

# REALITY-BASED RESEARCH

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A one-person account

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# Ways of Knowing.....

- “It is impossible to understand American Indians in their contemporary setting without first gaining some knowledge of their history as it has been formed and shaped by the Indian experience with Western civilization. Many of the customs and traditions of the past persist in the minds and lives of Indians today and have been jealously preserved over the several centuries of contact with non-Indians as the last remaining values that distinguish Indians from people around them.”
- Vine Deloria, Jr.

# My people's history is missing.....

- The history of America's original people existed long before contact with Europeans. Mainstream research lacks holistic, historical and cultural information of our people. Much of this unwritten history of Indian peoples still lives in their collective memory and oral history. The oral history must be included into innovative concepts of social research and program planning. This can lead to meaningful solutions to the social issues that challenge American Indians.

# The Culture of American Indians

- It's in our DNA
- Quest for Cultural Knowledge by Indians
- Know Where you come from, creation stories/spirit world
- Traditional Ways, based on cultural values
  - Language
    - Ceremonials
    - Sacred Songs
    - Legends/Stories

# History of Research on American Indians

- Research was done “**on**” Indians; not “**with**” Indians
- Research findings were seldom returned to Indian communities

Research data was repeatedly misrepresented.

Inappropriate use of research findings about American Indians. (Alaska, Arizona and other places).

- Indians were seldom involved in research project design

# What is Research?

1. A obtain information to question that need an answer
2. It could be a Hypothesis or a theory
3. Research to prove the hypothesis or support the theory
4. Secure information that clearly defines the issue.
5. Does research accurately define Indians?

# A Few Questions

- Why we are discussing research involving Indians?
- Indians: were they involved in forming the research project?
- What's the difference between mainstream society's research and American Indian culturally appropriate research?
- Do the terms Best Practices, Most Promising, Evidence-Based and Motivational Interviewing ring a bell?

# Public Policy; its relationship to Research

- Generally supported by a constitution, a finding of the courts or legislative acts.
- Supported by findings of social research.
- Such research may be known as “basis in fact.”
- In other words, research is as true as its information allows.

# Today, we address two kinds of research

- 1. The scientific paradigm of research (mainstream society).
- 2. Reality-based research (American Indian).
- Certain research methods are similar.
  - For example: talking circles and focus groups; key informant interviews are like personal Indian interviews, and analyzing transcripts for salient themes, using both methods are similar.

# The Scientific Paradigm

- Empirical evidence.
- Repetitive testing.
- Concrete and generally quantitative.
- Involves Peer-review
- Focus Groups
- Relies heavily on “published” literature.
- Linear, sequential and compartmentalized.
- Have conducted research on Indians for years.
- The research had little local impact on Indian communities.
- Commonly done by “outsiders” to Indian community.

# Reasons why Indians are Unique

- “Sees” the world through holistic lens
- Influenced by traditional ways that are couched in oral history. Indian ways not written
- Tend to be “relational,” e.g. would like to be communicated with personally; rather than via written, technological or media channels
- Indians are “transformational, non-Indians, “transactional”
- Recognizes the value of “extended family”

# Going to where the Indian is at....

- Indian information (RBR) comes more likely from internal, not external sources.
- The way the Indian “sees” the world is the Indian worldview.
- The “seeing” is based on the traditional values and norms that establish the “reality” of Indian life
- Indians possess a feature called “non-interference.”
- “Manifest Destiny,” not always the friend of Indians.
- Talking Circles are endemic to the Indian way of life.

# Reality-based Research

- Involves the people early on in project development
- Keeps such involvement throughout project
- Provides feedback to the people
- Sensitive to Indian oral history (since time immemorial).
- Content is couched in oral traditions
- Respects traditional Indian values
- Understands that Indians "see" the world differently
- Doesn't depend on literature for validation
- Reveals and incorporates the cultural situation of Indians into the research.

# Fundamentals of Reality-based

- Build trust
- Form relationships (be relational)
- Assure participation (validate effort with Indian people)
- Make every effort to bring findings back to Indian partners for review and/or approval
- Be willing to learn from the Indian people and their ways

# From Here on Out . . . . .

- Make sure Indians are involved very early in forming research project
- If you don't know; ask
- Strike up casual, informal conversations
- Work toward a common goal. If there isn't one, make one
- Be relational and participatory
  
- **CREATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS**