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Students Participate in University-Reservation Partnership with Catawba Indian Nation

Winthrop University

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Students Participate in University-Reservation Partnership with Catawba Indian Nation

Quick Facts

- Students were trained in culturally-sensitive data collection, the Catawba Indian Nation culture and history, tribal government, and how to conduct biopsychosocial interviews.
- Winthrop students said the experience enhanced their understanding of issues related to aging, challenged their initial preconceptions about the Native American community and improved their self-confidence in their ability to conduct home visits.



The students involved with the summer project are:

Front row, from left, Scott Somerville, Jenn Kramb, Jhane' Kirkland, Tanwanda Smith, Hannah Kennon, Annie Jones, Rankin Fraedrich, and Cassidy Hopkins. Back row, from left, Tammara Sweeney, Emily Herrmann, Hannah Fraser, Delanie Gaskill, Suzanne Robinson, Ashley Eason, and M. Bianca Prescott.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Fifteen Winthrop University students partnered with the Catawba Indian Nation this summer to conduct a needs assessment evaluation with its senior citizens.

During an in-depth training provided by the [Department of Social Work](#) and [Catawba Senior Center](#), students learned about culturally-sensitive data collection, the Catawba Indian Nation culture and history, tribal government, and how to conduct biopsychosocial interviews. Students also had the opportunity to tour the Catawba

Cultural Center, according to [Allison Gibson](#), an assistant professor in social work.

She said that the student researchers went door-to-door across the reservation and surrounding York County community over a three-week period in May and June to interview senior tribal members about their health, well-being and social engagement to better understand their needs. Nearly 400 **Catawba Indian Nation seniors** were contacted during this period.

While classroom learning on cultural competence can prepare students for working with populations outside of their own cultural identity, Gibson said that research has demonstrated that immersion experiences can lead to enhanced professional learning.

“Student learning outcomes improve significantly when students are given the chance to interact with diverse populations in field settings,” she said. “Further, such research activities have shown data collection projects enhance students’ interpersonal skills.”

During exit interviews, the Winthrop students said the experience enhanced their understanding of issues related to aging, furthered their understanding of research and program evaluation, improved their self-confidence in their ability to conduct home visits and facilitate biopsychosocial interviews. It also challenged some of their initial preconceptions about the Native American community prior to

data collection, Gibson said.

Student involvement in the project was possible due to funding support from the **Catawba Senior Center**, Winthrop University's **Research Council** and **Winthrop University's Graduate School**.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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