

Native Communities

Understanding the Challenges of working with Diverse Cultures



Al Nygard, President & CEO
Al Nygard Consulting

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What we will cover

- Community
- Culture
- Organizing
- Entry
- Work
- Outcomes
- Follow-up

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Community

- A **community** is a social group of organisms sharing an environment, normally with shared interests.
- In **human communities**, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

Community Building & Organizing Stages

- **Pseudo-community:** Where participants are "nice with each other", playing-safe, and presenting what they feel is the most favorable sides of their personalities.
- **Chaos:** When people move beyond the inauthenticity of pseudo-community and feel safe enough to present their "shadow" selves. This stage places great demands upon the facilitator for greater leadership and organization, but this pressure should be resisted.
- **Emptiness:** This stage moves beyond the attempts to fix, heal and convert of the chaos stage, when all people become capable of acknowledging their own woundedness and brokenness, common to us all as human beings.
- **True community:** the process of deep respect and true listening for the needs of the other people in this community. This stage reflects a deep yearning in every human soul for compassionate understanding from one's fellows.

Community Types

- **Geographic communities:** range from the local neighborhood, suburb, village, town or city, region, nation or even the planet as a whole. These refer to communities of *location*.
- **Communities of culture:** range from the local clique, sub-culture, ethnic group, religious, multicultural or pluralistic civilization, or the global community cultures of today. They may be included as *communities of need or identity*, such as disabled persons, or frail aged people.
- **Community organizations:** range from informal family or kinship networks, to more formal incorporated associations, political decision making structures, economic enterprises, or professional associations at a small, national or international scale.

Native Communities

- Typically kinship based
- Sometimes are artificially formed “communities”
- Can be all four Community building stages
- Are extremely complex
- The starting point is not at the same origin as other communities

Social Capital

- Social capital is defined by Robert D. Putnam as "the collective value of all social networks (who people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other (norms of reciprocity)."
- Social capital in action can be seen in groups of varying formality, including neighbors keeping an eye on each others' homes.

Issues and forces

(a short list)

- Tribal governance
- Sovereignty
- Hurt
- Racism
- Poverty
- Identity
- Leadership
- Language
- Spirituality
- History
- Values
- Culture – Roles
- Oppression – Lateral Oppression

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Culture

- all the behaviors, ways of life, arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation.
- "the way of life for an entire society." It includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behavior such as law and morality, and systems of belief as well as the arts and gastronomy.
- United Nations - "... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

Understanding Culture

- Language
- Values
- Beliefs
- History
- Unique aspects
- Not all “cultures” are the same

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Organizing

- Culture
- Perceptions
- Perspective
 - Poverty
 - Leadership
- Community Structures

Culture & Values

- Groups, societies, or cultures have values that are largely shared by their members.
- values identify those objects, conditions or characteristics that members of the society consider important.
- In the United States, for example, values might include material comfort, wealth, competition, individualism or religiosity.
- Native Values Examples
 - Kinship
 - Praying
 - Respect
 - Compassion
 - Honesty & Truth
 - Fortitude
 - Generosity
 - Humility
 - Wisdom
 - Courage (bravery)
 - Helping
 - Responsibility
 - Thankful
 - Faith
 - Forgiveness
 - Honor

Perceptions

In order to understand poverty in diverse cultures, you must first understand the people. In order to understand the people, you must understand the Culture

Perspective Poverty -- Not Poverty

- **Emotional** – able to choose and control emotions without engaging in self-destructive behavior
- **Mental** – abilities & skills to deal with daily life
- **Spiritual** – Belief in divine purpose and guidance
- **Physical** – health & mobility
- **Support Systems** – friends, family, and backup resources to access in times of need
- **Relationships/Role Models** – frequent access to adults who are appropriate, nurturing, and not self destructive
- **Knowledge of Hidden Rules** – unspoken cues and habits
- **Financial** – having money

