

Learning How to Ask: Reflections on Engaging American Indian Research
Participants

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Communication patterns and explanatory processes are culturally specific and not often compatible with research data gathering approaches. Given the opportunity to engage in a communication style that is comfortable, understandable, and culturally appropriate for American Indians, the researcher may find that respondents participate fully and more openly. Learning how to ask the questions and understanding the process of engaging the research participant is essential to obtaining research data among American Indian participants.

This paper presents a discussion on utilizing storytelling to collect research data from American Indians and posits that engaging the respondent is just as significant a step in the process as the questions asked. Reflections on utilizing storytelling as a data collection methodology and recommendations on the process of engaging the research participant by learning how and when to ask the question are provided.

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