

Adult Learning, Indigenous Students & Social Work Education

University of Alaska/Kuskokwim Campus
Bethel Alaska



RHS program structure



- Indigenous ways of knowing + relevant adult learning approaches
- Students take 34 college credits
- 1 week/month intensives: 2 academic years
- Students fly in and work all week at the college
- Each course has syllabus, textbooks, homework
- Employer support

RHS Courses

- Rural Counseling I and II
- Family Systems I and II
- Interpersonal Violence
- Case management
- Grief and Healing
- Mental Illness and Recovery
- Addiction counseling
- Practicum: 100 hours
- Community Change
- English
- Cross cultural communication
- Alaska Native Values
- Personal growth/development
- Math

RHS program components



- Community learning environment
- Elders in every class
- Holistic, culturally grounded
- Transformational & experiential learning
- Education toward social change/justice
- Connecting learning to self, family, community
- Safety, comfort, and trust

Holistic/Experiential Education



- Student's life experiences inform, clarify, and evaluate the learning of new material.
- Students access their emotional, spiritual, historical, intellectual, and cultural selves to engage course content and special care in program design supports this.

Elders hold classes together



- Elders are the living embodiment of *historical and generational healing*
- Role models of resilience and lifelong learning
- Elders provide cultural grounding, safety, wisdom



Personal & Professional Growth/Development



- RHS model allows for personal/professional/academic growth & development to be simultaneous and intertwined.
- Confidence to not only perform their work duties better but also to work with western agencies in a more empowered way.

Engaged Pedagogy = Empowerment

- Learning/Healing coterminous: Learning the curriculum in and of itself provides a measure of healing and too, the act of healing is itself a learning experience
- Students use the classroom learning community to critically analyze the most pressing social issues their communities face and investigate solutions.
- The RHS cohort, in essence, becomes a working indigenous community mirroring their home communities.

Outcomes



- 80% retention/graduation rate
- 75% of graduates continue to work in their fields in Alaska
- Graduates pursue sequenced higher education degrees: HUMS AAS, BSW, and MSW
- Meets ANTHC Behavioral Health Aid levels I and II curriculum requirements
- Meets certification for Chemical Dependency Counselor I

Academic Pathway



- HUMS AAS degree
- 27 of the 34 RHS credits count towards the HUMS AAS degree
 - CDC II, BHA II/III
- 10 courses/18 months
- Blended delivery
 - Intensive + Audios
 - Elders participate

- BSW degree
- 8 of the 10 courses from HUMS AAS count towards the BSW degree
 - BHA III/IV
- Blended delivery
 - Intensives + Audios
 - Elders participate



Western vs RHS contrast:

**Culture:
foundation,
integrated**

**Collective
learning, non
competitive**

**Everyone
learned from
everyone**

- *“It was the first time in any school I felt proud to be a native woman.”*
- *“I thought it was going to be more sterile. Past college for me was horrible. It was western and what I needed was a place to belong. I could never feel like I belonged.”*
- *“It’s culturally oriented. It’s Yup’ik. It’s for us. Other training or school...you can tell it is from another cultural background and so I just go through it, but it doesn’t impact me as deeply and I don’t share very much at all. I don’t feel a part of it.”*

KuC--RHS 2014 Graduates



Contact information



Diane McEachern, PhD, LCSW, MSW
UAF/Kuskokwim Campus, Bethel
Assistant Professor, RHS /HUMS cohort programs

- **Program Head: UAF HUMS AAS cohort**
Program Head: UAF Rural Human Service (RHS)

- **Email: dmmceachern@alaska.edu**

- **Direct line: 907 543-4597**

Toll free: 800 478-5822

Fax: 907 543 4527