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Lessons Learned

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WHAT RESIDES IN OUR HEARTS LIVES ON

TAKU EYACHANTOGNAKA OWIHANKEYA WANICA

Tribal-Researcher Partnership Lessons Learned

The following highlights lessons learned from the Tribal-Researcher Partnership grant funded by the National Institute of Justice. The grant focused on building capacity between tribal and academic research partners while also exploring the topic of Native youth violence and resiliency.

- 1. BUILDING TRUST.** Establishing trust as a team does not just happen when you agree to partner on a project. Trust must be cultivated intentionally. Trust is most likely to be established over time and based on every partner having a voice and ownership in the research project. Critical to trust building is open communication, a recognition that many forms of expertise exist within the team and are valued, and deep listening must occur between members. Non-native researchers need to approach a project with humility and willingness to learn from Native partners on both the research topic but also culturally appropriate processes (e.g. making sure you have cultural supplies such as sage to smudge before starting a talking circle). Native partners may need researchers to review academic protocols and IRB processes. Creating ways to make space for everyone to learn from each other is important in establishing trust.
- 2. COMMUNICATION & DECISION-MAKING PLAN.** It is important to find ways for the team to share openly and create a space for difficult conversations. For our team, we used the software platform Miro to develop question prompts that everyone was able to anonymously respond to prior to our meeting. This allowed us to check-in with each other and talk about items that came up from the Miro posting. The first portion of each meeting was spent discussing the items that came up in our Miro boards. Establishing a plan for how a team will navigate disagreements in the project is also important. For us, consensus was desired to make decisions on the project. While this was consistently how we worked together, we had established a plan on who would be the deciding voice when consensus was not possible. This was our elder Native Co-Investigator.



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3. FLEXIBILITY IN MEETING FORMAT. Our team was working across tribal lands and across states. To build trust as a team, it was critical to meet in person, periodically. We used in-person time to get to know each other as people over meals. We also spent large chunks of time together to map out the project or work on next steps (e.g. planning workshops). Due to time and financial constraints, we could not always meet in person. Therefore, establishing regular meeting times for everyone to meet virtually was also important for meeting project deliverables and keeping the timeline moving. Making sure everyone knew the meeting items to discuss in advance helped respect team member's time.

4. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD. Academics working with tribal partners need to be mindful of required institutional review board (IRB) approval. In addition to university IRBs, when research is being conducted on tribal lands, researchers need to follow the protocols of each tribe for obtaining IRB approval. When research is being conducted with Native participants off tribal and trust lands, obtaining Indian Health Services (IHS) IRB should occur. Researchers should know that obtaining tribal IRBs can be a slow process. Extra time should be built into a research timeline to account for needing to obtain multiple IRBs (e.g. tribal, IHS, university).

5. INVOLVING THE NEXT GENERATION OF NATIVE RESEARCHERS. Research on tribal lands and with Native people needs to occur by and/or with Native peoples. In addition to employing community based participatory action research, hiring Native student researchers on a project provides a critical lens in which planning and implementing a study and collecting and analyzing data should be examined. Furthermore, including paid Native student researchers for their time and expertise is a way to mentor the next generation of scholars. We recommend this as a best practice in tribal-research partnerships.



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