

# Cultural Grounding and Scientific Rigor: Intervention Adaptation in Indigenous Contexts

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## Training and Capacity Building

- **NCRE – Native Children’s Research Exchange (R25)**  
Mentorship and training pipeline for American Indian and Alaska Native scholars.
- **AIAN Health Certificate Program**  
Graduate training in Indigenous health research and policy.

## Network Science of Youth Relationships

- **TRACS – Tribal Adolescent Connections Study (R21, R01/R37)**  
Large-scale longitudinal social network study of AIAN youth relationships and substance-use risk/protection.
- **TNDRA – Teen Networks of Diverse Relationships in Alaska (Pilot)**  
School-based network study examining how youth connections shape exposure to violence, substance use, and suicide risk.

## Intervention and Prevention Science

- **Strong Man Trial (P50 – RP2)**  
Randomized controlled trial adapting the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) to support mental health among Navajo men

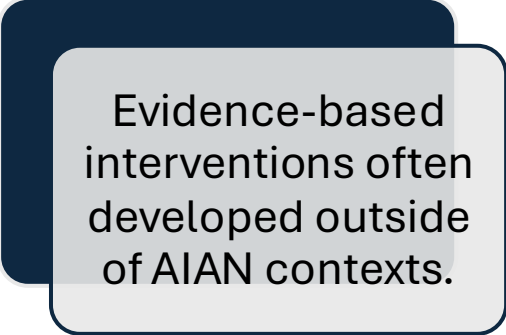


# Agenda


- Cultural Adaptations
  - Frameworks for cultural adaptations
  - Case study – Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man)
  - Considerations
  - Get involved
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# Core tensions of cultural adaptation work



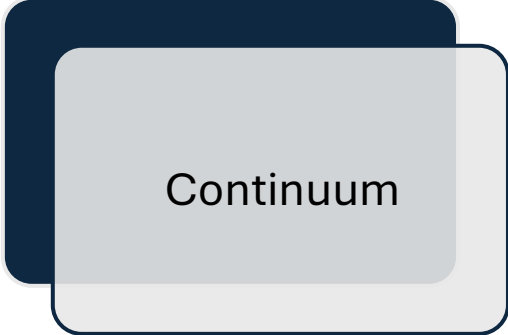
Evidence-based interventions often developed outside of AIAN contexts.



