm, APHA-TV, approached CAIRHE about the opportunity earlier this year and created the film on location.

An international film company working for APHA-TV, WebEdge, designed the concept and conducted on-site video shoots at

[Indians travel great distances for obstetrical care: Examining rural and racial disparities](#). *Social Science and Medicine*. 2023 May; 325:115897.

Tyra, AT, Ginty, AT, Johnson, LR, Lafromboise, ME, Malatare, M, **Salois, Emily**, and **John-Henderson, Neha**. [Emotion regulation strategies relate to ambulatory cardiovascular activity in an American Indian community](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*. 2023 Jan; 85(1):2-7.

**Davis, Lauren**, & Aylward, A. [Mitigating rural adolescent trauma: Remote delivery of a trauma-informed yoga intervention during COVID-19](#). *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma*. 2022 Dec; 16(3):1-14.

**Scott, Brandon**, Sunchild, L, Small, C, & McCullen, JR. [Anxiety and depression in Northern Plains American Indian youth: Evidence for resilience and risk](#). *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 2022 Oct; 1-13.

**Davis, Lauren**, Aylward, A, & Buchanan, R. [Trauma-informed yoga: Investigating an intervention for mitigating adverse childhood experiences in rural contexts](#). *Educational Studies*. 2022; 58(4):530-559.



## CENTER NEWS

MSU during the week of October 23, including interviews with CAIRHE Director **Alexandra Adams**, Community Research Associate **Emily Salois**, faculty members **Emily Tomayko** and **Scott Monfort**, and graduate research assistant **Anna Whiting Sorrell**.



Titled “Respect, Relationship, and Reciprocity in Community-Academic Research Partnerships,” the film provides a 6-minute overview of CAIRHE’s community-based participatory research mission, with examples including the [Turtle Island Tales](#) program, the [Protecting Our Community](#) COVID home-testing study, and the Monfort Lab and its osteoarthritis research among Montana farmers and ranchers.

“This film was a great opportunity to introduce CAIRHE to the largest public health gathering of its kind in the country,” Adams said. “We can continue to use it locally and throughout our region as a way to connect with potential new partners and donors who will be important to our sustainability in the years ahead.”

At the APHA meeting the film was broadcast on television screens throughout the venue and on a dedicated television channel in select meeting hotels downtown. It will be featured on the APHA website and YouTube channel for one year after the meeting.

Meanwhile, the film is now also posted on CAIRHE’s own [YouTube channel](#) and [website](#), and it is currently promoted on the Center’s home page.

## DR. JULIE BALDWIN JOINS CAIRHE'S EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE



Julie Baldwin

Earlier this year CAIRHE added a fourth member to its longstanding External Advisory Committee (EAC). **Julie Baldwin**, Ph.D., is a Regents’ Professor in the Department of Health Sciences and the Executive Director of the Center for Health Equity Research at Northern Arizona University. She joins existing EAC members **Dennis Donovan**, Ph.D., **Donald Warne**, M.D., and **Jack Westfall**, M.D., who have served in their roles for up to seven years each.

Baldwin’s own research has focused on both infectious and chronic disease prevention, with a consistent program of applied research addressing HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention among American Indian youth and their families. As a citizen of

the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, she has made a lifelong commitment to serving Indigenous and diverse communities and to advocating for health promotion programs for children, adolescents, and families. She was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2022.

For the past two years, Baldwin has also served as a mentor and presenter at the Promoting Indigenous Research Leadership (PIRL) workshop presented by CAIRHE.

“Julie is a renowned scholar and center leader and a fine human being, and we are truly fortunate to have her guidance as CAIRHE moves into its next phase,” Director **Alexandra Adams** said.

## BRONSTON NAMED “EVERYDAY HERO”

**Maya Bronston**, CAIRHE’s grants management specialist, was recognized with an “Everyday Hero” award at a May 2 campus event, “Celebrating the Role of Research in the Land Grant Mission,” presented by the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development. The new award recognizes individuals who routinely support successful research, creativity, or economic development activities at Montana State.



Maya Bronston

Bronston has served in her present role at CAIRHE for seven years.

“This was well-deserved recognition for Maya, who is so important to the work of our center and faculty by providing fiscal management and other grant-development support,” said CAIRHE Director **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D.

## CAIRHE ADDS PROJECTS FOR 2023-24

CAIRHE has welcomed two new project leaders for the 2023-24 year, its 10th year of existence.

Though no stranger to CAIRHE, **Miranda Margetts**, Ph.D., leads a new one-year [research project](#) this year that builds on her previous two years of pilot project support. Her study, Investigating Health Care for Rural Females with Complex Gynecological Conditions, continues work examining health care and outcomes for rural females with congenital uterine anomalies (CUAs). Margetts and her team will engage with the Billings Clinic CUA patient community in focus groups; assess Mountain West health system administrative records to reveal the prevalence and extent of interstate travel required to receive care for CUAs and to stratify gynecological cancer risk for women with CUAs; and examine the financial burdens and insurance barriers connected to CUA-related health care procedures.

Margetts joins existing research project leaders **Lauren Davis**, Ed.D., and **Brandon Scott**, Ph.D., who are each in the last year of their projects. The final phase of CAIRHE’s COBRE grant, beginning in September 2024 once awarded, will not support multiyear research projects.

