Tribal Community Obesity Prevention: Youth Defining Health through Photovoice

Derek R. Jennings, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota
June 11, 2014
The Purpose for the Research

✓ Examining differences between medical and communal views of health and wellbeing
✓ How this influences obesity intervention for NIHLB/NCI prevention study
Importance of the Study

✓ Indigenous populations’ childhood obesity rate are at least 15% higher than all other groups in U.S.A.

✓ Communities’ voice is often missing in health research design.
Methods Used to Gather Data

- **Photographs as tangible things are therefore no longer solely depictions of decontextualized places or moments, but can be viewed as touchstones that fuel discussion, generate stories, and bring to bear memories among those whom view them.** (p.55, Schneider, 2007).

- **Photographic representation connects meaning to culture** (Hall 1997).
More on Methods: For Youth

- Less threatening than writing
- More holistic representation for abstract concepts: health in context
- Lessens power differential
- Their perspective is heard throughout data generation
Initial Findings of Youth Defining Health

✓ Family
✓ Nature
✓ Pets
✓ Environmental Pollution
✓ Cultural Teachings
✓ Subtle theme: Play and Exercise
IMAGES FROM THE KIDS: HEALTHY
HONESTY
RESPECT
IMAGES FROM THE KIDS: UNHEALTHY
Images from the Kids: Voted Both

- Lack of healthy food knowledge
- Debating Balance
Summary of Findings

✓ Western Medicine
  ✓ Exercise
  ✓ Nutrition

✓ Tribal Holistic Health
  ✓ Interpersonal (family, pets)
  ✓ Environmental
  ✓ Character
  ✓ Exercise
  ✓ Nutrition (not ideal)
Health Interventions

- Individual
- Family
- Tribal Culture
- Geography/Food
- American Culture/History
Implications: Community Transformation for Health

- Tribal Culture
- Geography/Food
- American Culture/History
- Family
- Individual
Next Steps

- Continue conducting health research within American Indian communities
- Research with community transformations for health in obesity and related health disparities
- Exploring the idea of health sovereignty and how it can be implemented
Thank You University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Family Medicine, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NIH NIHLB, NCI, NARCH and GLITC!

Special Thanks to Dr. Mary Louise Gomez and Dr. Alex Adams.