Our Experience

	# Communities	% < 1500	Income	Poverty Rate	Population
Totals for SBC	18	94%	\$8,012	38.8%	778
Totals for Idaho	14	73%	\$15,063	17.6%	1531
Totals for Washington	23	45%	\$12,642	19.7%	1321
Totals for Montana	18	65%	\$13,804	15.9%	1201
Totals for Iowa	23	57%	\$15,592	14.0%	1440
Totals for North Dakota	24	92%	\$15,774	14.3%	908
Totals for South Dakota	24	79%	\$15,236	15.3%	1106
Totals for Minnesota	12	50%	\$16,407	13.6%	2105
Totals for North Dakota	24	92%	\$15,774	14.3%	908
Totals for SBC ND	3	100%	\$7,601	41.9%	830
Totals for South Dakota	24	79%	\$15,236	15.3%	1106
Totals for SBC SD	8	88%	\$7,508	42.0%	695
Totals for Minnesota	12	50%	\$16,407	13.6%	2105
Totals for SBC MN	7	100%	\$8,765	33.9%	851

Our Experience

Community	Income	Poverty Rate	Population	AGE 18 AND UNDER	AGE 19 TO 30	AGE 31 TO 40	AGE 41 TO 50	AGE 51 TO 60	AGE 60 AND OVER
Totals for SBC ND	7601	41.9%	830	45.2%	12.8%	23.0%	7.1%	11.2%	9.3%
Totals for SBC SD	7508	42.0%	695	43.7%	16.6%	14.8%	13.6%	9.0%	9.7%
Totals for SBC MN	8765	33.9%	851	41.7%	11.2%	24.1%	7.9%	15.8%	7.2%
Totals for SBC	8012	38.8%	778	43.1%	13.9%	19.8%	10.3%	12.0%	8.6%
Totals for SBC NA	6889	42.1%	747	45.2%	14.5%	18.8%	10.3%	10.8%	6.9%
Totals for SBC mixed	11945	27.4%	888	35.9%	11.5%	23.3%	10.2%	16.3%	14.8%

Perspective - Leadership

We believe that poverty is not our worst problem. It is our poverty mentality. If we can change that, we can change our circumstance

Elsie Meeks, Director, First Nations Oweesta Corp.

Community Structures

- Capacity
- Focus on the Future
- Change Management

Capacity

- is a central element to sustaining the effort.
- Native communities typically do not have structures in place to attract and handle resources that are needed to sustain the effort.
- Not for profit entities are abundant in non Native communities. However the instance of not for profit entities in Native communities are limited to churches if any. Creating these capacity generating entities allows the community to tackle the greatest hurdle in front of them – funding.
- Community focused not for profit development allows the community to attract needed capital and create partnerships with outside entities that are critical to sustaining the effort long term.

Focus on the Future

- **future** is critical to maintaining the momentum past the initial phase of dialogue and the associated hoopla surrounding “let’s do something”.
- Focusing the community on a future that compels the community to focus the committed groups within the community is essential to sustaining the effort.
- Poverty dynamics take their toll on communities; especially communities that have experienced chronic and intergenerational poverty as we find in many Native communities.
- Most communities have never thought beyond the next election much less 10 to 20 years in the future. The first hurdle is to get the community to understand the need to look out that far and then to actually dream.

Change Management

- Resistance to change in the community is typically the norm. Change is very threatening to the existing structures within the community.
- That threat is either actual or perceived.
- The key to managing change is to create win – win situations. Allow the existing structures to latch on to a piece of the future.
- We advocate the 20-60-20 rule of change management.

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Entry

- Barriers
 - Trust
 - Communication Systems
 - Leadership systems
 - Governance
 - Lateral Oppression
 - Racism/Equality effects
 - Hurt/Balance

Trust

- an element in communities that keep that community from taking a leap of faith forward.
- Sometimes that community has experienced an “outsider or outsiders” bringing promises of hope and change only to fail to deliver on that promise. Over time that creates a distrust of anything that may be considered positive or that in any way might involve change in the community on any level.
- the most effective way to bridge trust is to allow the community itself to affect change. It must emanate from within; it must be theirs and theirs alone. Outsiders arriving and “doing” something to a community has created that mistrust.
- the community must acquire the skills and tools to affect change. When that occurs it breaks down the negative effects of trust.

Communication Systems

- Communication at the local level is critical to mobilizing a community to take action.
- in communities of extreme poverty the ability to communicate in the conventional sense (i.e. phone, radio, TV, newspaper, etc) is severely limited.
- the incidence of phones and conventional communication mechanisms is very low. So, the default method is to pass the word by person to person contact.
- In rural or highly dispersed communities, there comes a need for transportation to get the word out. That creates a dilemma in that the individual must make a decision as to how important the message is in relation to basic survival.

