Paving a Path: Building Tribal Research Infrastructure through Community Engagement

Melissa Buffalo, M.S. | CRCAIH
Heather Larsen, M.Ed | Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Research Office
Michaela Seiber, M.P.H. | CRCAIH

This presentation is supported by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institute of Health under Award Number U54MD008164
Summary

• Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health (CRCAIH)
• 5 tribal partners in ND, SD, & MN
• In 2014, partnered with the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO)
  – Goal to build tribal research infrastructure
  – Community engagement vital to building capacity
  – Ongoing process of educating community and getting “buy-in”
Overview

• 3 aims
• All focus around building tribal research infrastructure
• All “pave a path” for community engagement & educating:
  – Tribal leadership
  – Community stakeholders
  – Tribal community members
AIM 1 | Engagement Strategies

• Increasing tribal community’s understanding of research
• Following tribal judicial process of passing a Research Code:
  – 7 districts – multiple visits
AIM 1 | Engagement Strategies

- Development of all community engagement tools:
  - TRO website
  - Articles in tribal newspaper
  - Tribal radio station PSAs
  - Monthly newsletters
  - Presentations
- Establishing SWO’s research priorities
AIM 2 | Building Capacity

SWO

Health Status Priorities
(ranked from community assessment data)

1. Behavioral Health
2. Diabetes
3. Addictions
4. Obesity
5. Cardiovascular Disease
6. Adverse Childhood Experiences
7. Cancer
8. Teen Pregnancy
9. Domestic Violence
10. Infectious Diseases (including STIs)

Assist Tribal Partners in developing or strengthening research infrastructure through:

• Building Community/Tribal Capacity:
  • by identifying Health Priorities
AIM 2 | Building Capacity

- Building Community/Tribal Capacity:
  - Trainings
  - Working groups
  - Informational resources
AIM 3 | Community Dissemination

• Research result dissemination
  – Tribal community stakeholders
  – Strengths-based
AIM 3 | Community Dissemination

[PROJECT TITLE] SURVEY RESULTS:

IH DUSA K A
Strengthening and preparing yourself for a child

[TRIBE] MOTHERS AND FATHERS WERE less likely to have used alcohol during the last two years than SD white mothers.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR THE HEALTH OF YOUR BABY!

XX% of [TRIBE] MOTHERS
XX% of [TRIBE] FATHERS
XX% of SD WHITE

REPORTED THEY HAD NOT HAD ANY ALCOHOLIC DRINKS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS.
AIM 3 | Community Dissemination

74% of [tribe] moms reported breastfeeding

[Tribe] Moms, thank you for breastfeeding!
Detours on our pathway...

• Tribal leadership terms & tribal employee turnover
• Resistance to change
  ‒ Tribal elders & school board members regarding any research
  ‒ Tribal program managers/directors non-compliance
• Continual process of obtaining community “buy-in”
  ‒ This work is never quite finished – did not realize in the initial years
  ‒ Always a need to reevaluate and reinvent your strategies of education
  ‒ Short staff or one-person staff must balance with all other important duties
• As tribal leaders – how can you alleviate some of these roadblocks?
Tribal Leader takeaways

• The importance of developing and strengthening tribal research infrastructure through culturally relevant community engagement activities and practices that are **key** to the desired audience while centered around the traditional values of the people.

• Tribal leadership's role in recognizing the need for research oversight to protect their people and resources, through exercising their sovereign rights.

• It is significant that tribal leaders understand that community engagement is a continuum process through various approaches regarding the importance of research infrastructure and dissemination of results.
Nina pidamiya’ye/pilamiya’ye  
(Thank you very much!)

Contact Information:

• Melissa Buffalo | Melissa.Buffalo@sanfordhealth.org
• Heather Larsen | HeatherL@swo-nsn.gov | (605) 698-8411
• Michaela Seiber | Michaela.Seiber@sanfordhealth.org