



# Community-based Participatory Research on Traditional and Commercial Tobacco Use

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**Northern Plains Tobacco Prevention &  
Cessation Symposium**  
**Rapid City SD**  
**May 18, 2005**



Linda Azure - Assiniboine/Nakota/Ojibwe

Jean Forster - University of Minnesota

Audrey Fuller - Dakota

Julie Green - Ojibwe - Gineu/Golden Eagles

Jennifer Irving - Lakota - University of Minnesota

Julia Littlewolf - Ojibwe

John Poupart - Ojibwe - American Indian Policy Center

Loretta Rivera - Seneca

Kris Rhodes - Ojibwe - University of Minnesota

Patty Thompson - Ho Chunk/Dakota - Gineu/Golden Eagles

Hope Flanagan - Six Nations

**Steering  
Council**

# Background

- Little useful information on
  - Why American Indians smoke more
  - American Indian-specific prevention
- Methodological, conceptual flaws limit usefulness of existing research
- Historical distrust between University and American Indian community

# *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Maori education specialist

University of Auckland

## Dominant research paradigm

- ❑ problematizes Indian culture
- ❑ takes research findings out of context
- ❑ generates knowledge for its own sake
- ❑ doesn't reflect knowledge of Indian community

# Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)

- ❑ Recognizes the community as basic unit
- ❑ Builds on community strengths and resources
- ❑ Facilitates partnership in all phases of research
- ❑ Integrates knowledge and action for mutual benefit
- ❑ Promotes a process that attends to social inequalities
- ❑ Recognizes a cyclic and iterative process
- ❑ Uses multiple methodologies

# Reality-Based Research

- Gathers information from a community perspective
- Uses culturally appropriate strategies for input
- Facilitates capacity building through self-identification of needs and concerns
- Creates the confidence and leadership skills to use the “power of information” effectively
- Provides updated information to non-Indians about Indian experiences, strengths, and needs.



## Partnership Timeline Phase 1

- June 2000: Ginev-Golden Eagles & University staff discussed possibility of partnership
- Dec 2000: Funding to develop partnership
- Jan - March 2001: 1-on-1 interviews to identify issues and SC membership
- May 2001: First meeting of steering council
- June 2001 - Nov 2003: Monthly SC meetings

# AICTP Steering Council

- Predominantly American Indian
- Final authority on all aspects of the research
  - Research questions
  - Protocols and instruments
  - Analysis and interpretation
  - Dissemination
- Opportunities to participate in all phases
- Financial resources shared
- Monthly working meetings

## Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement:

“Determine as a group what we need to know, how we can learn it, and how to use what we learn to reduce tobacco abuse among young, urban American Indian people.”



# Phase 1 Accomplishments

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- Looked at various research methods

## Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement
- Looked at various research methods
- Studied various types and uses of tobacco among different tribes



Indian  
tobacco



Red willow  
bark



Commercial  
tobacco

# How do Indians use tobacco?

- Smoked in a pipe
- Burned in a dish (like incense)
- Offered (put on the ground, buried, or wrapped in cloth and tied to a tree) to the spirits (of water, plants, animals, ancestors or the Creator)
  - During daily prayer
  - When harvesting food and medicine;
  - During storms;
  - To give honor to a namesake, clan, or sacred animal
- Offered to other Indians as a sign of respect
  - When you are asking them to do something for you (share knowledge, sing a song, prayer, healing, ceremony).



## Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement
- Looked at various research methods
- Studied various types and uses of tobacco among different tribes
- Developed research goal
  - Goal: to gather information needed to develop tobacco abuse prevention strategies for youth grounded in the culture and values of Indian people in the Twin Cities

# Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement
- Looked at various research methods
- Studied various types and uses of tobacco among different tribes
- Developed research goal
- Identified research questions:
  - What are the cultural strengths of American Indian community in the Twin Cities?
  - What are the tobacco-specific issues here?
  - How could cultural strengths address these tobacco issues?

# Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement
- Looked at various research methods
- Studied various types and uses of tobacco among different tribes
- Developed research goal
- Identified research questions
- Decided on a research plan
  - Elder talking circles
  - In person structured interviews of adults
  - School-based surveys of youth

## Phase 1 Accomplishments

- Developed a mission statement
- Looked at various research methods
- Studied various types and uses of tobacco among different tribes
- Developed research goal
- Identified research questions
- Decided on a research plan
- Conducted elder interviews (N=50)



“We educated each other -  
community members, service  
providers and researchers -  
about our cultures and values  
on many different levels.”

- Steering Council Member



“We have shown that people from the University and people from the community can work together if an environment of mutual respect and trust is created and fostered.”

-Steering Council Member



## Partnership Timeline Phase 2

- June 2004: Funded to do the research
  - MPAAT Community-Academic Research Award
  - 3 years



## Partnership Timeline Phase 2

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- June 2004-present: Monthly SC meetings



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- June 2004: Funded to do the research
- June 2004-present: Monthly SC meetings
- Summer 2004: Elder talking circles
  - 2 reservation, 2 urban



## Partnership Timeline Phase 2

- June 2004: Funded to do the research
- June 2004-present: Monthly SC meetings
- Summer 2004: Elder talking circles
- Oct 2004: Community event
  - “Honoring Traditional Tobacco”
  - Feast, leather tobacco pouches, tobacco seeds & plants, red willow bark
  - Elders telling their experiences
  - Collaborated with other community groups

## Partnership Timeline Phase 2

- June 2004: Funded to do the research
- June 2004-present: Monthly SC meetings
- Summer 2004: Elder talking circles
- Oct 2004: Community event
- Jan-Apr 2005: Adult interviews (N=300)
  - Ages 18-74, reflecting age, gender distribution
  - Administered by Native SC members
  - \$25 gift card
  - Prevalence of different types of use
  - Ideas for prevention of tobacco addiction

## Barriers to University Participation

- Colleagues don't understand non-traditional research paradigm
- Difficult to apply traditional research expectations to this collaboration
- Differences in cultural expectations and practices
- Funding

## Benefits to the University

- The opportunity to learn about and experience a new research paradigm
- Insight into urban Indian culture and traditions
- Knowledge and understanding that can be shared with public health practitioners and professionals

# Barriers to American Indian Participation

- Tobacco isn't a priority
- Negative experiences with researchers
- Traditional data collection methods are not ideal; like to have a social interaction before revealing information

# Benefits to the American Indian Community

- Opportunity to collaborate in a study of their own people
- Some community members will learn new skills
- More accurate reflection of the daily realities and the cultural strengths of urban Indian people

## Next Steps for the AICTP Partnership

- 600 surveys with Native teens
- Reaction focus groups to help interpret
- Share results with Indian community
  - Community feasts
  - Presentations to community groups
  - Data reports for community
- Co-author scientific papers



*“Some people carry tobacco all the time.*

*Sometimes I go outside and I do a lot of talking to my Creator too, like the old man did, especially if I’m troubled. But, I don’t smoke the tobacco that they have now. I put it in my hand and after I’m done then I lay it by a tree and bury the tobacco because that’s what they say; that it goes back to our Creator.”*

Ojibwe female, age 72.



*“People are growing lazy and complacent. It’s easier to go to the store and get Pall Malls or whatever ... The truth is that if you really want to show respect for ceremonies that are involved in sending a person off to the spirit world, you go out and harvest that asema. You are out there and praying. It becomes more significant then. You bring it back and set it out there in a bowl and then different people use it and they come to know it.”*

*—Ojibwe male, age 58.*