

**CLOSING REMARKS****Elmima Johnson***Senior Staff Associate*

REC/EHR/NSF

Before we say goodbye, I would like to explain the impetus for this meeting. This workshop is being held under a contract with the American Institutes for Research for a series of actions focused on the cultural context of evaluation within the framework of capacity building. This year we proposed three major activities. This workshop is the first. The second activity is on a different level. We are in the process of developing a theoretical model for training and capacity building in evaluation, a model that will incorporate the concept of contextual factors and their influence on the process of evaluation. This is not an easy task and we have asked a panel of experts to assist us. Some of the expert panel members attended this workshop and sat in on the subgroup discussions to gather input for our model development activities. The third planned activity is a session on the cultural context of evaluation, which we will present at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) meeting in November 2002. So you see this workshop is part of larger effort, which we hope will be expanded.

I would like to thank everyone for joining us for these two days and promise you that NSF will keep in touch. First, you will receive a copy of the published proceedings of this workshop. I hope you will find it useful as a reference document. Second, we plan to tap your expertise by inviting you to serve as proposal reviewers. Third, we will continue to solicit feedback from members of this group as we plan follow-up activities related to capacity building.

Thank you for joining us. We did hear you.

**Carlos Rodríguez***Principal Research Analyst*

American Institutes for Research

I speak not only for myself but also for what I've heard other individuals say since yesterday about the nature of this truly pioneer work. To our knowledge, there has not previously been a pulling together of these kinds of minds over this kind of topic. I want you to know that it is really quite powerful from NSF's perspective, and part of that attention goes to you because of what you do. I don't say that just to pat you on the back but to say it's moving in the right direction.

Elmima Johnson and I have worked together for a few years now and I see how she is changing the thinking at NSF. Part of that is getting your voices heard. I was struck by the metaphor that Eric Jolly used about "missing bricks." What we have been engaged in since yesterday has been forming and firing some of those bricks so that they can become part of the pathway that eventually winds up bettering our Native American students.

When we talk about theoretical model-building, there are a number of features that have to be identified. We're building a theory of change in evaluation. Part of the change that comes out of this meeting is the notion of communal, collective building of knowledge. Collective understanding is not part of the rather autonomous or atomized approach we generally take to evaluation. This is a very significant contribution from this group, and it has been expressed by saying that practitioners are part of the problem and part of the solution. Practitioners have to be at the table

both talking about the problem and the solution in which they are engaged. In the field, we call this “participatory” or “action research.” In our breakout group session on dissemination of information, I called this “participatory evaluation research.” I believe your work here is a real contribution that can inform NSF’s direction in evaluation initiatives. We will be diligent in our work with NSF to pursue the idea that participatory evaluation research must become a critical feature of culturally and contextually relevant evaluation efforts.

One issue that I find challenging in terms of guiding some of our work are the statistics that were cited during the dissemination breakout group. There are about 1,300 schools in 27 states that actually have Native American students in them. In those 27 states and in those 1,300 schools, we have about 95 to 98 percent of the Native American student population in the United States. This in itself is a way of informing NSF and other federal minds about the uniqueness of this challenge. Policies that come from Washington tend to homogenize people, groups and ideas. We make policies for *all* Native Americans, for *all* Hispanics. We do not address the differences that are so important.

If I was a CEO of a major entrepreneurial investment organization, what marketing strategy would I develop to target 500,000 individuals in 27 states? There would be some marketing strategists and companies that would be banking maybe billions of dollars on getting their message out. And that’s part of why I like the notion that Craig Love came up with in terms of taking kind of consumerist approach. This is not an impossible problem or challenge to deal with. What do we have? Over 30,000 school districts in this nation among all the states? I’m not minimizing the challenge, but I’m trying to put it in perspective. We’ve been dealing with the unmanageability of it for decades. As one of our expert authors has reminded us, we know the problem. We’ve been looking at the achievement gap for a long time. We keep coming up with different explanations for the achievement gap. We keep understanding the problem, but we haven’t figured out the solution. This solution can be found, I think, by following these steps:

