



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

**Wassaja Carlos
Montezuma Center for
Native American Health**



American Indians into Health Professions (AIHP)

2025 Report



Prepared by
**Wassaja Carlos
Montezuma Center**

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American Indians into Health Professions (AIHP)

“Growing Our Own”

July 20, 2025 - August 1, 2025



Over the course of two weeks the College of Medicine, and the Wassaja Carlos Monetzuma Center for Native American Health implemented the American Indians into Health Professions. This is a two week summer program, first ever, for youth and adults. One week for youth and the other for adults. The program focused on Healthcare topics through presentations, hands-on activities, campus visits, cultural workshops, and student panels. Individuals applied their communication skills and creativity by presenting their experience of the week long program to their families and friends. Participants stayed near campus for the week where they practiced their time management skills and experienced time away from home to get a glimpse of the independence of college life. The purpose of the program is designed to serve tribal youth and adults interested in Healthcare Professions by exploring careers in Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture for Traditional Healing, and other unique fields.

Meet Our Partners:

University of Arizona

Community Engagement & Partnerships
Office of Health Care Advancement (Phoenix) College
of Public Health
College of Nursing
College of Veterinary Medicine
University Libraries - CATalyst Studios
Cooperative Extension - Tribal Extension Programs
Native American Advancement & Tribal Engagement
SALT Center
Native SOAR

Community Partners:

American Indian Health - Area Health Education Center
Tohono O'odham Community College
Tohono O'odham Department of Education
Tohono O'odham Nation Healthcare
Tohono O'odham Environmental Health





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Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health



November 23, 2025

Greetings Relatives, Partners, and Community Members,

On behalf of the Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health, it is my honor to share the 2025 American Indians into Health Professions (AIHP) Report. This year's program, spanning two weeks and welcoming both youth and adult participants, continued to demonstrate the strength, curiosity, and brilliance that lives within our Tribal communities. The voices and experiences reflected in these pages speak to the spirit of "Growing Our Own," and remind us that the pathway into the health professions is strongest when it is built by, with, and for Indigenous people.

To our participants: thank you for showing up with enthusiasm, courage, and openness. From hands-on learning in the Health Sciences Innovation Building, to our cultural and healing workshops, to the final poster presentations shared with your families and friends, each of you brought your whole selves to this experience. You reminded us that Native people belong in every space of medicine, research, and healing, and that your presence strengthens those spaces.

To our partners, Tribal Nations, presenters, and sponsors: your commitment made this program not only possible, but impactful. Your mentorship, cultural grounding, institutional support, and financial generosity ensured that every participant had the opportunity to explore health careers, build confidence, and envision new possibilities. We raise our hands in deep appreciation for your guidance and continued collaboration.

As the Wassaja Center looks ahead, we are excited to continue expanding these opportunities. In Summer 2026, we will once again host AIHP, and this Spring we look forward to launching Wassaja Scrubs, a hands-on healthcare career experience that includes job shadowing, skill-building, and certification pathways. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to creating Indigenous-centered programs that uplift Tribal sovereignty, nurture identity, and prepare the next generation of Native healthcare leaders.

I warmly invite you to stay connected with us—through our upcoming mailing list, website updates, and community events. Together, we will continue strengthening pathways that honor our ancestors, support our students, and build healthier futures for all Native nations.

Most Respectfully,

Christina Bell-Andrews
Assistant Professor, Executive Director
Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health
College of Medicine – Tucson
The University of Arizona



Week One: Youth AIHP

July 20 - July 25

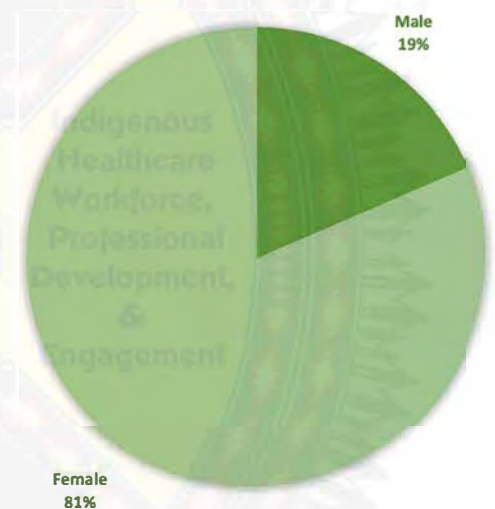
ATTENDANTS:

27 Youth (Ages 15-18yrs)

AGE RANGE



GENDER



TRIBAL AFFILIATION:

Tohono O'odham
Navajo
Pascua Yaqui
Whiteriver Apache
San Carlos Apache
Hualapai
Hopi

