

Workshop on Best Practices for Native American Outdoor Youth Programs

Putah Creek Lodge

UC Davis, Davis, CA

April 20, 2010, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Identify best practices to sustain and build capacity of Native American outdoor youth programs
- ❖ Foster knowledge, networking, and information sharing among Native American youth providers
- ❖ Increase awareness on ways to improve outdoor programs for Native American youth
- ❖ Discuss ways to improve the cultural relevance of outdoor programs for Native American youth

AGENDA

9:00–9:30 a.m.	Opening prayer, welcome, and introductions
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Review agenda and objectives
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Discuss characteristics of effective programs
12:00–1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00–3:00 p.m.	Assess program best practices
3:00–4:00 p.m.	Next steps, final remarks, and closing prayer
4:00 p.m.	Adjourn

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND NOTES

Characteristics of Effective Programs

Participants work in small groups to discuss and prioritize what is needed and what works for each category (organizational capacity; youth development practices; risk management; program design and implementation; cultural relevance; collaboration and partnerships; impact beyond participants; evaluation and outcome measurement). Small groups report back, and then everyone discusses commonalities and differences.

- ❖ Organizational capacity
 - Include youth voice through board of directors or youth council
 - Create a stable environment (e.g., consistent staff)
 - Develop and implement real measurement tools
 - Create pipeline for youth to become leaders within/outside organizations
 - Understand and connect to community partners and resources
 - Dedicate enough time to build strong relationships with Native community
 - Ensure that program is relevant to community need
 - Have capacity to address long-term needs of youth
 - Have well-trained staff
 - Commit to keeping programs going
 - Raise some funds

- ❖ Youth development practices
 - Ensure that programs and practices are sensitive to cultural heritage of youth; provide adequate staff training, include youth and community
 - Connect with elders in the community and incorporate them into teaching
 - Provide peer education and youth-to-youth mentorship
 - Develop skills to deal with conflict and racism
 - Employ leaders that have traditional knowledge and integrate that with modern reality
 - Know your target population, specific needs and characteristics of youth and families
 - Cooperate, be inclusive, and invite broader participation
 - Incorporate fitness, nutrition, and physical activity
 - Make sure youth's basic needs are met (e.g., food, shelter, appropriate clothing)
 - Connect programs to school and attendance
 - Understand and respect youth identity and culture
 - Be open-minded and understanding of youth's interests and experiences
 - Teach traditional values and self-respect

- ❖ Risk management
 - Train staff in CPR and basic first aid
 - Check backgrounds of all staff
 - Develop transportation policies and ensure that all drivers are licensed and insured
 - Make sure outdoor providers are certified and insured
 - Develop emergency protocols, and train youth
 - Identify parents and community members with relevant skills, and invite them to help supervise field trips
 - Teach basic survival and plant identification skills (e.g., building shelter, starting fire, identifying poison oak) to prepare for time outdoors
 - Scout locations and plan ahead
 - Keep open communications, build trust, and remember to listen in addition to teaching
 - Have appropriate adult-to-youth ratio, and employ both male and female staff
 - Write down clear guidelines and checklists for all trips and locations, include medical and emergency provider information (e.g., nearby hospitals, CHP helicopters)
 - Have alternate communications plans in case cell phone coverage is limited
 - Know the environment
 - Teach and model proper wilderness behavior
 - Prepare students for outdoor realities and expectations (e.g., pit toilets, Leave No Trace)

- ❖ Program design and implementation
 - Integrate outdoors with the classroom and curriculum standards
 - Have elders provide hands-on teaching to empower and connect the generations
 - Acknowledge traditional science within Western science
 - Partner with juvenile justice system to connect at-risk youth with the outdoors
 - Provide leadership opportunities and job skills by training youth to lead programs
 - Define roles and get buy-in and input from the community through focus groups
 - Conduct restoration projects
 - Use traditional stories and ceremonies (that involve landscape, outdoors, local flora and fauna, the spirit world, natural resources, society) to teach values and cultural history through the outdoors
 - Impart understanding of holistic connection between life, afterlife, and nature