Transportability assumptions rarely hold



Fidelity vs fit



Continuum

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# Fidelity vs Fit



## **Fidelity**

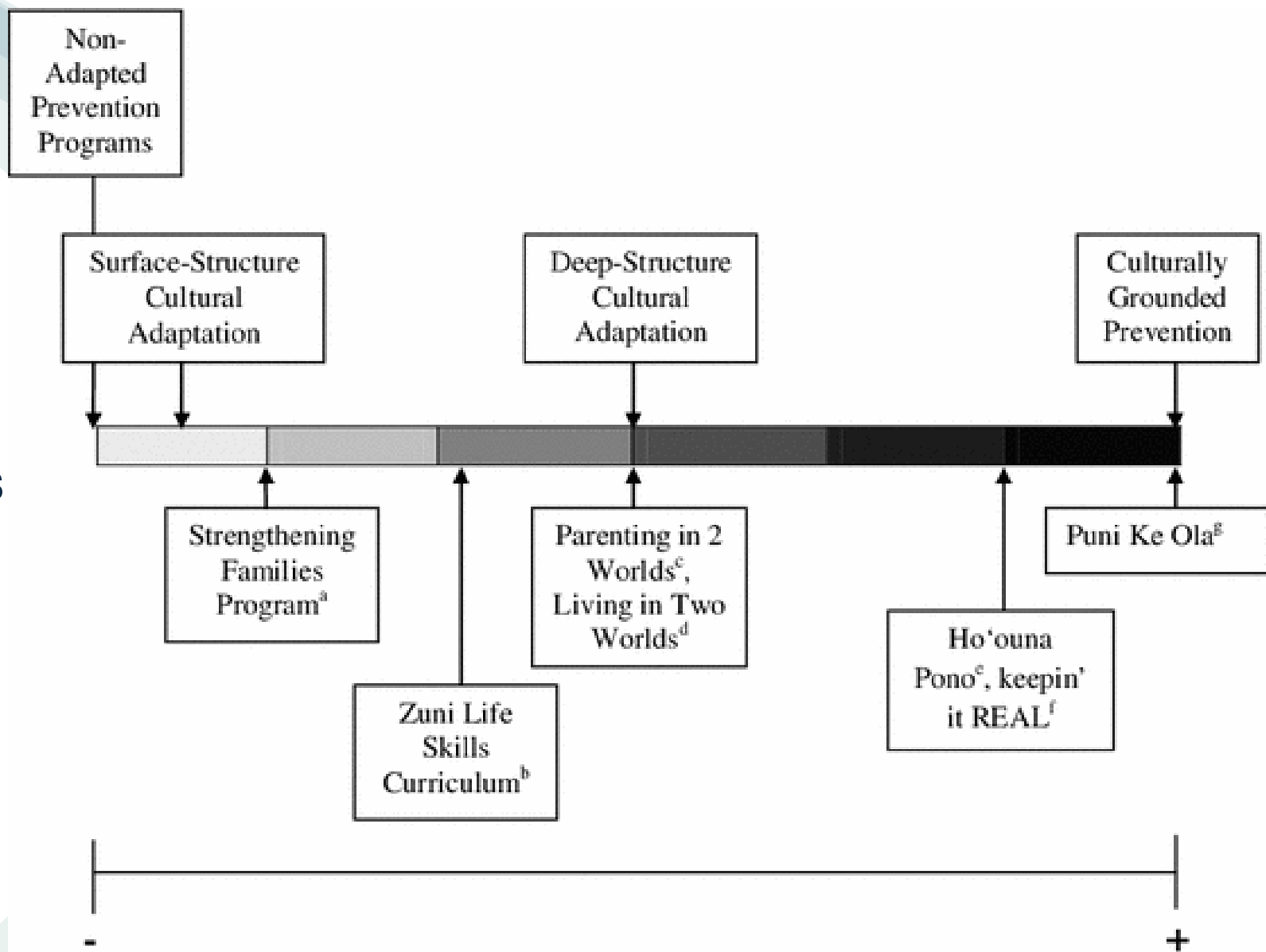
Preserving core components



## **Fit**

Cultural and contextual alignment

Continuum approaches  
of Adaptation –  
Okamoto et al. 2015



# Existing Adaptation Frameworks

ADAPT-ITT

- Wingood & DiClemente, 2008

FRAME (Stirman  
et al., 2019)

