

Best Practices for Research and Evaluation that Benefits Tribal Communities

Building Research-Community Partnerships to Make the Most of the Home Visitation Programs

Nancy Rumbaugh Whitesell, Ph.D.

Michelle Sarche, Ph.D.

Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health
Colorado School of Public Health, University of Colorado Denver



Acknowledgements

- Tribal partners around the country
- Colleagues at the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health

Our Stories

Nancy

- Studying child and adolescent development for 22 years
- Working with tribal communities for 9 years
- Current work –
 - Partnering with Oglala Sioux Tribe to build tribal infrastructure for public health research
 - working with tribal Head Start and Early Head Start programs to evaluate and improve services for Native families (AK, CA, MT, OK, OR)
 - examining factors that contribute to early substance use to inform better prevention efforts with Native youth
 - sexual risk reduction interventions with Native adolescents
 - Native Children's Research Exchange



The “children” that inspire me

Our Stories

Michelle

- Clinical psychologist
- Studying children and families for 20 years
- Working with tribal communities for 16 years
- Current work –
 - Partnering with Midwest tribe to develop a culturally-based prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
 - Director of the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Research Center (ACF) – building partnerships to evaluate and improve HS and EHS programs for Native families
 - Native Children's Research Exchange
 - Interested in children's early development and supporting parent-child relationships through culturally-based interventions
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe tribal member



Research and tribal communities

Criticisms of Research in Tribal Communities

- “Helicopter” research
- Research driven by questions from the outside
- Inflexible approach based on western scientific ways of knowing
- Little benefit to the community

**Research
Question**

+

**Western
Scientific
Approach**

=

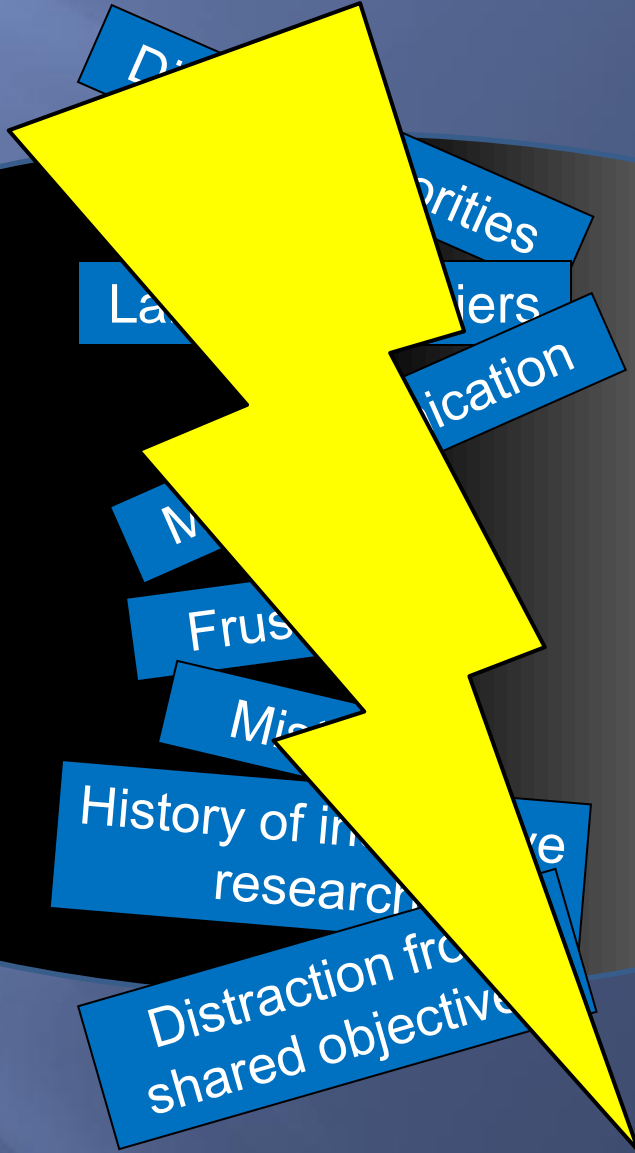
“Knowledge”



**Tribal
Community**

**Western
Scientific
Ways of
Knowing**

**Cultural
Ways of
Knowing**



D:
priorities
La
iers
ication
M
Frus
Mic
History of in
research
Distraction fro
shared objective