TRIBE





Week Two: Adults AIHP

ATTENDANTS:

July 27 - August 25

30 Adults (Ages 18-60yrs)

GENDER

AGE RANGE

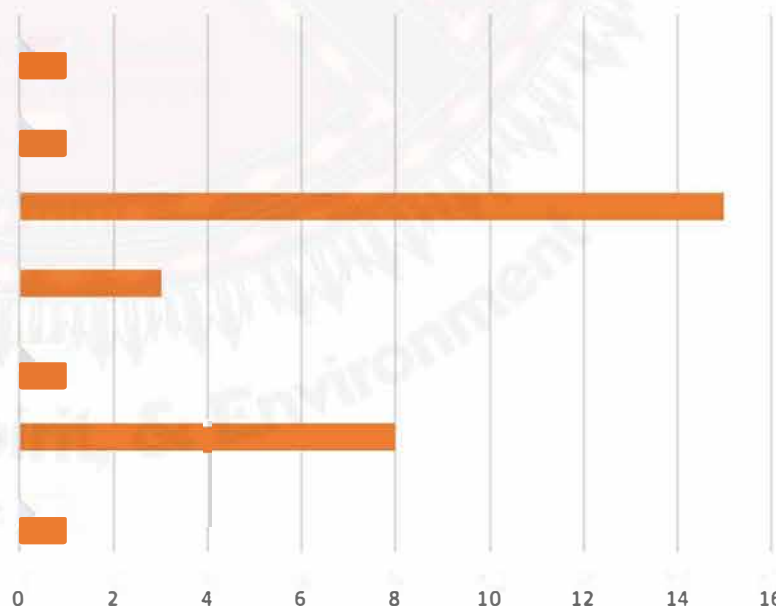


TRIBE

TRIBAL AFFILIATION:

Tohono O'odham
Navajo
Pascua Yaqui
Whiteriver Apache
Fort McDowell Yavapai
San Carlos Apache
Gila River Pima Maricopa

Salt River Pima Maricopa
White Mountain Apache
Tohono O'odham
San Carlos Apache
Pascua Yaqui
Navajo
Ft. McDowell Yavapai



Day 1 Overview: Orientation

Day one: arrival of participants. This day focused on student orientation and hotel check-in. Participants brought family and friends to help check-in to hotel, discuss expectations, and the program overview. This day was filled with introductions, orientation, ice breakers, group rapport and team building exercises.



Day 2 Overview: Tohono O'odham Community College

Day two: consisted of traveling to Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC) located in Sells, Arizona on the Tohono O'odham reservation. Participants were introduced to the TOCC community and gained knowledge about their traditional and cultural values. TOCC presented on tuition, programs offered through the college such as the language preservation program, sports programs, health professions, and a tour. Other resources included assistance with career specialists, career advisors, and other academic supports to ensure all students who attend TOCC are successful. There was a special presentation on "Knowledge Protectors" where we as Indigenous peoples have to protect our culture, language and traditions and tour of TOCC's CNA lab.



Day 3 Overview: Health Science Innovation Building (HSIB)

Day three: the day included a student panel from Indigenous students in health programs at the University of Arizona. Key presentations from the University of Arizona includes; College of Medicine Dr. Valenzuela, College of Veterinary Medicine Dr. Arviso, College of Nursing Nursing team, College of Public Health Dr. Felina Cordova, American Indian Health-Arizona Health Education Center (AIH-AHEC) Brooke Rector, they presented throughout the day. Following the presentations we toured the Arizona Simulation Technology and Education Center (ASTEC) was given along with lab activities. Later in the evening, participants learned about the Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) program and services. SALT assisted participants with their presentations to conclude the day.

Meet the Student Panel



Ilana Rosas, Kristin Melendez, and
Angel Leslie
(Current UA Students in healthcare)

Day 4 Overview: UofA Phoenix

Day four: We traveled to the College of Medicine, University of Arizona Phoenix campus. The day started by traveling to University of Arizona, Phoenix campus and returning to Tucson. The day was filled with hands-on activities and presentations from the College of Medicine; School of Pharmacy, Art Therapy program, Northern Arizona University's School of Physical Therapy and tour of the institution. The students were able to participate in hands-on learning experiences by using different instruments and tools in the student Simulation lab.



Day 5 Overview: HSIB and Culture Night

Day five: HSIB and Culture night. We continued our presentations and workshops at the HSIB building. Presenters included School of Agriculture Sciences, and UofA's Extension campus located at San Carlos, AZ. Following the presentations, students attended Culture night at the Wassaja Center, students wore their traditional attire. We had a presentation from a local Tohono O'odham medicine man and woman, where they discussed the importance of culture, tradition, language, traditional healings, traditional medicine; shared plant information, and incorporating it into everyday life. Also, traditional healing was presented by an O'odham traditional healer. We topped off the night with food from the Santa Rosa Cafe and students shared stories, songs, and dances from their culture.



Day 6 Overview: Poster Presentations

Day six: Participants presented their posters, had a light lunch, and departed for home. At the beginning of the week, we requested a poster of highlights of their week and each student were to do a poster presentation. Family and friends were able to walk around the room while each participant presented their poster, overall experiences, highlights of their week, something they've learned, new experiences, and new friendships. Every poster was creative and unique in their own way, it exceeded our expectations. At the conclusion of the program, the participants received a t-shirt, a certificate of participation, and a letter of recommendation upon request.



AIHP Youth Evaluation Results

How can AIHP Improve?

“Do something hands on i kinda got bored during the tour”

“Provide more water”

“I think to have us move around more, just to keep our bodies awake and going in a way.”

“Take a couple breaks in between each station.”

“Do more activities revolving around exercise like a scavenger hunt about the various buildings and people within those buildings.”

“Talking about natives in Healthcare more like staying more on track of Healthcare for native americans.”

“I think maybe giving us more time to interact with each other because we are in groups so we talk with the same people.”

“More snacks”

“More hands on activities”

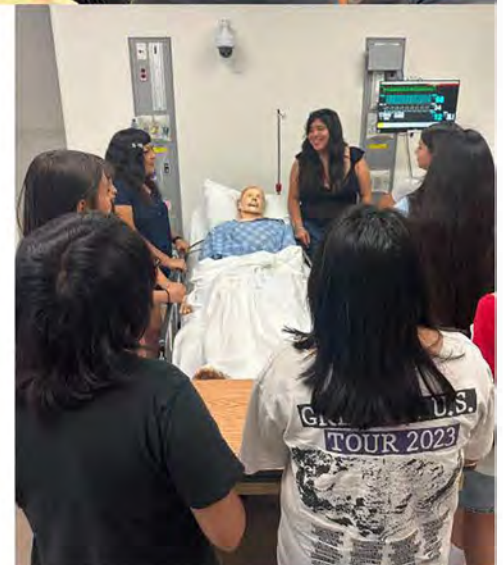
“I feel like we could of done more activities together as a group, to talk among our peers and socialize more.”

“I feel like maybe we could have a bit more time eating before we started the presentations, because I felt rushed to eat quicker.”

“Maybe, the food I feel that for lunch it wasn’t much food so that is all that you could improve.”

“Take small minute stretch to get the students more awake and motivated.”

“I would probably suggest a little bit more time for the presentations as the stuff was very interesting to learn and I would want to learn more about it.”



AIHP Adult Evaluation Results

How can AIHP Improve?

“Have a q&a session with individuals who have graduated from the program.”

“Maybe have more hands activities and more social activities, other than that, amazing day.”

“I think a group chat would be interesting. It's not needed but it might be useful.

More information about all classes held at TOCC and online.
Tour of dorms and how it is living and going to school there”

“I wouldve loved to see the school during a more active time when it is in actual effect”

“I think you can do differently is proved snacks during the presentation.”

“Today was great, the speakers should be required to make sure to be clear and focus on ensuring all are able to participate”

“I suggest that we input more activities or like hands on stuff instead of just sitting there and transportation.”

“I guess the only bad thing was the lack of space in the vans, it was hot and stuffy. Other than that everything was great!!”

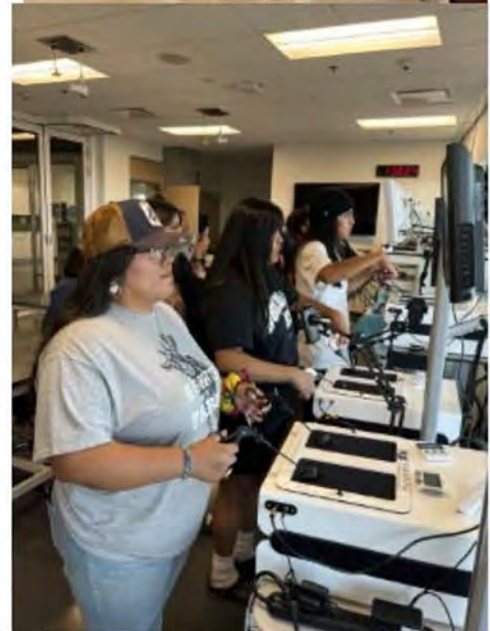
“Have more of an interaction activities.”