- Reporting of adaptations

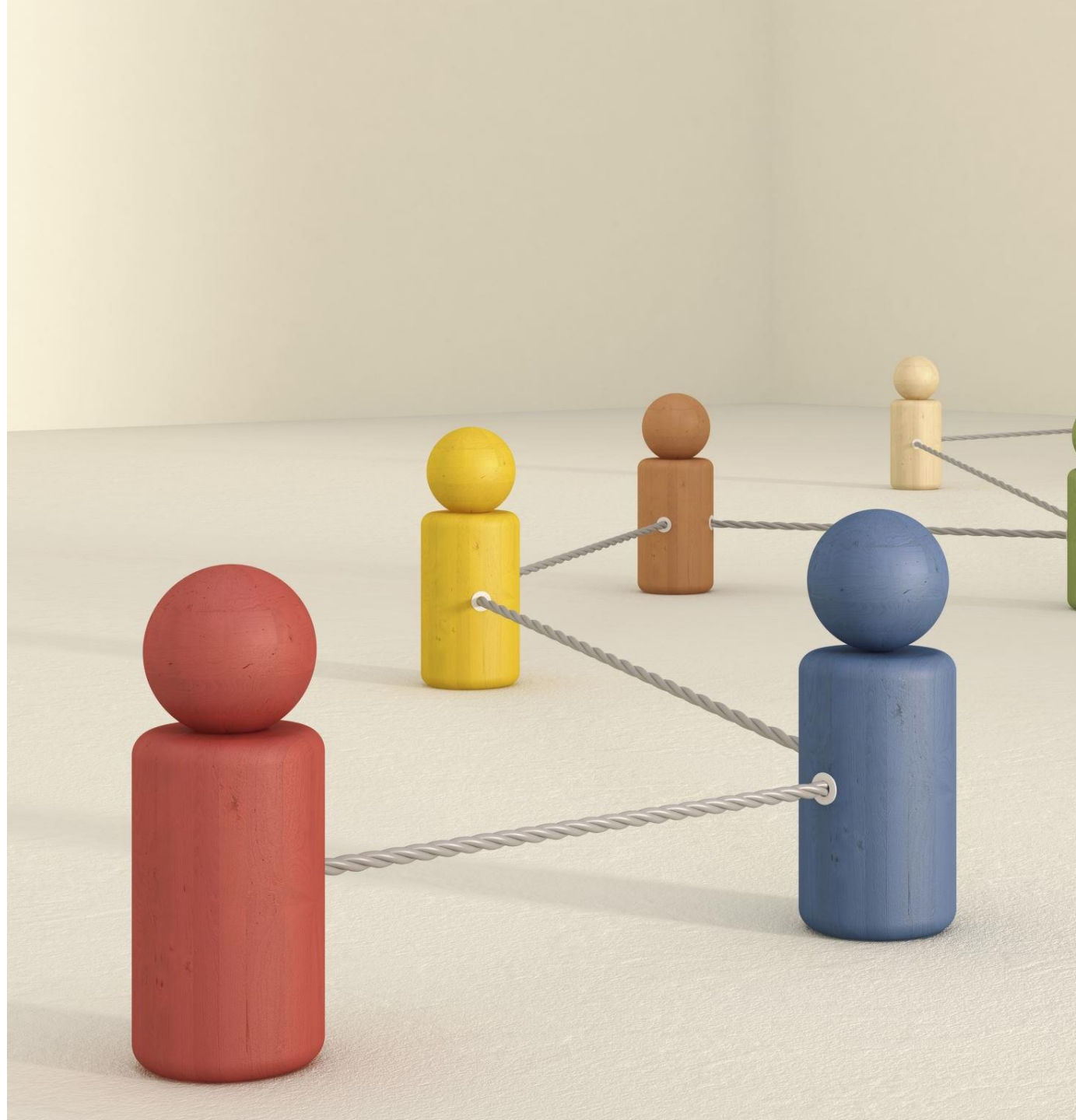
Many More –  
Scoping review

- Leung et al., 2025

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## Limitations in Indigenous Contexts

- Processes often depicted in linear steps and not relational
- Limited to no emphasis on sovereignty, governance, or history
- Scholars have little available information on the role of community authority across various contexts.



# Hastiin Bidziil Strong Man

A program by



JOHNS HOPKINS  
CENTER FOR  
INDIGENOUS HEALTH

In partnership with



CETA

Navajo Children's Research Exchange  
September 18-19, 2025

Title: Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man)

IRB #: IRB00027710; NNHRRB# 24-513

Principal Investigators: Jennifer Richards & Jerreed Ivanich

Funding: NIDA P50DA058619

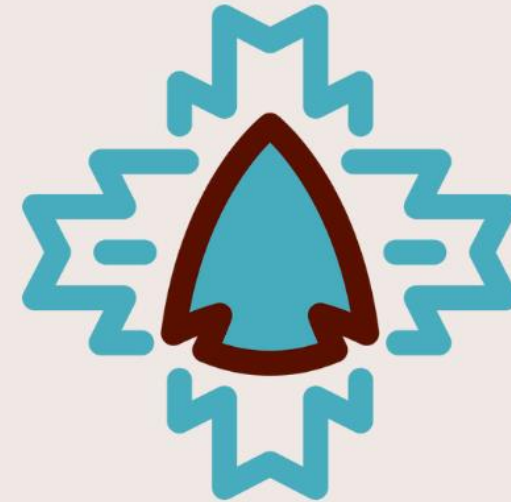


# Background & Significance

- American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) people experience highest rates of substance use-related mortality and morbidity than any other racial/ethnic group. This is a result of structural and social determinants of health that disproportionately affect AI communities.
- AI men have higher rates of substance use and substance use-related comorbidities and consequences than AI women and NHW men.
- While AIANs are disproportionately over-represented in health disparities, they are under-represented in availability of mental health and SU providers, with an estimated 101 mental and behavioral health providers per 100,000 AIANs compared to 174 per 100,000 for NHW populations.

# Pre & Post Study

- Among participants (n=125), lifetime substance use was highest for alcohol (66%), cannabis (43%), amphetamine type stimulants (8%), and hallucinogens (8%).
- Participant < 25 years of age (n=12) lifetime substance use is highest for alcohol (42%), cannabis (42%), and hallucinogens (17%)
- Among all participants, past 3-month substance use is highest for alcohol (38%) and cannabis (27%).

