

My project, "A History of the Indian Schools of Practical Nursing in the United States, 1935–1975," explores the origin and evolution of three federally-funded practical nursing programs for Indigenous students that operated out of Oklahoma, Alaska, and New Mexico. This project foregrounds the contributions of Indigenous practical nurses to patient care, examines the ways in which Indigenous people were able to mitigate colonial and bureaucratic forces and shape these programs, and considers the impact of these programs on healthcare within and beyond Indigenous communities.

I began this project during a postdoctoral fellowship affiliated with the Office of American Indians in Medicine and Science (AIMS) at Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences. The AIMS Office is one of many Indigenous-led entities that seeks to encourage Indigenous youth to pursue careers in the health and science professions while also addressing cultural tensions that can arise in the pursuit of such professions. As a direct product of my time with the AIMS Office, it is my hope that this research will not only further knowledge of these historical programs but also assist in present-day efforts to increase Indigenous representation in the healthcare fields.

During the first phase of this project, I focused on the earliest of the three practical nursing programs, which operated out of Kiowa Indian Hospital in Lawton, Oklahoma, from 1935 to 1955. I found that Indigenous women and their nations utilized multiple means to bring the program, and the nursing service that resulted from it, into better alignment with Indigenous realities and priorities. In addition, the Kiowa School led to a new category of worker in the US Indian Service, sparking a transition from two classes of nursing personnel (attendants and graduate nurses) to three (attendants, nurse aides/practical nurses, and graduate nurses). As nurse aides/practical nurses, Kiowa School alumnae were largely responsible for the bedside care of patients in subacute conditions and played an important role in addressing nursing shortages in the Indian Service. Further, the Kiowa School served as a model for other nurse training programs both locally and abroad. These preliminary findings will appear in an article titled "Nursing a School and a Profession at Kiowa Indian Hospital," which will be published by the journal *Ethnohistory* in July of 2026.

The 2025 AAHN H-15 grant facilitated data collection for the next phase of this project, which focuses on the Mount Edgecumbe School of Practical Nursing, a program for Alaska Natives that operated from 1952 to 1961. This phase of the project will continue to explore Indigenous influence on program development as well as the place of the program in the broader field of nursing. The Mount Edgecumbe School also offers the opportunity to explore the experiences of Alaska Native men in practical nursing because, unlike the programs in Oklahoma and New Mexico, it enrolled male students.

During the award period, I traveled to Juneau, Alaska, where I spent one week examining and photographing records held in the Alaska State Archive and Alaska State Library. I am still in the early phases of analyzing these materials, but they have already given me a better sense of contemporaneous health and nursing trends, particularly in Alaska. For one, the Mount Edgecumbe School developed at a time when there was a growing demand for hospital services in Alaska due to high tuberculosis rates alongside a shortage of hospital personnel. In addition, a new nurse practice in 1953 required that one member of the Alaska Nurses' Examining Board have connections with an accredited school of practical nursing in Alaska. With the Mount Edgecumbe School being the only accredited school of practical nursing in Alaska at the time, its affiliates assumed the role and were well-positioned to shape nursing policies in the territory/state. Early records also show that graduates of the Mount Edgecumbe School scored above the national average on standardized licensing examinations, which speaks to the quality of education there and the talents of its students.

The data I collected at the Alaska State Archive and Alaska State Library will assist in the preparation of an article manuscript and later chapter on the Mount Edgecumbe School for a book manuscript tentatively titled *Indigenous Schools of Practical Nursing in the United States*. University of Oklahoma Press has already expressed interest in this project, and I plan to have a formal book proposal ready for submission within the next year.