- Treat youth as equals, respect them, believe in them, and keep it positive
 - Empower youth and help them understand their critical role in preserving Native culture
 - Think outside the box and don't be limited by existing standards and curricula
 - Involve families
 - Provide a series of progressive opportunities for youth and adequate preparation before diving into more difficult outdoor expeditions
 - Offer opportunities for teens that include adventure and challenge
- ❖ Cultural relevance
- Ensure that staff are knowledgeable about tribal areas, tribal culture, and youth culture
 - Make the connection between culture and the natural world
 - Make culture the foundation of programming, and connect to other Native providers
 - Provide programming that is relevant to Native youth who come from other (non-California) tribes
 - Acknowledge ancestral lands and local tribes
 - Instill pride in Native youth
 - Reconnect urban Native youth to their culture through traditions, song, and dance
 - Remember that nature is the teacher of humanity
 - Remember that culture is the past, the present, the future, and the harmony of all things
 - Extend cultural relevance principles to partners
 - Be honest and foster true understanding of culture, including strengths and challenges
 - Bring in tribal experts to help teach traditions and cultural activities
 - Include inter-tribal and diverse perspectives
- ❖ Collaboration and partnerships
- Collaborate with nonprofit and public organizations, including Forest Service and other agencies
 - Build partnerships with local, state, and federal government agencies; key stakeholders; and funders
 - Find opportunities to network
 - Exchange ideas and practices across programs
 - Act as subject matter experts and project advisors
 - Maintain connections with the experts in the room
 - Share skills, events, and projects to share costs
 - Bridge the gap between organization leadership and program staff to better serve youth and families
- ❖ Impact beyond participants
- Teach youth to be trainers and leaders in the community
 - Remember longer-term outcomes like leadership in the community that may not be immediately obvious or measurable
 - Improve the community through restoration projects
 - Inspire pride and family connections through outdoor activities
 - Develop a model of cultural programming that can be expanded or replicated
 - Help youth build job skills and connect to employment
 - Inspire youth to become guardians of the land and the community

- ❖ Evaluation and outcome measurement
 - Assess impacts on family and broader community
 - Invite family members and/or authority figures to help evaluate impact on students
 - Have students perform a self evaluation
 - Incorporate group discussions
 - Conduct pre and post knowledge surveys about traditional and Western topics
 - Ensure that evaluation is relevant externally (to funders)and internally
 - Take photos and videos to document activities
 - Use website to share results, photos, and stories
 - Involve youth in documenting (photo or video) the program and impacts
 - Incorporate longer-term follow up (e.g., six months after program)
 - Identify and track demographics of participants
 - Follow up with participants and document their outcomes and accomplishments
 - Trust and be patient that programs will produce long-term results

Program Best Practices

Participants independently assess their organization's programs using the categories and priorities discussed earlier. Participants share their assessments in small groups and share ideas to address challenges and identify resources. Small groups discuss common priorities, available resources, and any surprising results.

Next Steps

Participants form a talking circle to share observations about the workshop and ideas for next steps.

- ❖ Observations
 - I want to express my appreciation for this opportunity. I heard a lot of great things today. I am very honored and proud to be speaking on behalf of Native people as a member of this group. I'm excited about continuing to participate and to grow and foster these relationships, not only to support my own community but other tribal communities as well. Traditional knowledge can be a critical force, and we should use all of our tools to make sure that our children and youth are happy and successful. My role is to keep one foot in yesterday, and have a vision for tomorrow. I hope to hear more from you, and I will share my work with you about natural resources management based on traditional knowledge. Take home what you learned today, because we are a full circle; we are all one, and that is the way we will continue.
 - Youth are very important. I remember when there were Boy Scouts. Indian people are a challenged people; we need to reconnect with our traditions of gathering and living off the earth. As leaders, you should incorporate a program where you give youth awards when they reach levels (by age and accomplishment). Youth will feel appreciated and receive an award that shows they achieved something. Those are the things that we need to incorporate for Native people.
 - We really just scratched the surface on ideas and best practices today; I'd like to see more sharing. People often reinvent the wheel, when there are good examples and lessons of programs out there. It's important to share those. I'd particularly like to learn more about evaluations or partnerships with universities. I particularly would like to help students get jobs in natural resources management, which requires degrees. I think there is a lot of opportunity to talk about how to make that happen.