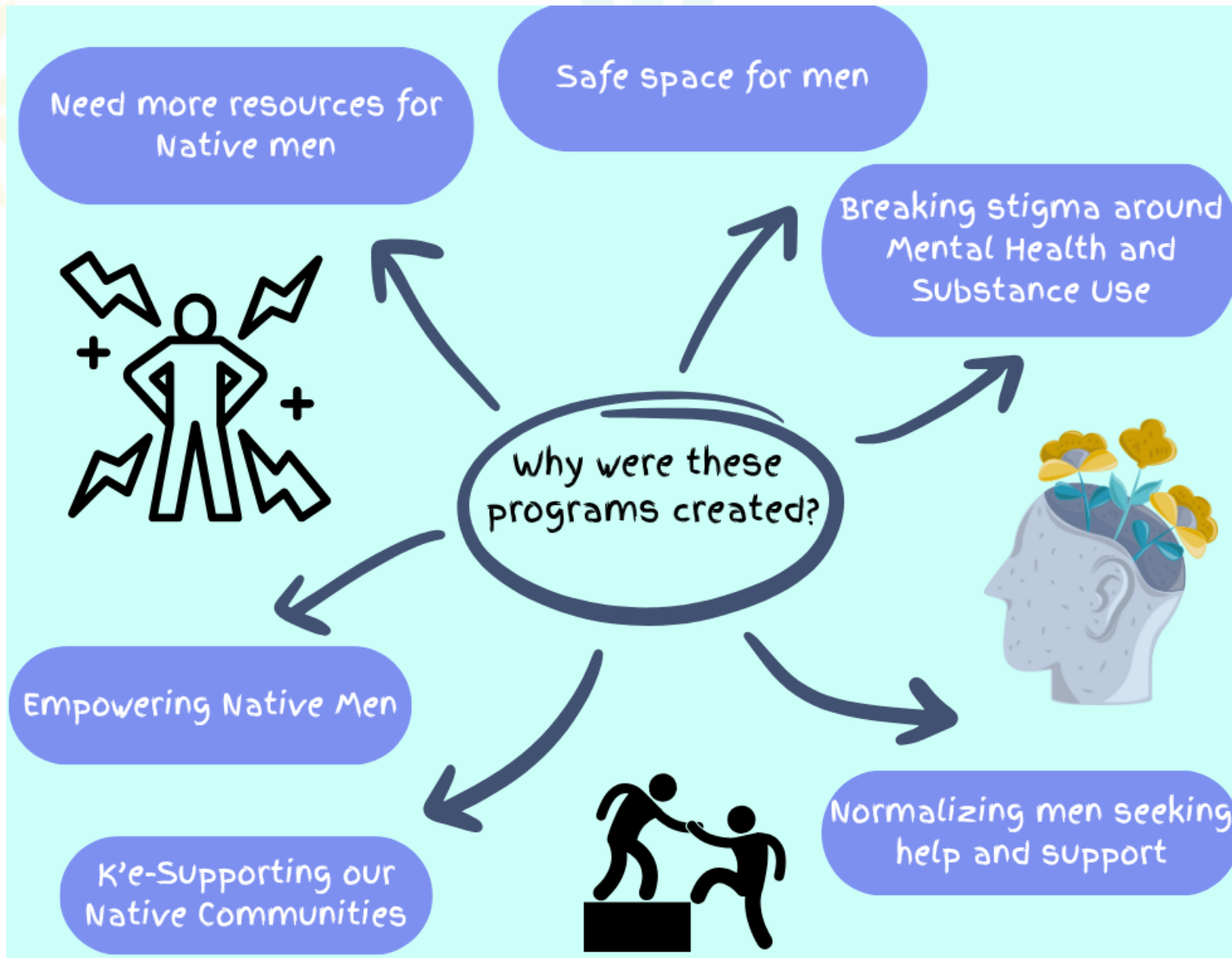


**Azhe'é Bidziil**  
Strong Fathers

This program was built to support Native father & father figures by:

- Promoting healthy relationships
- Developing work-seeking knowledge and skills
- Encouraging positive parenting

# A CALL FOR ACTION



# Study Goal

An intervention program to assess the effectiveness of a secondary prevention program (Hastiin Bidziil) aimed at reducing substance use among Native men between the ages of 18+.

# Specific Aims

## Aim 1

Adapt the Family Spirit Strengths/Common Elements Treatment Approach (FSS/CETA) and associated implementation strategies for young AI men, aged 18-26 years, resulting in the Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man) intervention.

