

Encouraging
Collaborations with
Indigenous
Communities:
Experiences of
Extension Educators

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Land Acknowledgement

Colorado State University acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations and peoples. This was also a site of trade, gathering, and healing for numerous other Native tribes. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as original stewards of this land and all the relatives within it. As these words of acknowledgment are spoken and heard, the ties Nations have to their traditional homelands are renewed and reaffirmed.

CSU is founded as a land-grant institution, and we accept that our mission must encompass access to education and inclusion. And, significantly, that our founding came at a dire cost to Native Nations and peoples whose land this University was built upon. This acknowledgment is the education and inclusion we must practice in recognizing our institutional history, responsibility, and commitment.

The Problem

- Extension is found in nearly 100% of counties, but only about 10% of Indigenous communities
- Given the mission of equity and access that LGIs ascribe to and the history of land dispossession that created LGIs, Extension has a responsibility to provide equitable access to the benefits of this system
- Extension programs at 1862 LGIs can collaborate with Indigenous communities to provide educational resources and agricultural support

The Study

- This data is from the Western Region of Extension
 - Survey: 307 respondents; 188 with current or past collaborations, 119 have never collaborated
 - Interviews: 20 participants
 - County Agent, Specialist, Advisor, Tribal Liaison, FRTEP Agent, SNAP Educator, Associate Director, and Assistant Director

Findings

- Characteristics of Successful Programs
- Characteristics of Successful Educators
- Barriers to Successful Collaborations

Characteristics of Successful Programs

- ***Centering the Goals of the Community***
 - Community first, not educator first
- Insider Collaboration
 - Someone on your side
- Culturally Relevant Programming and Pedagogy
 - Place matters!

Colonizers around the world would initially try and wipe out the entire Indigenous population. And then they would go to a point where they would totally take away their culture... And then, as we got a little more enlightened, we would go in and say, "Hi, I'm from the university, and we're here to help." But we never asked them what they wanted... And so, in countries where they finally wised up and said, "We're from the university, what do you need help with?" And that took, you know, a century (laughs) to get to that point. - Karen

Characteristics of Successful Educators

- Involved with the Community
 - Show up!
- Build Trusting Relationships
 - Follow Through and listen
- Academic Understanding
 - Context, history, culture
- Willing to Learn
 - You are not the expert on their community
- **Allyship**
 - A rising tide lifts all boats

It's more important to be an ally and a partner than it is to be a leader, because what our ultimate goal should be, whether we're tribal or non-tribal, is fostering ownership and leadership, you know? That's what we need to work ourselves out of a job, and have our Native youth take over these jobs as program managers, and as scientists eventually. That's our ultimate goal. So I guess just keeping that in mind, you know? You're an ally, you're a partner. - Carrie

Barriers to Successful Collaborations

- Logistics
 - Funding, research, rural Issues
- Educators Spread Thin
 - Time and consistency
- Community distrust of government and universities
 - Different worldviews, reps not following through or leaving, sovereignty
- **Racism**

You have this White community that's trying to maintain its Whiteness, and then you have the others. It's very di... It can get very ugly there. This is part of the politics that are going on in the community. And I think that's one of the reasons why Randall is so adept at working with the Native community, he's been pretty much shunned by the White community, and Randall's White... It's hard down there. They want to maintain the White culture at any cost. - Diane

Barriers to Successful Collaborations

Which Barriers Were Prohibitive?
Experiences of educators that have never worked with Indigenous communities

- Need for ***academic understanding***
- Importance of trusting ***relationships***
- Insider collaborations
- ***Funding***
- Lack of ***systemic support***

Expertise, relationships, funds, FTEs, supportive administrators. – Survey Respondent

Discussion and Recommendations

- **Creating Systemic Change**
 - People
 - Education
 - Culture
- **Big Picture**

Recommendations: Creating Systemic Change

People

- Engagement and Collaboration
 - Across campus
 - With other educators
- ***Value this work in employee evaluations***
 - Create pathways for faculty to have successful careers

There's a couple of reservations that are less than a hundred acres and they don't have a lot of tribal members. I could find way more people working in a more populated area, that has volunteer groups that are twice as big. Ensuring that the career of Extension professionals can still be successful, accommodating for all the idiosyncrasies of working with tribes compared to just standard non-tribal clientele. - Jack

Recommendations: Creating Systemic Change

Education

- Culturally Relevant Programs
 - Curriculum for Extension programs (4H, SNAP)
 - Professional development to create CR programs
- **Professional Development**
 - Program development
 - DEI
 - US and tribal history

