

# The American Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (AMICA) Project: A Community-Based Approach to Adapting a Culturally Safe Dementia Screening Toolkit for Indigenous Communities

Presenters: Kala Cornelius, Carrie Trojanczyk, Cassandra Thomas, Sierra Skenandore  
Wisconsin State Alzheimer's Conference  
May 19th, 2026  
Wisconsin Dells, WI



---

---

---

---

---

---

## Learning Objectives

- Understand the rationale and components of a culturally safe and valid dementia assessment toolkit for Indigenous populations in the United States.
- Highlight the significance of a community-based approach and iterative process in adapting the AMICA Toolkit.
- Discuss applications and outcomes of the AMICA Toolkit in clinical and community settings.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Oneida AMICA Team



Carrie Trojanczyk:  
Project Manager



Dr. Kala Cornelius:  
Nurse Practitioner



Dr. Carey Gleason:  
Principal Investigator



Dr. Megan Zuelsdorff:  
Co-Investigator



Cassandra Thomas:  
Community Researcher



Dr. Nickolas Lambrou:  
Research Scientist



Sierra Skenandore:  
Nurse Researcher



Jonathan Bryan:  
Research Intern



---

---

---

---

---

---

# Acknowledgements

## Minnesota

- Dr. Kristen Jacklin, PI
- Dr. Melissa Blind, Project Coordinator overall
- Dr. Sheamus Cavanaugh, Red Lake Site Coordinator
- January Johnson, Community Based Researcher
- Alexis Mason, Community Based Researcher
- Dr. Lynnise Radovich, Research Manager
- Dr. Amy Otto, Senior Research Associate
- Brooke Metz, Communications Coordinator

## Wisconsin

- Dr. Carey Gleason, MPH
- Dr. Megan Zwickhoff, Co-I
- Dr. Nickolas Lambrou, Research Scientist
- Carrie Ann Trojanczyk, Project Manager for Oneida site
- Dr. Kala Cornelius, Coordinator & Nurse Practitioner
- Cassandra Thomas, Community Based Researcher
- Sierra Stenandone, Nurse Researcher

## Albuquerque

- Dr. Tassy Parker, MPH
- Dr. Nancy Panditi, Co-I
- Blake Boursaw, Senior Research Scientist
- Debra Garcia, Administrative
- Operations Director
- Rebecca Ovi Morgan, Community Based Researcher
- Erik Kalkaska, Research Scientist

## Oneida Nation Indigenous Knowledge Advisory Group

### Consultants

- Karen Pitanewakwat, RN, Dr. Jennifer Walker, PhD
- Dr. Melissa Castro, Neuropsychologist
- Dr. Megan O'Connell, R.D. Psych
- Dr. Blythe Winchester, M.D.
- Dr. Kate Smith, PhD

The AMICA project is a five-year (2022-2027) grant awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with funding through the National Institute on Aging (NIA) (R01AG074231). The content is the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.

---

---

---

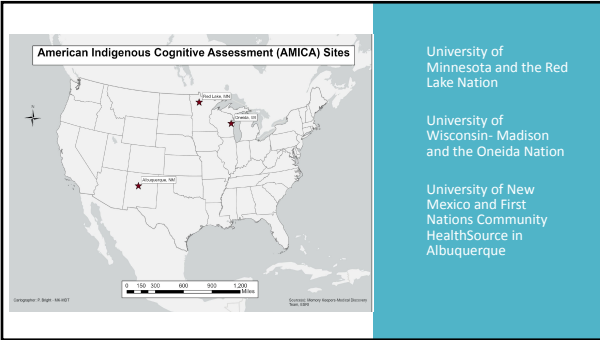
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Background

Why is dementia research important in Indigenous communities...

---

---

---

---

---

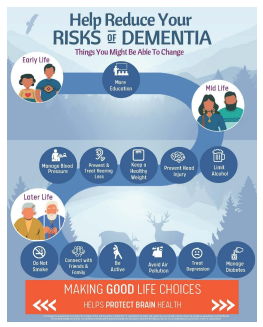
---

---

---

## Rates

- **1 in 3** Indigenous elders 65+ are projected to develop dementia (compared to 1 in 9 from the general population), with a 10 year earlier onset compared to white populations
- **1 in 6** American Indians and Alaska Native people 45 and older report problems with their memory that have gotten worse in the last year



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Disparities

- Current cognitive assessments are not culturally relevant and can lead to misdiagnosis or under diagnosis
- Mistrust in the healthcare system and research d/t negative historical experiences
- Limited access to appropriate dementia related treatment and services

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## AMICA Goals

What we intend to do and how...

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## AMICA Project Aims

- Develop a culturally appropriate dementia evaluation **toolkit** to be used in American Indigenous communities.
- Improve Indigenous brain health in present and **future generations** with earlier detection and increased awareness.