## Aim 2

Determine the effectiveness of Hastiin Bidziil for reducing substance use among N=160 AI men (ages 18-26) using a randomized controlled trial design

## Aim 3

Explore mediators and moderators of Hastiin Bidziil, guided by CIRCLE's Indigenist Ecological System Model, to inform precision approach to implementation

## SITES: Chinle and Fort Defiance

## PARTICIPANTS

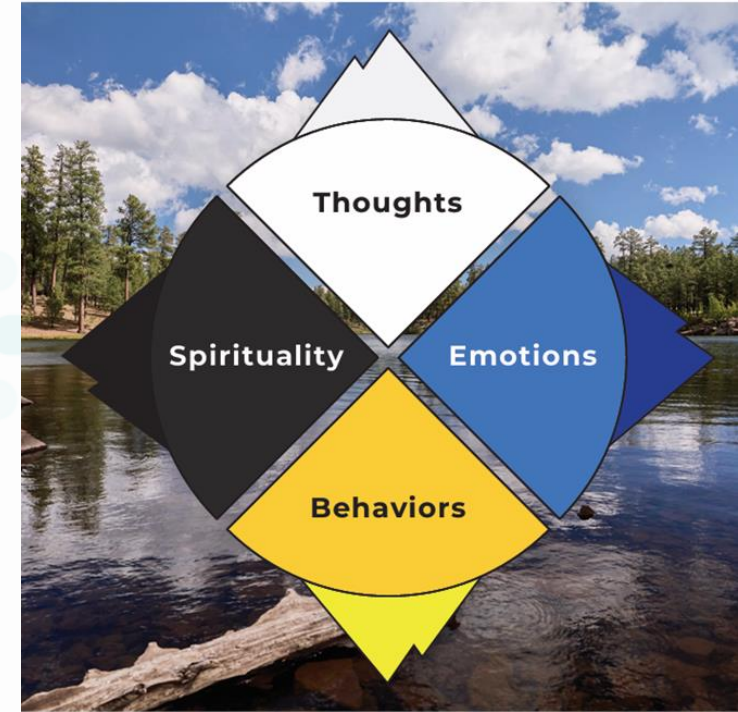
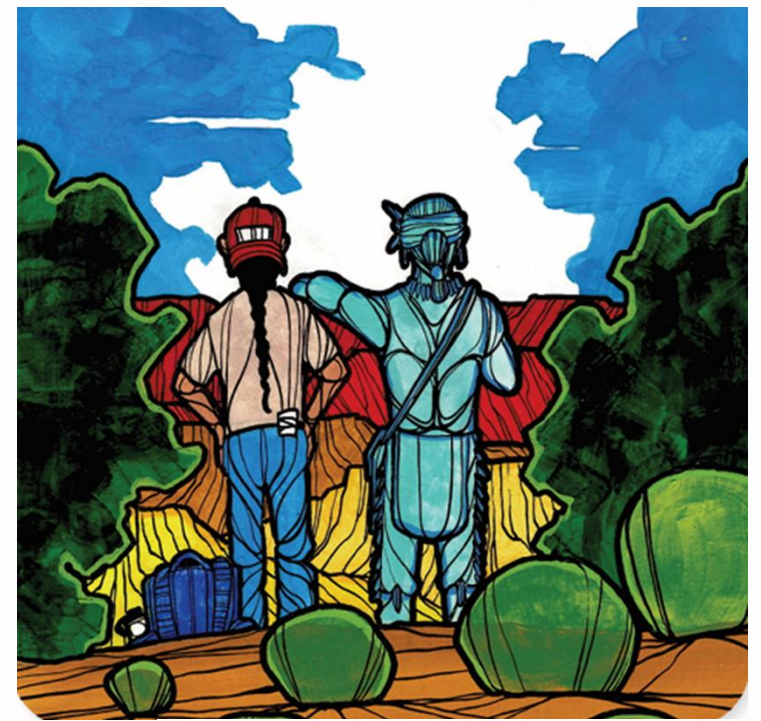
- ~160 Native Men
- 18+ years of age
- Screen positive for lifetime use of alcohol and/or other drugs.
- Live within a ~60 miles radius of a study site

## HASTIIN BIDZIIL (STRONG MAN) INTERVENTION

- 5-8 lessons (~1.5 hrs)
- Individual-based on a weekly basis
- Individual social support visits
- Topics: Relaxation techniques, substance use reduction goal setting, problem solving, identify mood improving activities, etc.

## BASIC VEHICLE MAINTENANCE-CONTROL

- 4 workshops (~1 hr)
- Group based on a weekly basis
- Individual social support visits
- Topics: Winterizing your vehicle, fluid check, oil change.