- I've heard a lot of good ideas today, and I have a lot of things to think about when I get home.
- Bringing together the diversity of people that are here to share our successes and challenges has compelled me to keep working on this, because of the importance of reconnecting our kids with the Native world view and the understanding of our land and our people. I appreciate everyone's input, and I hope to come back again.
- It's been very nice to see connections being built between people. At the University, we are thinking about how to support youth programs. We would like to help provide the expertise to work together with tribes and teach young people. I'd like to work toward better partnerships.
- I saw a lot of potential today for Native programs. The connections are already there, especially with nature and with tribes. I hope the Stewardship Council will continue down this road of engaging Native peoples. The staff and board have been very supportive in the past, and I encourage everyone to stay engaged with each other and with the Stewardship Council.
- Getting together with fellow environmental educators is very important, and I look forward to the future.
- One of the things that impressed me the most was the intergenerational commitment that everyone has, and how over time the world will be a better place for everyone.
- I thank everyone for being so open. I've learned a lot that I will take back to my program. We are not traditionally people that have learned from schools; we have traditionally learned from the outdoors and activities, and we need to remember and keep holding on to that history.
- I gained a lot of knowledge today, and I have some new ideas about how to work with the youth in my program.
- I am rejuvenated by participating today. Youth are the leaders of tomorrow.
- It can be a struggle doing environmental work, and trying to raise funds to support the environment and culture. I've come away with a lot of ideas, and this has helped to refocus me as well.
- I look forward to taking the knowledge I've learned from all of you back to my programs.
- I enjoyed meeting all of you, and I would be happy to work directly with you to take your youth outdoors. I have expertise in taking youth outdoors, and I'd be happy to support your program.
- The discussion today helped to remind me about the importance of connecting our youth with the outdoors.
- It's awesome to hear all the passion here. Our own culture inspires me, and it feels good to see all of you doing this work.
- I commit to hosting on our land in Nevada County an inter-tribal youth summit. I also commit to moving forward on the grandparents as gifts and the junior stewardship program, which incorporates Native youth as stewards in my community.
- I was reminded of how integrated we are with the land and our history. We have a calling to maintain it. I think about the legacy of our lives, and how important it is to contribute.
- I appreciate meeting so many people who share my passion about teaching kids about the environment.
- I definitely see this as the first step toward future gatherings. I am happy that I was able to connect with everyone, and I look forward to deepening those connections, perhaps through site visits to see each other's programs.

- Being here today has made me reflect on how limited capacity and resources determine how far into nature we can take youth. In an urban environment, the farthest you can take kids can be a local farm. In my work, I've been inspired to create more opportunities in local settings to get kids and families outside. A friend and mentor of mine suggested that I get in touch with the Stewardship Council, in order to make better connections to other organizations. Then the invitation came to me to attend this workshop, and I am happy to be in a space that is so multicultural. There is a lot of wisdom in this room, that has taught me that we can reclaim and revive our cultures, while also adapting in healthy ways, and making ourselves more sustainable.
 - I am reminded to make sure that the youth I work with have that spiritual connection with the outdoors, to realize the connection between the environment and us.
 - It's nice to realize that I'm not the only one out there struggling. There are other programs that may be doing better or not as good, and I enjoyed sharing our successes and challenges. I really do hope that there is a follow up. I invite everyone to come to Lake Tahoe and experience the Washoe culture.
 - I would also like to extend the invitation to your youth to come to my campout in August. It's a blessing to be here amongst all of you. I look at all of you and you are deeper than gold. There is a lot of strong energy here, and I look forward to keeping up the balance.
 - This was such an open forum today, and it was so nice to hear the wisdom of the Native people that is so vital to all of us as a people. It's going to take healing of people and healing of the earth, and this is an important step.
 - I'm very grateful for being in such amazing company. I encourage everyone to look at funding opportunities from the Stewardship Council, because the application is very doable, and the staff is very helpful. We need to take the time to take care of one another and play.
 - We need to think about intensity and duration of programs. It's important to lengthen, deepen, and strengthen youth's exposure to the outdoors.
- ❖ Ideas for next steps
- Future panels focused on sharing expertise in specific areas
 - Better collaboration and leveraging of University resources
 - Bring in other programs that serve Native youth
 - Stay engaged with the Stewardship Council and offer suggestions
 - Convene an inter-tribal youth summit
 - Cross-program site visits
 - Food justice gathering in the Bay Area on May 22nd
 - Follow up convenings!