A Cognitive Assessment

Interview of Symptoms of Dementia

Evaluation of Depression Symptoms

Medical History Questionnaire

Inventory of Changes in Activities of Daily Living

---

---

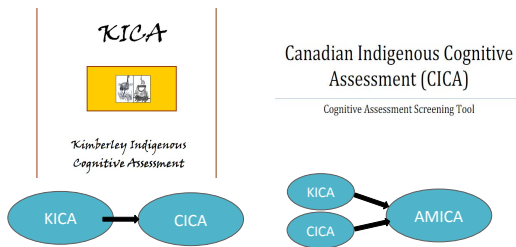
---

---

---

---

## Adaptation of Existing Indigenous Tools



---

---

---

---

---

---

## Logistics

How we will reach our goals...

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CBPR Approach

Two Eyed Seeing

Strength Based vs Deficit based

Community Members as IKAG Development

---

---

---

---

---

---

## IKAG Members Across Each Site



Each site has 5-8 respected members of their community who have an understanding their culture and language

- Oneida, WI: Haudenosaunee
- Albuquerque, NM: Urban Indigenous population
- Red Lake, MN: Ojibwe

Review and examine current assessments (CICA/KICA)

Discuss adaptations needed to make tools culturally safe and appropriate to use with Indigenous older adults

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Assessment Expert Panel (AEP)



Adaptation and AEP working group meeting January 2024

AEP includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts:

- Geriatric and Family medicine
- Medical Anthropology
- Neurology
- Epidemiology
- Nursing

Provide clarification to any questions asked by the IKAGs



Ensure adapted questions are accurately assessing the part of the brain they are intended to

---

---

---

---

---

---

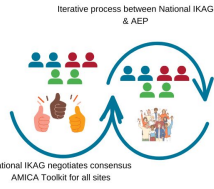
## Building Consensus Across Groups



AMICA Team retreat with National IKAG Albuquerque, NM, Sept 9-13, 2024

### Bringing together a National IKAG.

- 2 nominated IKAG members from each site.
- Purpose of meeting – Develop one common set of tools for all sites (if possible).
- Lots of time for discussion and consensus building.
- Two in person meetings, along with Zoom meetings.



---

---

---

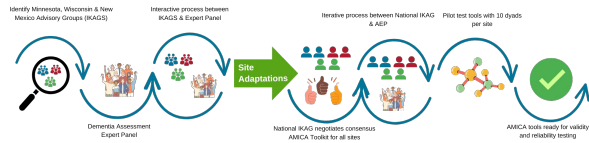
---

---

---

---

## AMICA Phase 1: 2022-2026



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Interactive Activity

Sample of Demographics questions: practice with a partner

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Results

Accomplishments thus far...

---

---

---

---

---

## Oneida IKAG Site Specific



Recruitment process of members: respected members of the community with traditional knowledge and language expertise



In person meetings: with full UW Oneida team for field notes and facilitation

---

---

---

---

---

## Oneida IKAG Unexpected Outcomes



---

---

---

---

---

## AMICA Toolkit Ready for Pilot!



AMICA Team retreat with National IKAG Tempe, AZ, Feb 24-28, 2025

Adapted following tools using this process

Person Being Assessed	Caregiver
Cognitive Assessment	
Medical History	Medical History
Smoking / Alcohol History	Smoking /Alcohol History
	Cognitive Informant Report
	Behavioral Report
Depression	
Activities of Daily Living	Activities of Daily Living

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## AMICA Toolkit Pilot!

- 10 Dyads over 2-3 weeks
- Data pending...

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Next Steps

What we plan to do in the near future...

---

---

---

---

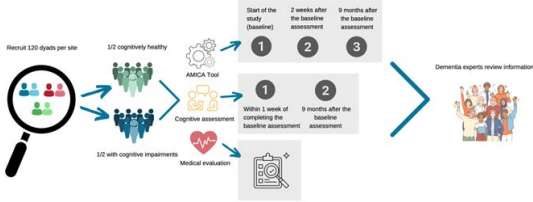
---

---

---

---

## AMICA Phase 2 Validation: 2026-2027




---



---



---



---



---

## Implementing the Toolkit in Practice

### Who

- Community Health Workers
- Loved ones
- Caretakers
- Clinicians

### Where

- Community Health Centers
- Nursing homes
- In home
- Community gathering spaces

---



---



---

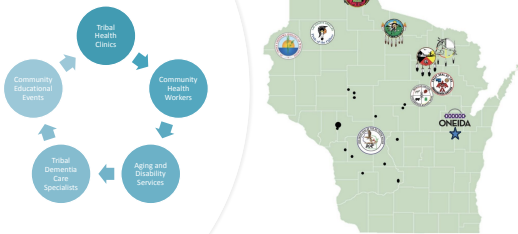


---



---

## Local Implementation




---



---



---



---



---

## AMICA Grant Renewal

Continue our work into 2028

Toolkit trainings, manuscripts, scientific presentations

Indigenous Behavioral and Cognitive Symptoms (IBACS) Checklist, TBD Summer 2026

---

---

---

---

---

## Interactive Activity

How would you implement this toolkit in practice?

---

---

---

---

---



[Home](#) [About Us](#) [AMICA](#) [Contact](#)

Addressing Alzheimer's Disease  
and Related Dementias Disparities

# AMICA

The American Indigenous  
Cognitive Assessment

More information about AMICA: [www.amicatoolkit.com](http://www.amicatoolkit.com)

---

---

---

---

---