Research in Partnership with Tribal Communities

- Models for partnerships between communities and researchers
 - *Community-Based Participatory Research*
 - *Tribal Participatory Research*
- Research driven by community questions
- Provides information that is directly useful to community
- Western scientific ways of knowing working together with cultural ways of knowing contribute to shared success

Tribal Community

Research Question



Western Scientific
Ways of Knowing



Cultural Ways of Knowing



New Knowledge

How to make the partnership work

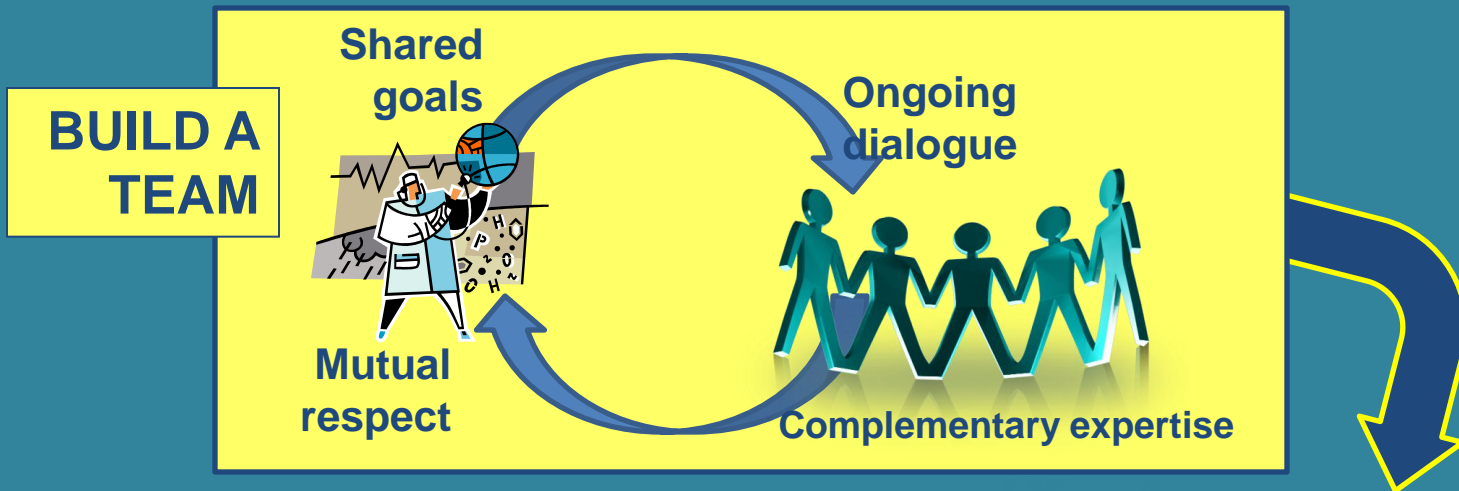
What researchers can do to support the partnership

- Be informed about tribal culture, norms, and practices
- Be informed about tribal protocols for research & follow them
- Work with community partners to identify questions that need to be answered
- Provide consultation on how research can answer these questions:
 - Consider what is feasible
 - Propose a research design
 - Propose research measures
- Work with community partners to review evaluation plan and change it based on what will work for the community
- Provide summaries of research progress and findings in straightforward language
- Seek ongoing input and feedback throughout the research process, making changes as needed to ensure success

What communities can do to support the partnership

- Help researchers understand cultural customs and practices
- Ensure that community stakeholders are represented in discussions
- Work with researchers to identify questions that need to be answered
- Consult with researchers on the research plan
 - Identify potential barriers to successful implementation
 - Provide input on procedures and measures, insuring a good fit with the community culture and language
- Assist researchers through the tribal approval process
- Help interpret findings in cultural context

QUESTION: How can the home visitation program work best in your community?



1. Identify what you want to learn from the research.
2. Design the evaluation (make a plan to answer your questions)
3. Carry out the evaluation (gather information about the home visitation program)
4. Analyze the data (look at all the information you collected to see what it can tell you)
5. Use findings to improve your home visitation program – make adjustments and adaptations based on reliable information.

Take opportunities to talk with researchers here at this conference -

- For advice on how to identify potential research partners
- For advice on how to work best with your research partners to make an optimal evaluation plan
- To share your thoughts on the challenges to tribal-university partnerships and how to overcome them

Contact information:

nancy.whitesell@ucdenver.edu

michelle.sarche@ucdenver.edu