Meanwhile, **Elizabeth Johnson**, Ph.D., RN, joined CAIRHE as its newest pilot project leader. Johnson, assistant professor in the



## CENTER NEWS

Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing, is early in her career at MSU, having received her Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Arizona in 2021. Her [pilot project](#), “A Mixed Methods Evaluation of Phillips County Hospital Infrastructure and Rural Community Health Care Needs Assessment in Malta, Montana,” employs community-based participatory design methods that will examine the influence of built environment on care delivery to align the hospital system of care to the current health care needs of its rural-dwelling patients. Co-investigators on the project include **Julie Ruff**, Ed.D., Mark & Robyn Jones College of Nursing, and **Bernadette McCrory**, Ph.D., Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering.

Johnson joins **Vernon Grant**, Ph.D., and **Mark Schure**, Ph.D., who are leading the second and final year of their pilot projects.



Elizabeth Johnson

for the project year, beginning September 1, 2024. The deadline for a required letter of intent is February 1, 2024, with an application deadline of April 1.

“CAIRHE is a multidisciplinary center, so we’re again reaching out to faculty in departments across campus,” said **James Burroughs**, CAIRHE program coordinator. “For health researchers who maybe don’t yet have a well-funded research agenda of their own, our pilot projects offer the benefit of NIH funding with application review and project administration all handled here locally by your peers at MSU.”

In addition to funding from the National Institutes of Health, being a CAIRHE project leader offers faculty a range of support services from the Center, including mentoring by senior investigators and collaboration with a community of scholars who share similar research interests, Burroughs said.

For complete details and instructions, visit the [CAIRHE RFP website](#). Burroughs welcomes inquiries and one-on-one information sessions with interested faculty. 🌿

## OTHER CAIRHE FACULTY HONORS ...



Kaylin Greene

**Kaylin Greene**, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, was one of two recipients of the new Excellence in Integration Award, which recognizes MSU faculty members who have demonstrated student engagement in valuable learning processes that integrate teaching, outreach, and research activities. The award from the College of Letters and Science was presented at its April awards ceremony.

**Scott Monfort**, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, received tenure and promotion at the May 9 Tenure and Promotion Celebration Dinner.



Scott Monfort

CAIRHE Director **Alexandra Adams**, M.D., Ph.D., presented the final lecture in the 2022-23 Provost’s Distinguished Lecturer Series on April 11. Her talk, “Reimagining Wellness: Learning from Partnerships with Indigenous Communities,” described her work with Indigenous partners across the country over two decades.

## CAIRHE REQUESTS PROPOSALS FOR PILOT PROJECTS, WITH APRIL '24 DEADLINE

CAIRHE has again issued its annual Request for Proposals for one-year pilot projects from MSU faculty engaged in community-based public health research. Proposals should be consistent with CAIRHE’s mission of reducing health disparities in Indigenous and/or rural communities, and they should have a high likelihood of leading to independent funding from external (non-MSU) sponsors. Funding usually ranges from \$20,000 to \$50,000 in direct costs



A group from MSU and CAIRHE, with friends from the Menominee community (WI), traveled to New Zealand on Feb. 21 through March 6 as part of a cultural exchange with Maori colleagues there, including Dr. Ihirangi Heke, who visited MSU in Oct. 2022 (see *Fall 2022 Newsletter*). The group explored the Maori worldview and ways of knowing across natural and cultural settings, along the way enjoying stunning scenery and outdoor adventures. Pictured (left to right) are Vanessa Simonds, Maya Bronston, Emily Tomayko, Liam Adams, Cedar Fernandez (Menominee), Alex Adams, Aubrey Ridgebear, and Steven Davis.

## SEE YOU IN 2024!



## Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity (CAIRHE)

Health Sciences Building  
P.O. Box 173485  
Montana State University  
Bozeman, MT 59717-3485  
Web: [www.montana.edu/cairhe](http://www.montana.edu/cairhe)



Center for American Indian  
and Rural Health Equity

## ADMINISTRATION

Alexandra Adams, M.D., Ph.D., *Director and Principal Investigator*  
James Burroughs, *Program Coordinator*  
Tel: (406) 994-4407; E-mail: [jburroughs@montana.edu](mailto:jburroughs@montana.edu)  
Maya Bronston, *Grants Management Specialist*  
Stephen Martin, Ph.D., *Director, Translational Biomarkers Core*  
Eliza Webber, MPH, *Research Project Manager*

## CAIRHE PROJECT LEADERS AND RESEARCH FACULTY

Lauren Davis, Ed.D., *Department of Education*  
Vernon Grant, Ph.D., *Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity*  
Elizabeth Johnson, Ph.D., *Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing*  
Miranda Margetts, Ph.D., *Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity*  
Stephen Martin, Ph.D., *Center for American Indian and Rural Health Equity*  
Mark Schure, Ph.D., *Department of Health and Human Development*  
Brandon Scott, Ph.D., *Department of Psychology*

## CAIRHE MENTORS

Jason Carter, Ph.D., *Baylor University College of Health and Human Sciences*  
Suzanne Held, Ph.D., *Department of Health and Human Development*  
Ron June, Ph.D., *Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering*  
Elizabeth Rink, Ph.D., MSW, *Department of Health and Human Development*  
Molly Secor, Ph.D., *Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing*  
Sarah Shannon, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, *Mark and Robyn Jones College of Nursing*  
Monica Skewes, Ph.D., *Department of Psychology*

## COMMUNITY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Erica McKeon-Hanson, MPH, MSEd  
Emily Matt Salois, MSW

## EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Julie Baldwin, Ph.D., *Northern Arizona University*  
Dennis Donovan, Ph.D., *Professor Emeritus, University of Washington*  
Donald Warne, M.D., MPH, *Johns Hopkins University*  
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