Leadership Systems

- Leadership systems in extreme poverty ridden communities in many cases do not mirror the conventional notion of leadership.
- Cultural mores and traditions are still alive and practiced in minority communities or communities with a high degree of cultural identification.
- cultural nuances greatly affect the way and methods in which a community, family, sub-group within a community leads itself.
- To assume that the conventional leadership paradigm is subscribed to and practiced in these communities is foolish.

Governance

- Governance at the local level is rife with distrust and bitterness.
- As this plays out over time, the ability of local government to effectively address local needs becomes minimized.
- No real governance actions can occur since there is no firm backing by the community at large.
- What is the role of government locally?

Lateral Oppression

- Lateral oppression is a phenomenon that is best described as a situation whereby people from the same class oppress each other in the same manner as those of power oppress those who are of less power.
- one group exerts its power over another: back stabbing, undermining efforts, negative gossiping and rumoring, and blatant plays at exclusion that enhance one group's power over another.
- the “crab bucket” effect that is illustrated by a bucket of crabs in which other crabs grab onto and pull down crabs that are attempting to crawl their way out of the bucket.
- This dynamic has a powerfully negative effect on the community overall.

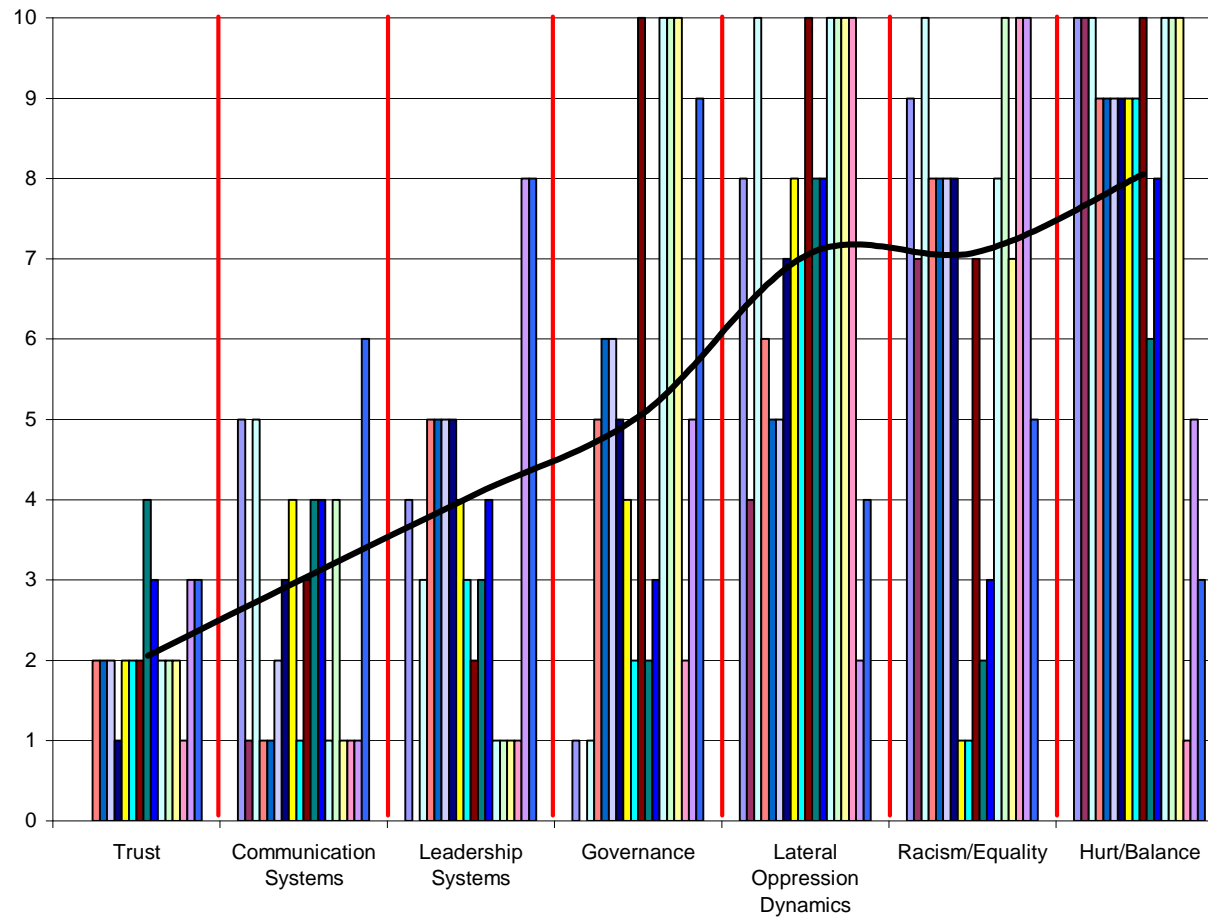
Racism/Equality

- Racism/Inequality is alive and well in this country and the world today.
- Many people's work has raised the awareness of racism and the negative effects of racism/inequality on the oppressed.
- Racism/inequality is still practiced and the effects are clearly visible in communities of extreme poverty.
- The marginalization effect of racism/inequality greatly limits the ability of these communities to dream and create a collective vision to the future.