# Intervention Group

Together on the Learning Journey

- Establishing rapport, building relationship, understanding trauma

Thinking in a Different Way

- Changing unhelpful thoughts to helpful thoughts, understanding connection between thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and spirituality.

Walking in Balance and Harmony

- Substance use reduction, goal setting, learning skills to reduce substance use, developing plan.

Finding Connection

- Aimed at addressing depressive symptoms, identifying activities to improve mood, develop plan to practice activities.

Getting on a Good Path

- Problem solving. Identifying problems and using step by step approach to solving them.

Relaxation

- Aimed at addressing anxiety symptoms. Identifying relaxation activities to reduce anxiety symptoms. Practice relaxation skills (deep breathing, imagery, progressive muscle relaxation techniques).

# Control Group

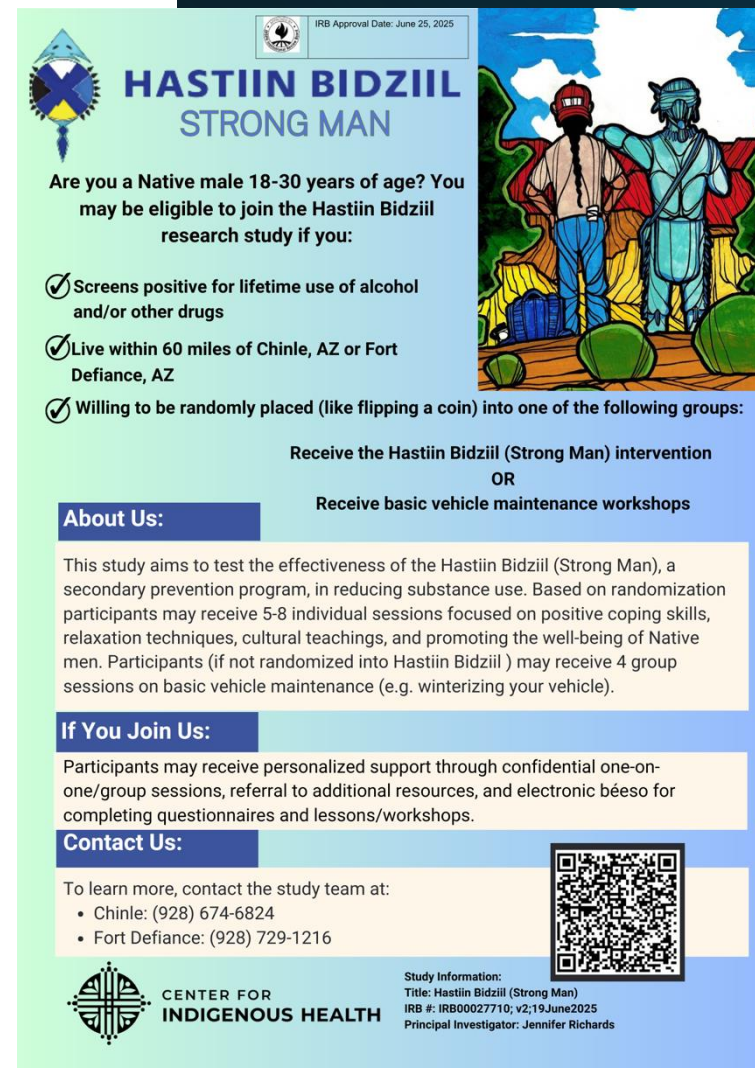
## Basic Vehicle Maintenance

- CRC chosen control condition
- 4 workshops
- Weekly/Bi-weekly
- 1 hour
- Group sessions
- May receive intervention as service (non-research) upon completion of the control group.

Vehicle Maintenance	
Workshop 1	<p>Introduction to Automotive Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic Tools and Equipment (30 minutes)</li><li>• Know Your Vehicle (30 minutes minutes)</li></ul>
Workshop 2	<p>Basic Engine Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engine Components and Operation (10min)</li><li>• Cooling and Lubrication Systems (10min)</li><li>• Oil Change (40min)</li></ul>
Workshop 3	<p>Vehicle Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changing Windshield Wiper Blades (15min)</li><li>• Battery, Starting, and Charging Systems (20min)</li><li>• Adding Fluids (10min)</li><li>• Checking Air Filter Procedures (15min)</li><li>• Basic Vehicle Maintenance Schedule (20 minutes)</li></ul>
Workshop 4	<p>Tire System and travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tires and Wheel Inspection (20 minutes)</li><li>• Preparing travel check list (20 minutes)</li><li>• Winterizing Vehicle and Roadside Emergencies (20 minutes)</li></ul>

