



spring 2022 press release

# RISK AND RESILIENCE AMONG FAMILIES IN URBAN AI/AN COMMUNITIES: THE ROLE OF YOUNG ADULTS



Alina I. Palimaru

Ryan A. Brown

Virginia Arvizu-Sanchez  
*Tongva, Kumeyaay, Apache*

Lynette Mike  
*Paiute and Miwok*

Kathleen Etz

Carrie L. Johnson  
*Wahpeton Dakota*

Daniel L. Dickerson  
*Inupiaq*

Elizabeth J. D'Amico

## SUMMARY

Urban American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) young adults and their families often live far from one another and/or experience challenges receiving social support from their tribal homelands. Because of these challenges, some urban AI/AN young adults may tend to feel disconnected. Young adults sometimes feel isolated and aren't able to participate in traditional activities or connect with their families or culture. The research we're doing looks at how having positive relationships with your family members and extended community can keep you healthy and help protect you against the risks of alcohol and drug use.

Our Traditions and Connections for Urban Native Americans (TACUNA) project has just released a paper that discusses these issues. We interviewed 90 AI/AN people from different tribes to get their thoughts on things like how involved they are with their families

and the different things they do to give and receive support from their parents, siblings, close friends, and their extended community. The young adults we talked to want to make connections with one another, have a healthy social support network, and be a source of health and strength to their families in both practical and traditional ways.

Those that participated in the focus groups talked about three important "circles" of family: immediate family

(parents and children), extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), and communal family (Elders, AI/AN community centers). For many participants, the communal family provided important resources for families, including access to AI/AN education, opportunities for participating in traditional practices and outdoor activities, networking, and services such as counseling.

Read the full article from the *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* on the TACUNA website at [tacunaproject.com/pressreleases](https://tacunaproject.com/pressreleases).

### PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

"My husband and I decided we weren't going to have alcohol or drugs in our household ... I can't control what other people do, but I can control what happens in my own home."

### PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

"I think there's a point where family is family, but you have to think about is this person good for me to have in my life? ... Things happened in our lives where we had to say: they're family but we can't keep going through this."

