



# “It’s Cultural, Beautiful, and Creative”: Assessing the Impact of a Beading Project with the Hopeful Connections Alaska Native Cancer Support Group

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## PARTNERSHIP



Hopeful Connections is facilitated within a community-academic partnership between the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) and the UAF Center for Alaska Native Health Research (UAF-CANHR)



## INTRODUCTION

**Hopeful Connections** is a collaborative research and intervention support program for Alaska Native cancer survivors and their loved ones.

In addition to twice monthly support group meetings, members come together for **Bagels and Beading** to create beaded pins as gifts for other cancer survivors during the Fairbanks' Relay for Life (American Cancer Society). Beaded pin designs come from Alaska Native traditional styles as well as from each beaders' individual style.



For cancer survivors and their caregivers, cancer is a lifelong journey replete with challenges.

Engaging in creative arts has the potential to enhance health status and quality of life by facilitating coping, reducing stress, and restoring a sense of control, self-esteem, and connections with others.

## GOAL & AIMS

**Goal:** To evaluate the impacts and importance of the beading project over a six week period

### Specific Aims:

- Quantitatively assess beading participants' sense of mastery, self-esteem, social connectedness, and perceived stress
  - Achieved by administering a semi-structured survey at week 1 (Pre) and week 6 (Post)
- Qualitatively gain insight from participants about the significance of the beading group to their quality of life along with suggestions for integrating arts-based opportunities into cancer support initiatives.
  - Achieved by conducting a 1-hour focus group

## ETHICS

- All materials and procedures were approved by the Fairbanks Native Association and the UAF-Institutional Review Board
- Participants provided informed consent
- Participants were offered \$15 for each data collection activity



## RESEARCH DESIGN & PROCESS

**Design:** Quasi-experimental, single (pre-post intervention) group, using mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative)

### Participant Observation

Initiated 2 weeks prior to data collection and continued throughout 6-week study, with the purpose of further informing the study by:

- Becoming familiar with culture and processes of the beading group
- Listening to topics discussed during beading sessions
- Participating in beading activities



### Quantitative Survey (Aim 1)

Pre-Post semi-structured survey comprised questions relating to participant demographics, their beading experiences, and standardized measures:

- Sense of Mastery Scale<sup>1</sup>
- Self-Esteem Scale<sup>2</sup>
- Social Connectedness Scale<sup>3</sup>
- Perceived Stress Scale<sup>4</sup>



### Qualitative Focus Group (Aim 2)

Focus group provided for participants a forum to:

- Learn and co-interpret survey results
- Share in-depth perspectives about beading project
- Provide suggestions for future programs and research



## RESULTS & FINDINGS

### Participant Demographics (N=9)

<b>Gender</b>		
Female	8	
Male	1	
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Range, Avg.	43-69, 59	
<b>History with Cancer</b>		
Survivor	4	
Caregiver	3	
Family/Friend	9	

### Participant Beading History (N=9)

<b>Years as Beader</b>		
Range, Avg.	1-40, 16	
<b>Learned Beading from:</b>		
	Family (Aunties, Mom, Grandma)	
	Elders	
	Self-taught	
	Hopeful Connections Group	
<b>Beading Skill</b>		
Beginner	3	
Intermediate/Advanced	4	
Master	2	
<b>Reasons for Beading:</b>		
	Hobby/Enjoyment/Creative Outlet	
	Sell/Make Gifts, Help Others	
	Stress Relief, Relaxation	



### Aim 1: Pre-Post Survey

	Week 1 (N=9)	Week 6 (N=8)*
<b>Hours Spent Beading in a Week</b>		
Range, Avg., Median	1-40, 8.13, 3	1-24, 6.53, 2.42
<b>Sense of Mastery</b>		
(Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)	3.76	4.00
<b>Self-Esteem</b>		
(Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)	3.93	4.19
<b>Social Connectedness</b>		
(Agree – Disagree)	4.39	4.58
<b>Perceived Stress</b>		
(Never – Very Often)	2.48	2.48

\*Only 8 of 9 participants completed both pre and post surveys

### Aim 2: Focus Group Themes

Topics Discussed	Participant felt...
Reviewing results and interpreting their meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results on measures did not fully reflect the positive impacts of the beading group - although everyone experienced stressors, beading was viewed as a beneficial source of relief</li> </ul>
How can we better assess impacts of beading?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The beading project could be assessed before and after each session (instead of waiting 6 weeks) "We're used to filling out surveys."</li> </ul>
Suggestions for incorporating arts into survivorship programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The beading project was more than merely "beading," but was also a familiar cultural tradition of "caring and sharing."</li> <li>Beading could be incorporated into all support group activities, especially when it has a purpose – such as, Relay for Life!</li> </ul>

*From Pre-Post surveys, participants reported:*

- An (non-significant) increase in Mastery, Self-Esteem, and Social Connectedness
- Although participants described beading as a stress reliever, Perceived Stress did not change

*"I enjoy the close, comfortable, creative circles of healing connections people and group leaders. Good work vibes, good place to bead and become stronger again after cancer"*  
- Beader 6



## DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Participant observation revealed how beading sessions facilitated sharing about life stressors

- Example: When a participant lost her house to a fire, she still came to beading. This was not accurately reflected in the standardized measures

*Implication: Better measures are needed. Participants expressed willingness to help adapt and develop appropriate evaluation measures and processes*

Participants understood the importance of evaluating the beading project. They indicated their openness to completing assessments at each beading session to assess immediate impacts

Participants described beading as a means to "breaking down barriers"

*Implication: Consider incorporating beading into all support program activities – from the very beginning*

Participants felt that beading with a purpose (such as for Relay for Life) added to its significance toward healing

*Implication: It is helpful to integrate creative arts with an avenue for giving back and helping others*



## LIMITATIONS & STRENGTHS

- The small sample size (N=9) warrants caution when interpreting results and findings
- The qualitative findings did not corroborate the quantitative results, which suggests the importance of improving survey measures and data collection methods
- Triangulation of methods (participant observation, quantitative survey and qualitative focus group) gave the opportunity for a more complete picture of the beading project and its significance

## CITED REFERENCES

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## GRATITUDE & CONTACT

*We extend our deepest gratitude to:*

- Hopeful Connections Beaders ~ for sharing their wisdom
- UAF-URSA Program ~ for providing generous funding

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