



Center for American Indian Studies focuses on health, education

Ed Smith, research project coordinator, AIHREA; Renalda Yazzie-Smith, research assistant; Dr. Sean Daley, director; Maggie Davis, research assistant; and (not pictured) Sonya Ortiz, smoking cessation facilitator, are JCCC's Center for American Indian Studies staff.

When the American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance held its fourth annual health and wellness pow wow at JCCC in May 2010, more than 815 people participated in cancer, cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure, vision and lung screenings. More than 100 people were determined to require medical interventions, including one surgery performed within a week.

“The Native community is the most underserved population in the United States as far as health care,” said Dr. Sean Daley, associate professor, anthropology and director of JCCC's Center for American Indian Studies.

For 2011, AIHREA has scheduled a two-day pow wow May 6-7 in JCCC's GYM that includes arts, crafts, dance and drum competitions, healthy food and health screenings.

“To our knowledge, this is the largest pow wow and health fair in the country,” said Ed Smith, research project coordinator, AIHREA.

The Center for American Indian Studies at JCCC, located on the second floor of the Carlsen Center, is home to AIHREA and a staff of five — Daley; Smith; Sonya Ortiz, smoking cessation facilitator; and Maggie Davis and Renalda Yazzie-Smith, research assistants.

AIHREA is dedicated to the health and education of Native peoples and communities throughout the United States with three locations — JCCC, the University of Kansas Medical Center and the Four Winds Native Center in Lawrence. AIHREA is funded by federal grants, most recently the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities grant awarded in 2010, and in-kind services from KUMC and JCCC.

The arching AIHREA goal is to ascertain and address the health needs of American Indians, especially targeting smoking cessation through the All Nations Breath of Life smoking cessation program and prevention of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer and asthma.

“In our pilot study, we had a smoking quit-rate of 25 percent at six months,” Daley said. “Most national programs feel successful with an 8 percent quit-rate.”

Daley attributes the success of the All Nations Breath of Life program to its differentiation of tobacco's ceremonial and spiritual use versus recreational use. First targeted to adults, 18 and older, the program is now working with Native youth on smoking prevention.

JCCC's Center for American Indian Studies is working on a bridge program that will mentor Native high school students starting their junior year in order to prepare them for JCCC



A bookshelf in the Center for American Indian Studies.

and then toward four-year institutions. KUMC will provide peer tutoring and mentoring for students seeking graduate degrees in the health professions. The Center has agreements with several high schools in Kansas and western Missouri to help Native students enter the educational pipeline.

In 2010, AIHREA offered seven undergraduate scholarships to institutions across the United States and three graduate scholarships to conduct cancer research at KUMC in partnership with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Two AIHREA staff from KUMC come to JCCC one day a week as part of the program.

AIHREA offers summer internships for students like Davis, who attended the Kickapoo pow wow in Horton, Kan., completing health surveys with the Native population.

Service-learning students at JCCC have worked with AIHREA to complete a video showing three tribal members discussing cultural use of tobacco and created a cookbook for diabetics, aimed at the Native population.

Smith, who is working on a master's degree at KU with a focus on cultural preservation, is putting together a youth culture camp, training Native college students in traditional American Indian skills like bow and arrow making, quill work, herbal tradition and flint knapping. The college

students would, in turn, teach the skills to younger students.

"We want to instill the idea that knowledge is to be passed on," Daley said.

The Center is also looking at creating a CD collection of tribal languages, many documented as endangered.

Currently JCCC offers *Native Americans* and *American Indian Artistic Tradition*. Daley is working with the Native community, as well as JCCC faculty, to develop a couple of new courses and eventually would like to develop an interdisciplinary program in American Indian Studies.

"AIHREA is addressing needs that were brought to us by the Native community," Daley said. "Because the Indian community has shared their traditions with us, we have an obligation to return that gift. AIHREA is based on a reciprocal relationship. To me as an anthropologist in the 21st century, that's the way it should be."



Ed Smith says Native Americans traditionally balance mental, physical, spiritual and emotional health.



Dr. Sean Daley talks about how the Indian Health Service is underfunded at about 50 percent of its need.