



Thriving Alaska Native Veterans: Translational Research for Health Promotion and Harm Reduction among Military Service Members

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Support & Disclaimer

- I acknowledge I work on the ancestral land of Troth Yeddha' home of the Lower Tanana and Dené people. Their stewardship of the land over thousands of years makes my work at UAF possible.
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- The researcher is solely responsible for the communicated findings, discussions, and implications and not of the funding source or affiliated institutions.

Situation

- Native Veteran
 - 47 deaths 100k PY (2004-2018; Mohatt et al., 2021)
 - VA evidence-based program available system-wide not tailored for AI/AN veterans or the communities in which they live (Mohatt, et al., 2022)
- Success in reducing suicide deaths among Alaska Native youth through promoting culturally relevant protective factors (e.g., Allen, Wexler, & Rasmus, 2021)
- RQ: How have Alaska Native Veterans successfully transitioned from military service to civilian life?



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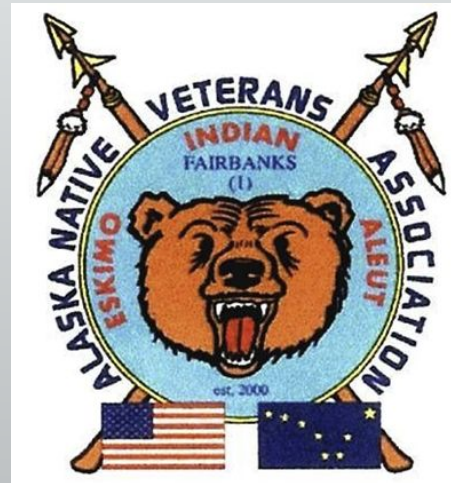
Approach



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- Theoretical Framework:
 - Protective factors and Mechanisms
 - Native cultural relevance
 - Lived experience
- Sampling
 - Interior Alaska
 - Conditions

- Data collection
 - Interviews
- Analysis
 - Transcripts
 - Whole-part-whole
 - Thematic analysis



Findings & Implications

• Findings

- Navigating adjustment challenges,
- Strengthening resolve through culture and traditions,
- Validating cultural identity,
- Preparing for the transition, and
- Appreciating Native identity.

• Implications

- Being Native could be isolating during service
- Those connected to Native culture and traditional practices may serve as a protective mechanism
- Services consider cultural influences to support transitions

Limitations and Lessons Learned

Limitations

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Access to Alaska Native Veterans
- Non-Native Investigator
- Omits significantly struggling Alaska Native Veterans

Lessons Learned

- Entry person/organization matters
- Native culture influences
- Rural Alaska continues to be challenging for accessing care and to access for learning

References

- Allen, J, Wexler, L, & Rasmus, S. (2021). Protective factors as a unifying framework for strength-based intervention and culturally responsive American Indian and Alaska Native suicide prevention. *Prevention science*, 1-14.
- Mohatt NV, Hoffmire CA, Schneider AL, Goss CW, Shore JH, Spark TL, Kaufman CE. (2022) Suicide Among American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Who Use Veterans Health Administration Care: 2004-2018. *Med Care*;60(4):275-278. doi: 10.1097/MLR.0000000000001656. PMID: 35271514; PMCID: PMC8923357.
- Mohatt, NV, Begay, RL, Goss, CW, Shore, JH, Kaufman, CE, & Hicken, BL (2022). A scoping review of veteran suicide prevention programs in Native American communities and in the general population. *Psychological services*.

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