1. We need more descriptive information about how we are doing it now. We do not have enough information about how Native American evaluations are actually playing out. We’ve had lots of ideas surface yesterday and today, but we need a descriptive study. What do we know about how Native Americans are being evaluated in STEM? In K-5, in undergraduate, in tribal colleges, across the entire spectrum? We don’t have that information and it is extremely important. That’s one step that comes out of today.
2. We also have the brick making, the real context of the situation, the parameters of the challenge—the 1,300 schools, the half million children, the 27 states.
3. We have this notion of building in partnership with the community as active and live members. Community must be involved at every level in evaluation, from inception to interpretation.
4. We didn’t get time to talk a lot about it, but I think we need to spend some time on identifying the *cultural stressors* for Native Americans in the educational process. Eric Jolly talked about that when he talked about the groupings. We also have cultural stressors that are social in nature—the high suicide rates, the high substance abuse rates, all of the cultural stressors. What are the stressors when children move out of a Native American environment and context and move into mainstream environments and contexts? How do we measure these stressors so that evaluators are able to identify the appropriate weights associated with these factors?

In terms of building an evaluation cadre, I believe NSF could have a significant cache not only at the association level but also in colleges of education. One of the things that struck me too about our work the last couple of days is that most of us and most of you have contributed in very targeted ways to looking at creating interventions. All of this is very targeted work—the SIGs, the TIGs, the RFA suggestion that you don't get funded if you don't have a participatory model—those are very targeted kinds of interventions.

Finally, I'd like to say that part of the challenge is looking at the cultural nuances among Native Americans. Did anybody note how many stories were told yesterday? Storytelling is a discourse model, it's a way that this community shares its information with itself. We do not yet know how to integrate story-telling into our evaluations. That's a little bit out of the box for what we are doing with evaluation. But if we don't think out of the box with this particular challenge as we have since yesterday, we are not going to change the problem.

The problem that we all clearly understand needs to be solved. Finally, I didn't want to miss Craig Love's point about this notion that a key feature of effective evaluation for Native American schools must be routinized, participatory evaluation. The next generation of informing culturally relevant evaluations is that there is a way of doing this; there is a routine you have to follow. If you want to do it well, there is a way of doing it well. It is not left up to chance. It's not anecdotal. It's left up to an evidence base, if you will, but there is a way that we can say to schools and to evaluators, "Here's a better way to do it and these are the steps to follow." I believe that we have started that process in this pioneer work.

**Anselm Davis**

*Program Director*

Rural Systemic Initiative Program  
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First of all, I want to acknowledge the National Science Foundation for allowing this Native American to be a participant in this workshop and to be a part of the Foundation. I thank Dr. Johnson for the opportunity for the Rural Systemic Initiative (RSI) to be a co-sponsor of this workshop.

The RSI effects the academic achievement of students in math and science by enhancing the capacity of our Native American people and others. Through the evaluation process, we get some sense of how well this is being done, but the evaluation process has many issues that need to be addressed especially from a Native American perspective. I am grateful for the opportunity to bring all of you here today and yesterday to take a look at the issues of evaluation. I think this is a giant step on the part of the National Science Foundation to have the willingness to bring Native American people to NSF. There were some really outstanding thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the past two days. I take this opportunity to acknowledge NSF for bringing us together.

Another really significant part of what NSF has allowed us to do is to allow our Native American thinking to take precedence. In that regard, we are always thinking holistically and that encompasses spirituality. We began this workshop with an elder putting us in touch with the

universe for the purpose of focusing on the child and his or her education. We have come full circle. Now it is time to acknowledge Harry McCabe, to thank him for being with us yesterday and for coming back this afternoon to close this workshop in the manner in which we began.

**Harry McCabe**

*Elder*

[Closing Navajo prayer reminded us as we closed the workshop and prepared to leave that there is beauty in all of us and beauty all around us.]