

***Evolving Dine'-Centered Research and Evaluation Methodology,
Coordinated by: San Juan Collaborative for Health Equity with DCRE Team
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The DCR&E committee has built a strong foundation, with the invaluable contribution and wisdom of our late colleague Dr. Larry Emerson, had clearly articulated the needs, goals and potential applications of a Diné-centered research and evaluation model. In-addition to the Hozhoogo na ada Methodology by Dr. Herbert Benally. In short, these tools has been sought by various groups addressing socio-economic issues, health and environmental ills, and other disparities affecting Navajo communities and our surrounding areas. The goal is to evaluate every aspect of these different issues, particularly racial equity, homelessness, environmental issues (fracking, water security, food security), and youth capacity building and leadership development-based on how they address our interconnected nature, ensuring that no matter how complex the identified issue may be, our understanding, approach (protocols) and solutions are holistic, effective and culturally appropriate. The goal in every endeavor, as it is in Diné epistemology and lifeways, is to strive to live life with good health, balance and prosperity, and to nurture a consciousness based on our understanding of our relationship to one another and all life— restoring our responsibilities as five-fingered Holy Beings (Nahookaa Diyiiin Dine) to be good relatives to all that surrounds us.

The DCR&E committee and affiliated allies and partners are all engaged in one or more aspects of this work on and off the Navajo reservation. Their expertise, experiences, and goals have helped inform the development of the emerging model to identify shared priorities and narrow down protocols that are culturally-appropriate but that inform and expand upon accepted research protocols to ensure quality of data and analysis of issues. The next steps include having each stakeholder that has been involved in the development of the emerging model apply it to the different issue areas, strategies, tactics and findings of their existing work and re-convene to combine these findings to identify areas of weakness, strengths and to combine best practices for the next phase of the development of the model. Such activities mean that the emerging model will be strengthened by direct application to issues ranging from water security, food security and human rights issues; environmental issues; policy development (Navajo Nation genetic research policy development); youth leadership development; and racial equity initiatives.

The emerging model will help organize the identified issues and on-going efforts of the different groups in accordance with our Diné worldview of assessing the balance between Spiritual (Nitsáhákees), Family (Nahata), Community (Iina) and Natural world (Siih hasin) relationships. For example, with Environmental issues such as fracking, it is not enough to articulate the impacts to the community based on only environmental and economic concerns as there are a plethora of issues affecting the social, cultural, and political fabric of the impacted communities. However, in western research and evaluation models these factors are often overlooked or ignored resulting in policies, or decisions that promise beneficial remedies/compensation with the unacceptable consequence of impeding the overall well-being of the impacted families and communities and natural world. Using the emerging DCR&E model will allow community advocates and environmental rights professionals to better analyze and evaluate these impacts, understanding how the economic development and impacts on the natural world affect the spiritual practices, family cohesiveness and community well-being of the impacted areas. With each stakeholder carrying out this process and presenting the findings in the identified areas, we will have the first compilation of major Navajo Nation issues using a holistic Diné-centered research lens, getting us closer to finalizing a comprehensive model for Dine-centered research and evaluation that is replicable across all issues.

END of Narrative. Contact info: hjames@nmhep.org or Janene.y@sixth-world.com