# Eligibility Criteria

- Self-identify as AIAN
- Self-identify as male
- Age 18+ years at time of enrollment
- Screen positive for lifetime use of alcohol and/or other drugs.
- Reside within ~60 miles of a study community (Fort Defiance, AZ; Chinle, AZ)



The flyer is titled "HASTIIN BIDZIIL STRONG MAN" and includes an IRB approval date of June 25, 2025. It features a logo on the left and a colorful illustration of two men on the right. The text is organized into sections: eligibility criteria, intervention options, an "About Us" section, an "If You Join Us" section, and a "Contact Us" section with a QR code. The footer contains the Center for Indigenous Health logo and study information.

IRB Approval Date: June 25, 2025

## HASTIIN BIDZIIL STRONG MAN

Are you a Native male 18-30 years of age? You may be eligible to join the Hastiin Bidziil research study if you:

- ✓ Screens positive for lifetime use of alcohol and/or other drugs
- ✓ Live within 60 miles of Chinle, AZ or Fort Defiance, AZ
- ✓ Willing to be randomly placed (like flipping a coin) into one of the following groups:

Receive the Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man) intervention  
OR  
Receive basic vehicle maintenance workshops

**About Us:**

This study aims to test the effectiveness of the Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man), a secondary prevention program, in reducing substance use. Based on randomization participants may receive 5-8 individual sessions focused on positive coping skills, relaxation techniques, cultural teachings, and promoting the well-being of Native men. Participants (if not randomized into Hastiin Bidziil ) may receive 4 group sessions on basic vehicle maintenance (e.g. winterizing your vehicle).


**If You Join Us:**

Participants may receive personalized support through confidential one-on-one/group sessions, referral to additional resources, and electronic béeso for completing questionnaires and lessons/workshops.

**Contact Us:**

To learn more, contact the study team at:

- Chinle: (928) 674-6824
- Fort Defiance: (928) 729-1216



**Study Information:**  
Title: Hastiin Bidziil (Strong Man)  
IRB #: IRB00027710; v2;19 June 2025  
Principal Investigator: Jennifer Richards

**CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS HEALTH**

# Challenges

- Slow enrollment due to stigma around mental health and substance use
- Referrals for ineligible participants (outside of age range)
- Difficulty screening with ASIST tool
- Hard to reach target population
- Outreach materials not appealing to target audience
- Difficulty establishing clinic partnerships
- Difficulty implementing the Timeline Follow-Back in REDCap as a self-report



# Adjustments

- Expanding age range (18-26 years to 18-30 years to 30+)
- Talking circle with target audience to identify strategies
- Updated flyer – more white space, using casual terms for SU
- Shortened screener from 8-items to 3-items (focus is now on lifetime use of substances)
- Recruitment/outreach strategies – casual clothes, business card with QR code, immediate enrollment scheduled after positive screen, targeted recruitment events, one-on-one approach to potential participants

# Adaptation lessons learned



Adaptations are ongoing



Community is not just a stakeholder



Rigor requires time and transparency



Relational world



Tension is productive

# Practical Steps

## Start

- Start with relationships, not intervention



## Define

- Define core components early



## Build

- Build adaptation tracking into design

# Questions to Ask Yourself

Who defines success?

What is non-negotiable?

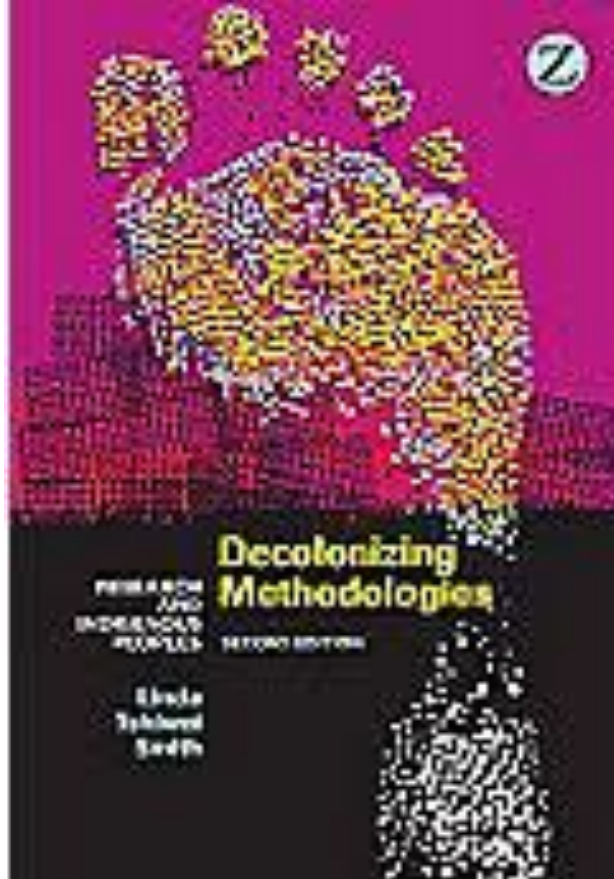
What is being assumed?