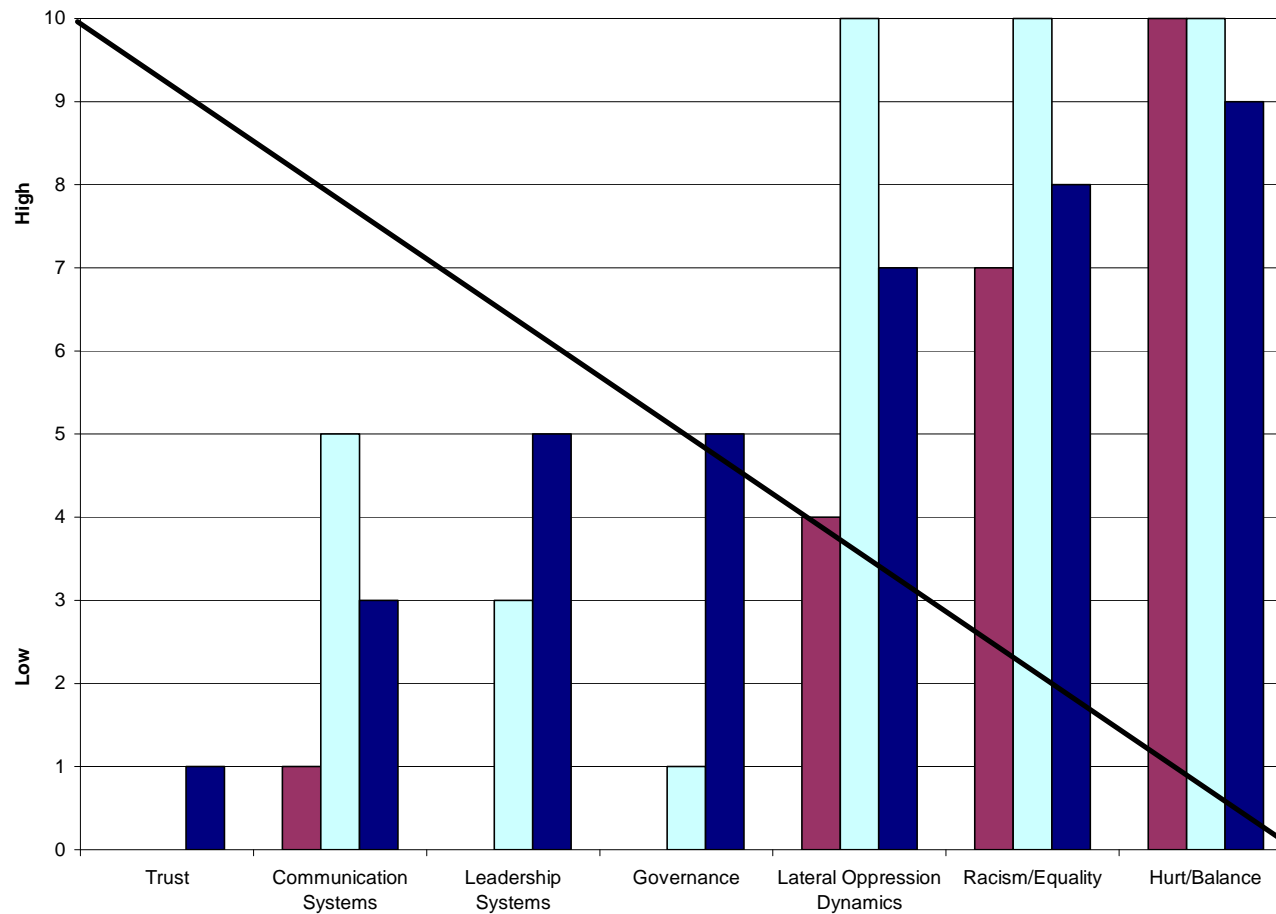
Hurt/Balance

- There is a high degree of hurt in these communities.
- When those events that cause widespread hurt within a community are not reconciled, there is no mechanism whereby the community can grieve and it causes the community to become dysfunctional.
- This dysfunction generally manifests itself by a severe decline in the social fabric of the community. This decline, over time, then becomes the norm.
- In order for the community to begin a journey back to normalcy, it first needs to grieve collectively.

Our Experience



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Work

- Creating this balance is essential to the community becoming healthy and able to take on the more complex issues of building community and place
- Strategies – Triple bottom line
 - Who we are
 - What we are
 - Where we come from

Balance

- A critical element in the community is the sense of balance that the community experiences. Most of the communities struggle with creating balance between the past and the future. They struggle with development, healthcare, education, youth issues and the like.
- Understanding the dynamics at play with these three questions goes a long way toward creating balance in the community.
- Ethnic connectedness, racial commonality, historical similarity; all create common bonds that create a sense of real community that bonds communities together.
- Just as we need to understand these three elements in our individual lives; communities too, need to understand these three questions as a community or they fall out of balance.

Triple Bottom Line

- The triple bottom line assists in understanding the needs and dynamics of the community and where the community is strong as well as where they are weak.
- Emotional/Mental Relationships (EMR)
- Social/Cultural/Community (SCC)
- Physical/Financial/Environment (PFE)

Who we are?

- People – Emotional/Mental Relationships (EMR) This dynamic places an emphasis on creating cohesion and maintaining individual relationships that allow individuals to thrive.