If you're working on mindfulness with adults or you're doing nitrate testing, all of this involves a human, and, therefore, involves some cultural aspect. I definitely think that could be implemented. It has to come from the admin[istration] at Extension, you know? Have it be more of a cultural shift. We're working on that, but we're certainly nowhere near where we need to be. - Danielle

Recommendations: Creating Systemic Change

Culture: See above

- Cultivate Allyship
- ***Prioritization for Culture Change***

Increase cultural competence within Extension so that Tribal members would be welcomed, valued, and feel seen and comfortable when/if they interacted with Extension. This doesn't solve the issue that relationships are not built among Extension and Indigenous people in [State], but maybe we need both (transforming our organization internally and building bridges?).
– Survey Respondent

Big Picture: What does “success” mean?


- *Somebody always asks this question of “bang for the buck,” you know? It's like, “Well, we can get an Extension Agent in [Big City] who can see 20 times as many people and have a hundred times as many interactions than somebody out in the boonies.” So, why are we doing this? While I feel like I can articulate the value and I can speak passionately about it, it's hard to put down on a piece of paper when we're looking at numbers. – Clay*
- *You get the result that you incentivize. If you are incentivizing outreach in the community, then you're gonna get a lot of that. If you're expecting publications and impact factors, then that's what you're gonna get. I've just kind of ignored what the expectation is for my position and hope that I don't get fired. – Dave*

Big Picture: How do we work across cultures?

- Support efforts to encourage people, education, and culture change
 - Prioritize: funding, resist silo-ing, encourage or require trainings
 - Support educators: professional development and networks, recognize that this work requires time and expertise by creating career pathways
 - Educational and cultural experts to help educators: Tribal Liaison, DEI experts
- Encourage characteristics of successful educators and programs: hiring, evaluations
- Collaborate with 1994 Tribal Colleges

Survey Data

- 307 total; 188 current or past collaborations with Indigenous communities
- Nine had current collaborations with a 1994 LGI; four had past collaborations = 13 (~7%) had some experience with a 1994 LGI
- 126 said that they have never worked with a 1994 LGI
 - There are 15 1994 LGIs in the Western region; several mentioned that they are not near one
 - Some of the current and past collaborations were across state lines and/or regional
- Two used to work for a 1994 LGI
- 13 were unsure
- 34 left the question blank



Thank you!
Questions

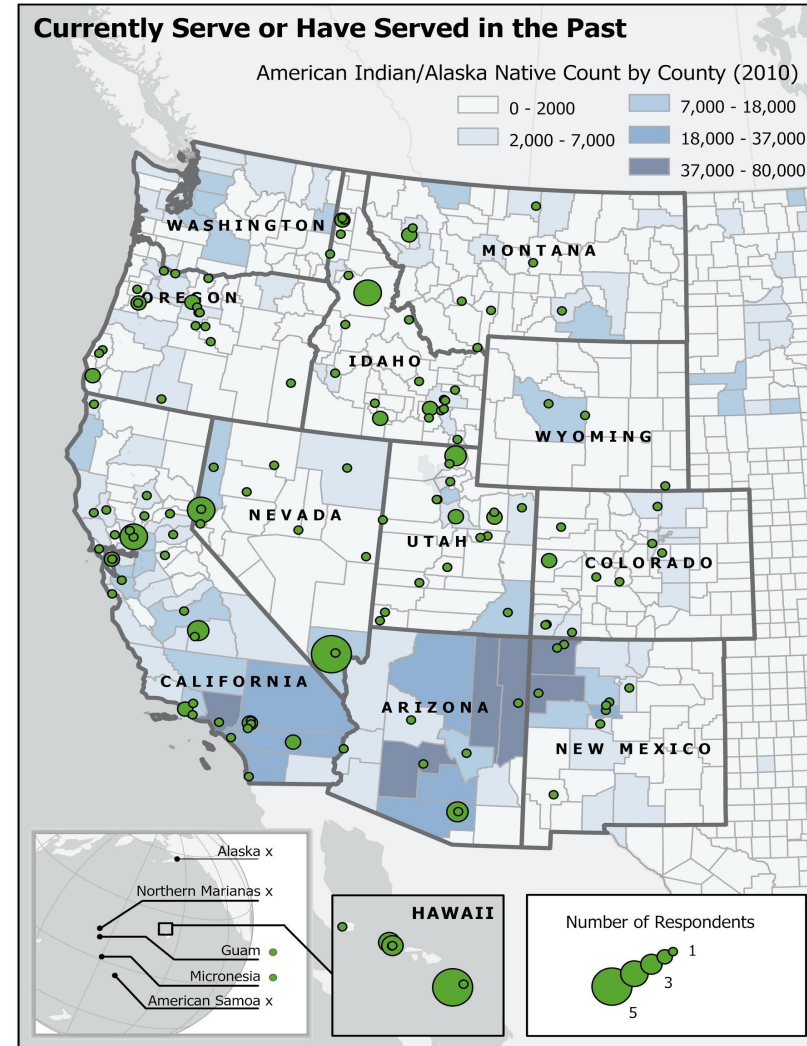
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Participants- Survey

