

December 19, 2006

Panel Proposal Submission for the Native American Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma, Indigenous Studies Meeting May 3-5, 2007

PANEL OVERVIEW: Indigenizing Evaluation: New Tools and Techniques Grounded in Time Honored Traditions

This panel brings nearly 80 combined years of Indigenous evaluation to the academic community. Panelists represent the academic, community, and/or business sector. Through this panel, the diversity of evaluation in American Indian communities will be shared. Environmental Justice, education, human services, and health sector evaluations across Indian Country will provide rich data that will not only inform participants but transform homogeneous thinking of "one size fits all" for evaluation in Native contexts. Theory will be closely tied to application and will bridge the gap so evaluation is meaningful and useful. Real Indigenous evaluation tools that have been piloted in rural, urban, and Tribal reservation communities will be shared. Participants will leave with many human, organizational, and academic resources to begin or strengthen their existing understandings of evaluation in American Indian communities.

PANELIST 1: Decolonizing Research & Evaluation Through Critical Thinking Centers by *Dr. Michael Yellowbird, Sahnish (Arikara) and Hidatsa First Nations, University of Kansas, mybird@ku.edu*

Decolonization through research and evaluation studies is a journey toward liberation. Since the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is so deeply entrenched in the United States and Canada, most of us have never learned how to actively challenge the status quo. Most of the current institutions and systems, which often produce major research and evaluation studies, are designed to maintain the privilege of the colonizer and the subjugation of the colonized. This continually produces generations of academic researchers and evaluators who will never question their position within this relationship. Critical Thinking Centers, part of a larger decolonization handbook, will provide information and concrete strategies to help you learn about the meanings of colonization and decolonization within the context of research and evaluation. The presentation will discuss the importance of developing a critical thinking center or processes that can be weaved within your research and evaluation activities. Definitions of critical thinking, the four stages of critical thinking, barriers to critical thinking, and the phenomenon called "groupthink" will be shared.

PANELIST 2: Self-Determination Through Evaluation by *Nicole Bowman Mohican/Stockbridge-Munsee (PhD dissertator), University of WI-Madison and Bowman Performance Consulting LLC, nbowman@nbowmanconsulting.com*

As declared through U.S. Congressional Policy (Title 25, Chapter 14, Subchapter II, Section 450), the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975 establishes a self-determination policy which will permit an orderly transition from the Federal domination of programs for and services to Indians, to effective and meaningful participation by the Indian people in the planning, conduct, and administration of those programs and services. Evaluation studies can provide a powerful opportunity for promoting this policy or can exclude Indian

people which have devastating consequences for their social, cultural, educational, and economic well-being as we have seen through over 80 years of research and evaluation studies. The presenter has participated in evaluation studies in Indian Country over the last 10 years and will share specific evaluation strategies and tools used to promote self-determination through evaluation. Beyond concrete tools, Indigenous sources of information will be shared with the audience so that participants are able to consider Indian evaluators and scholars in their future professional endeavors. The audience will leave with a strong awareness of academic texts, Indigenous journals, and organizations that have assured maximum Indian participation in research and evaluation studies so such services are more responsive to the needs and desires of those Indigenous communities (rural, urban, and Tribal reservation contexts).

PANELIST 3: Influence by Design and Environmental Justice: An Indigenous Evaluation Framework With Consequences for Life and Death by *Dr. Marie Steichen, Kansas State University, emarie@ksu.edu*

From this presentation, participants will learn about the Influence by Design Theoretical Model and how this model is used in Indian Country to assess the living conditions of Native Americans. Native American communities living on Tribal Reservations face significant health, environmental, and cultural risks from contaminants such as uranium mines leaking radioactivity into the air and water. Toxicity levels in air, soil, water, and biota as a result of zinc and lead mining on and/or near Tribal lands makes for life-threatening or harming living conditions. Given these realities, the importance of framing or communication-based influence cannot be overstated. The way environmental evaluation studies are designed to assess for impacts, positive or negative, can have life and death consequences. Data based decisions that are informed by these environmental evaluations, especially regarding human risk assessment and risk taking, are literally life and death issues for participants. Influence by Design contributes to better decision making, program improvement, Native empowerment, social justice, and environmental capacity building.

PANELIST 4: Building Bridges of Empowerment: Culturally Competent Evaluation Applied to Tribal Superfund Outreach Process by *Brenda Brandon, Seneca/Cayuga (PhD, a.b.d), Haskell Indian Nations University, brendabrandon@msn.com*

Adequate representation of Tribal cultural risk concerns is rarely achieved during the Superfund cleanup process. Hazardous sites, complex Indigenous cultures, environmental justice, and health problems pose challenges for project managers and practitioners working with Tribal communities. To develop culturally competent outreach and capacity among Tribal communities, evaluation frameworks are needed that reflect Native American traditions, beliefs, and world views. The presenter will describe how the indigenously informed evaluation framework, Influence by Design (ID), was applied during technical outreach projects with Tribal communities. ID framework integrates Indigenous knowledge and community decision-making processes with technical assistance about environmental contaminants, risk management, problem definition, and empowerment evaluation methods. ID focuses on collaborative decision-making and community-based assessment and monitoring for program improvement. The result is an engaged, involved community during the public comment period for the proposed Superfund Cleanup Plan.