- Who we are encompasses a greater understanding of our collective self and how we feel about the issues in the community as well as how we deal with them.

What we are?

- Place – Social/Cultural/Community (SCC)
This dynamic is the seam between the other two. It is in essence where the other two converge and as such requires a unique effort to create as well as maintain.
- What we are connects that feeling of self with the community. Are we farmers, are we faith based, are we factory workers. Just who are we collectively as a community.

Where we come From?

- Things – Physical/Financial/Environment (PFE) This dynamic places an emphasis on providing the opportunity and quality of life associated with the other two.
- Where do we come from. Communities have a tendency to abandon the roots of their existence. Even the “Heinz 57” communities have a rich connection to some sort of common connectedness that sets them apart.

Our experience

All Communities		EMR	SCC	PFE	EMR -- Emotional/Mental/Relationships
Total responses	294	52	117	125	SCC -- Social/Cultural/Community
% of Total responses		18%	40%	43%	PFE -- Physical/Financial/Environment
Positive responses	77				
% of positive responses	26%				

The table above is a compilation of responses from community visioning session of all 18 communities. As we examined the issues that are forming the future of the communities, we must explain the methodology. We asked the community members to tell us what is good and not so good in their community. The answers are a listing of those comments. These comments are the pulse of the community and are the drivers shaping the community today.

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Outcomes

- Results
 - Time lines
- Measurement
 - Survey
 - Community Attributes
- Functional Connectedness

Results

You must recognize the element of the perspective of the community as it relates to the complexity of the environment.