“Maybe give information on how to register for TOCC. Do the session early June.

Everything was great today until the end of the day.”

“Stress to the group how it’s important to communicate with host.”

“The roommate assignment and the ride accommodations to and from the tohonoodam college.”



[illegible]

“The program thus far has been amazing! Very eye-opening into exploring the many other careers in the medical field. I've been very grateful to have been able to experience such a great program.”

“Everything went well and perfectly fine. The presentations made me learn a lot about the medical field and what they do daily. It was fun and interesting overall.”

“The presentations were on point and had the knowledge we need. It was a great opportunity for us. It helped me see different kinds of nursing and overall things in the health field.”

“The presenters were very nice to get information from. Learning about the research and medical technology was nice as well since it gives me an idea for things to expect if I want to go into that specific field.”



What's Next for Wassaja Center?

- Wassaja Center plans to hold another AIHP for Summer 2026!
- Wassaja Scrubs, Fall 2026! We are creating a healthcare professionals program where students will have hands on experiences such as training, job shadowing, activities, and certifications.
- An email list serve to will be sent out to anyone who would like to have updates and opportunities and resources within the University of Arizona and its partners.
- Wassaja Center Website Instagram page! Filled with updates, highlights, and other student resources.



“GROWING OUR OWN”

American Indians Into Health Professions (AIHP)

SUMMER 2026!

Engage in a summer program designed to serve tribal youth and adults interested in Health Professions. Explore careers in Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Veterinary Medicine, and other unique fields.

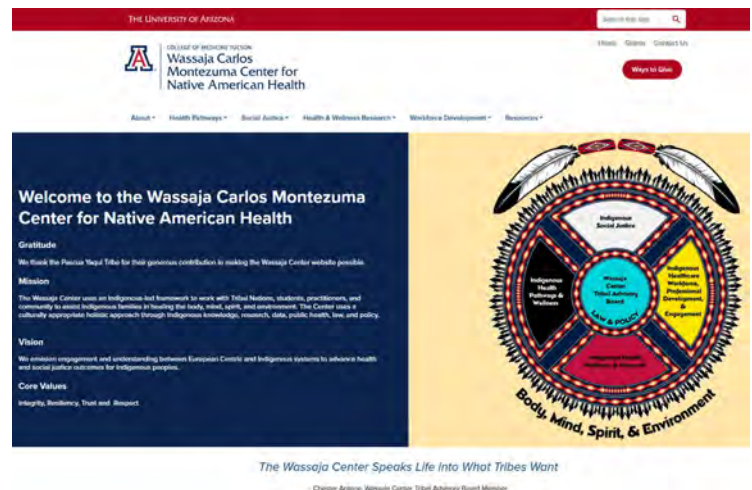
For additional Information please contact Jordan Upshaw via email at: jupshaw@arizona.edu

SCAN ME:





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About • Health Pathways • Social Justice • Health & Wellness Research • Workforce Development • Resources


Welcome to the Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health

Gratitude
We thank the Pima and Tohono O'odham Tribes for their generous contribution to making the Wassaja Center website possible.

Mission
The Wassaja Center uses an Indigenous-led framework to work with Tribal Nations, students, practitioners, and community to assist Indigenous families in healing their body, mind, spirit, and environment. The Center uses a culturally appropriate holistic approach through Indigenous knowledge, research, data, public health, law, and policy.

Vision
We envision engagement and understanding between European Center and Indigenous systems to advance health and social justice outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

Core Values
Integrity, Resilience, Trust and Respect



Body, Mind, Spirit, & Environment

The Wassaja Center Speaks Life Into What Tribes Want

© 2025 Wassaja Center Tribal Advisory Board Mission

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W.K. Kellogg Foundation
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 College of Public Health
 College of Nursing
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 Cooperative Extension - Tribal Extension Programs
 Native American Advancement & Tribal Engagement
 SALT Center
 Native SOAR



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 Tohono O'odham Department of Education
 Tohono O'odham Nation Healthcare
 Tohono O'odham - Environmental Health



2025 AIHP Report

Special Thanks to Our Partners:

Thank you to our Partners. Without you this wonderful opportunity would not be possible. Thank you for your support, effort, assistance, guidance in creating this opportunity for the American Indian community members. We are very grateful for the support, resources, and of course the financial assistance to create this program.



Pictures above are of Kellogg representatives Lauren King and Suzan Mason with participants from our Youth week. They stayed three days, they were able to participate in the presentations, cultural presentations; they work closely with the youth.



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