

### *Evolving Dine'-Centered Research and Evaluation (DCR&E) Methodology*

The San Juan Collaborative for Health Equity (SJCHE), a core partner of HEP's, established a core team to develop the DCR&E Model, with team leader, our late wisdom keeper, colleague and relative, Dr. Larry Emerson of Tse da kaan, New Mexico. The work of the DCR&E a social justice tool, is dedicated to Dr. Emerson legacy. The model builds upon a Dine'/Navajo epistemology foundation. As part of HEP's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, we honor Dr. Emerson's legacy and this tool.

In 2017, the SJCHE completed a series of presentations to address racial equity and health issues impacting the Navajo community. The SJCHE presented on the Indigenous Research Lens and Hozhogo Na ada Research and Assessment Model to:

- The City of Farmington's Mayor, Mr. Tommy Roberts and local service providers (presented by Dr. Emerson and credited to Dr. Herbert Benally) in March 2017;
- Frontline service providers in September 2017; and
- The City of Farmington Community Relations Commission in September 2017.

SJCHE is working towards a one-day event with Behavioral Health Providers, eventually with a training and community engagement process, evolving into Dine'-Centered Research and Evaluation Model.



The DCR&E team/committee instructed by Dr. Emerson clearly articulated the needs, goals and potential applications of a Diné-centered research and evaluation model. This tool is currently being sought by various groups addressing socio-economic issues, health and environmental ills, and other disparities affecting Navajo communities and surrounding areas. The goal is to evaluate 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. No matter how complex the identified issue may be, our understanding, approach and solutions should be holistic, effective, and culturally appropriate. The purpose is to strive for a life of 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 Diyiin 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 protocols that are culturally-appropriate but which inform and expand upon accepted research protocols to ensure quality of data and analysis of issues. Next steps include:

- Having each stakeholder apply the approach to their respective issue areas and work; and
- Re-convening to combine their findings to identify areas of weakness, strengths and to combine best practices for the next phase of the development of the model.

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. It will help organize the identified issues and on-going efforts of the different groups in accordance with the Diné worldview of assessing the balance between Spiritual (Nitsáhákees), Family (Nahata), Community (lina) and Natural world (Siin 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 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 their identified areas, the SJCHE 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. A unification in understanding Dine' K'e' clanship relation life ways.

The exciting work continues. SJCHE and DCR&E Committee appreciates and acknowledges the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for the sincere financial contribution for the evolving processes. Ahe'hee/Thank you!

*Submitted by Hazel James, San Juan Collaborative for Health Equity*