Community Development Timelines

	Gain Trust	Actual movement	See Change
Non-Native	1.5 years	3 years	7 years
Native	4 years	7 years	10 years

Measurement – Survey Methodology Pitfalls

- Instrument design
- Cultural attributes
- Attitudes toward surveys
- Literacy
- Analysis Perspective
- Trust
- Leave something behind

Measurement – Community Attributes

1. **Demonstrate strong community pride and cultural preservation and protection.**
 - Communities are proud of their heritage and history and promote their unique cultural features. Culture is preserved and traditional values and practices are honored.
2. **Investing in our seventh generation**
 - People take a long term view – and consider decisions and investments in terms of the 7th generation. All decisions are made with an outlook on the future – to build a future that will last. Expenditures are considered investments in the future, including investments in people.
3. **Return to tribal communal decision making**
 - Tribal decision making follows traditional lines; and people feel part of the process. People collaborate and share resources.
4. **Empowering tribal entrepreneurial spirit**
 - The tribal members support an entrepreneurial spirit – economic development is done with an eye on building long term prosperity and success for future generations. The tribe has a well thought out and executed investment approach that creates a positive environment in which a tribal economy can thrive.
5. **Support and develop tribal businesses that engage in honest behavior**
 - Tribal businesses are supported – and provide employment and career opportunities for tribal members. They are run with a high degree of integrity and honest behavior.

Measurement – Community Attributes (cont)

6. **Provide opportunities to our seventh generation by preparing them to become stewards of our land, language and culture**
 - Tribal members and leaders have well established ways to develop, nurture, and transition power to future generations of leaders. Emerging generations and leaders are taught to become stewards of the land, language and culture.
7. **Creating pathways for traditional teachings and contemporary knowledge**
 - Education of tribal members is a priority – they are schooled and skilled in modern education and traditional teachings.
8. **Existence of traditional roles and societies that keep our communities strong**
 - The tribal system works well – and people from all across the tribe participate in different ways to build a strong, cohesive and healthy tribal community.
9. **Willing to work with others who will respect our standards and tribal values**
 - We take a stand for our values and tribal standards – we welcome those that are willing to respect our standards and values; and we are open to their input, ideas and support.
10. **“Take care of our own” – tribal communities are self reliant.**
 - Tribal leaders and members operate by a value of ‘taking care of our own’. We look after our community members and know the future of our people, and our destiny, is in our own hands.

Our Experience

1. Demonstrate strong community pride and cultural preservation and protection.	+/-	-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	+	+	+/-	-	-	-	+
2. Investing on our 7th generation.	-	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-
3. Return to tribal community decision making.	-	-	+	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-
4. Empowering tribal entrepreneurial spirit	-	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-
5. Support and develop tribal businesses that engage in honest behavior.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	+	-
6. Provide opportunities to our 7th generation by preparing them to become stewards of our land, language, and culture.	-	-	+	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-
7. Creating pathways for traditional teachings and contemporary knowledge.	+	-	+	+/-	+/-	+	+	+	-	+	+/-	+	+/-	+	+
8. Existence of traditional roles and societies that keep our communities strong.	-	+/-	+/-	-	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	+	+/-	+	-	-	-
9. Willing to work with others who will respect our standards and tribal values.	-	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	+	+	+	+/-	+	-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-
10. "Take care of our own" – tribal communities are self reliant.	+/-	+/-	+	+	+/-	-	+/-	+	-	-	+	-	+/-	-	+/-

Functional Connectedness

- The notion of functional connectedness is best described as the ability of a community to link together and create relationships within (and from outside) the community to develop or maintain for the betterment of the larger whole.
- As a community becomes more functionally connected it becomes incapable of being separated into more disjointed subsets.
- In order for Native communities to become stronger, they need to explore the basic elements that are tearing it apart.
- Understanding the dynamics at play within the community that keep it from attaining a functional connectedness, is central to our efforts with Horizons.

Community Impact

- Community Dialogue
 - 810 Participated
 - 171 Facilitators trained
- Leadership Engagement
 - 490 Participated
 - 54 Trainers trained
- Community Vision
 - 2495 Participated
- 18 Local Non-Profits Established

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Follow-up

- Connections are critical – and difficult
- Capacity – conduits
- Partners
- Champions
- Empowerment
- Sustainability

Contact Information



- **Al Nygard Consulting**
7506 Twilight Road
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-250-6825 anc@btinet.net
- **Sitting Bull College**
1341 92st Street
Fort Yates, ND 58538
877-639-0702 laurierh@sbc.edu
- **Northwest Area Foundation**
60 Plato Boulevard E
Suite 400
St. Paul, MN 55107
651.224.9635 www.nwaf.org