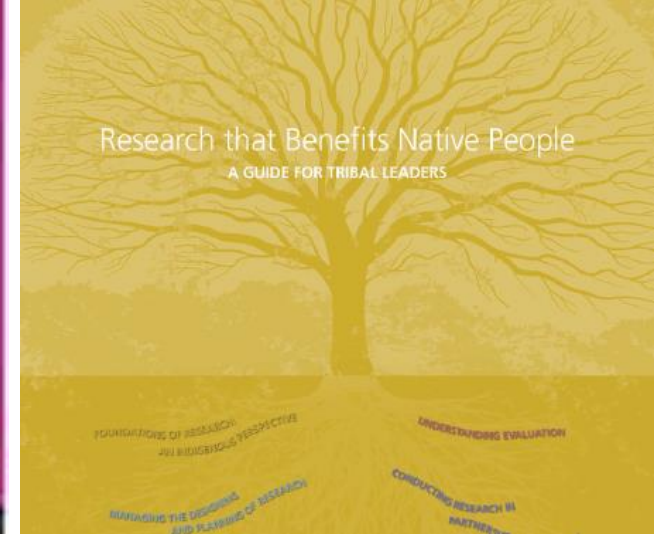
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# Ways to Improve AI/AN Health

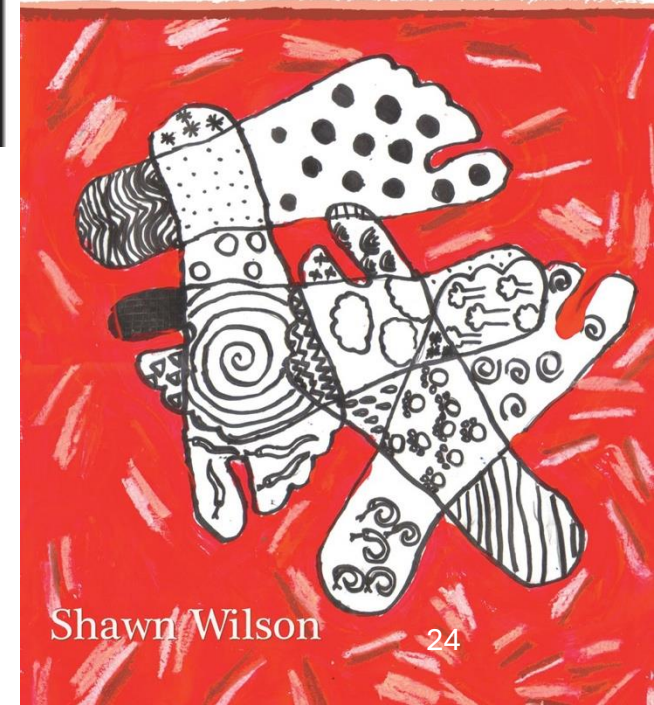
- Utilize tribal participatory research approaches
  - Uniqueness of tribal communities
- Increase tribally-driven research
  - Tribal Sovereignty
- Increase tribal research oversight (IRBs, RRBs)
- Increase funding
- Increase training for AI/AN public health professionals



Strengthening Research that Benefits Native Youth



## Research Is Ceremony Indigenous Research Methods



University of  
Colorado's  
Certificate in  
American Indian  
and Alaska  
Native Health



# Certificate content



Ethics



Historical Trauma



Role of Culture



Health Disparities



Health Programing  
in Tribal  
Communities



Self-determination



Treaties

## Certificate in American Indian & Alaska Native Health

- Study online, on your time
- Learn from experts in the Centers for American Indian & Alaska Native Health
- Advance your career and gain specialized knowledge



[coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/cert-ai-an](https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/cert-ai-an)





(T'oyaxsut 'nuusm)  
**Thank you!**

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