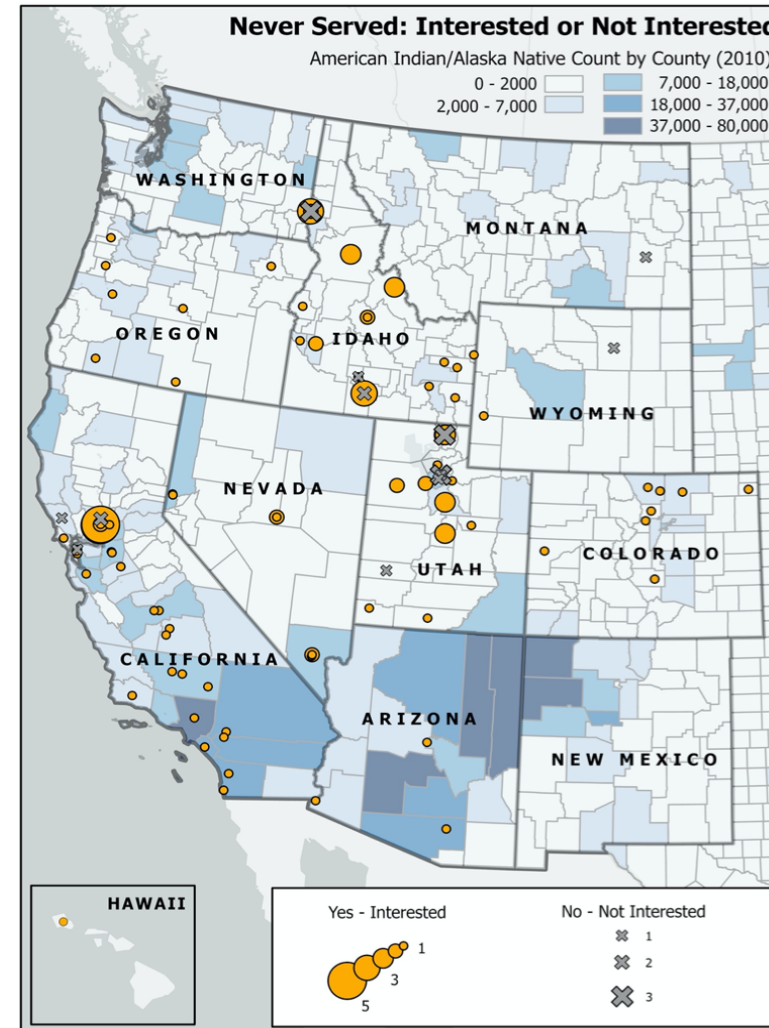
State/ US Territory	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Response to Question 4			
			Current	Past	Never-Yes	Never-No
Alaska	0	NA				
American Samoa	0	NA				
Arizona	13	2.56%	8	2	3	0
California	78	3.13%	22	18	35	3
Colorado	19	3.41%	4	7	8	0
Guam	1	1.29%	1	0	0	0
Hawaii	16	14.81%	13	2	1	0
Idaho	50	35.71%	19	8	20	3
Micronesia	1	3.03%	1	0	0	0
Montana	9	2.21%	7	1	0	1
Nevada	32	12.75%	9	9	14	0
New Mexico	10	30.30%	8	2	0	0
Northern Mariana Islands	0	NA				
Oregon	29	4.04%	18	5	6	0
Utah	42	28.00%	18	3	15	6
Washington	0	NA				
Wyoming	7	6.42%	3	0	3	1
Western Region	307	5.50%	131	57	105	14

Note. Question 4 on the survey read, “Do you currently or have you ever served Indigenous peoples or communities?” Respondents had the option to choose one of three answers: “I CURRENTLY serve Indigenous peoples or communities,” “I have in the PAST served Indigenous peoples or communities,” or “I have NEVER served Indigenous peoples or communities.” If they chose the third option, they were directed to a question that read, “Would you be interested in serving Indigenous peoples or communities?” to which they could have chosen, “Yes” or “No.”

Participants- Survey



Participants- Survey



Participants- Interviews

- 20 interviews

