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# Listening Sessions

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## Tribal Engagement and Indigenous-Led Public Health Disaster Research

<https://hazards.colorado.edu/research/public-health-disaster/listening-sessions>

### Listening Session 5 Report: Disaster Impacts and Capabilities of Indigenous Communities

July 9, 2023, 3:45 – 5:00 PM MDT

In-Person Session

Natural Hazards Center Workshop July 2023

**Session 5 Facilitators:** Shelby Ross, Melissa Villarreal, and Lauren Dent

**Notetakers and Report Authors:** Brigid Mark, Shelby Ross, Melissa Villarreal

**Report Reviewers:** Musabber Ali Chisty, Brigid Mark, and Lori Peek

**Audience for this Report:** This report is prepared for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder.

#### Report Outline:

- I. Listening Session 5 – Key Takeaways
- II. Listening Session 5 – Session Overview
- III. Appendix A: Listening Session 5 – List of Participants
- IV. Appendix B: Resources (Including Sessions 1-5)

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#### I. Listening Session 5 – Key Takeaways:

During this fifth and final session, some of the key lessons that we learned, as conveners, included:

- The lessons that we learned from the prior four online sessions served us well to prepare for the in-person convening. At the same time, there were different dynamics with the in-person arrangement—especially as related to people's desire to talk to one another and make personal connections—that affected our use of time during this session.
- There was enormous interest in this session! Of the five concurrent Listening Sessions offered at the 48th Annual Natural Hazards Workshop, this was one of the most attended with nearly 75 participants actively engaged.
- Personal introductions took up the entire allotted time of the in-person session because of the large number of individuals in attendance.
- It was difficult for the session notetaker to keep up with counting the number of hands when the facilitators asked opening questions that were designed to better understand the

audience in attendance. Utilizing an online poll would have better fit the large audience of the in-person listening session and saved time for discussion.

Importantly, lessons we learned from the participants that could inform future research efforts, funding streams, or other activities included:

- There are documents that have been published with best practices on how to conduct research properly and respectfully within Indigenous communities, both within the United States and Canada.
- The participants who attended the in-person session expressed that they have an interest in collaborating with Indigenous communities and are willing to share how their resources can be applied to these efforts. Having a listserv or an online place to consolidate resources and make connections would be a great start for a professional community that focuses on Indigenous communities, public health, and disasters.
- As with the online sessions, there were more people in this session who were non-Indigenous than were Indigenous. This points to a strong desire to listen and learn from those doing work in tribal areas, as well as from Indigenous researchers. It also speaks to the need to invest in and build capacity in Tribal Nations and among Indigenous researchers.
- Participants in this in-person sessions emphasized their desire to access the previously recorded sessions and underscored that it is important that the Natural Hazards Center showcase the progress made in building this community of practice. Rarely has such an effort been supported by a major federal agency like the CDC.

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## II. Listening Session 5 - Session Overview

The session began with prayer and a song from [Joseph Naytowhow](#), who is an Indigenous Elder of the Plains/Woodlands Cree of the Sturgeon Lake First Nation Band in Saskatchewan. After Elder Joseph Naytowhow finished the opening prayer, the facilitators proceeded with a [Land Acknowledgement](#) that has been established by the University of Colorado Boulder's Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies. The facilitators, Melissa and Shelby, then briefly introduced themselves. To promote audience engagement, the facilitators asked a series of questions, requesting a show of hands in response. The following summarizes an approximation of the number of participants who raised their hands for each question, as the session was not recorded and there were many participants attending the session (see Appendix A for full list of participants). Please keep in mind that the following numbers are rough estimates because of the number of people in the room.

**What is your career stage?** About ten participants were students. Five participants were in an early career stage. The majority were established professionals. None were retired.

**What is your institutional affiliation?** About twenty participants had academic affiliations. A couple had Tribal government affiliation. About fifteen had a federal/state/local government affiliation. About twenty participants were from a nonprofit. About five participants were from private industry. The facilitators solicited additional categories that may be left out, and one audience member mentioned non-recognized sovereign nations, emphasizing their nationhood.

**What is your discipline?** Many were social scientists. Around three participants were physical scientists. There were three engineers, seven public health workers, and ten emergency managers.

Additional categories identified by the audience included artists, landscape architects, educators, activists, and legal services.

**Did you attend any of the virtual sessions? How many?** About ten participants had attended at least one virtual session, and only three people (including the two facilitators) had attended all four.

**What is your level of experience with working on issues related to disasters and public health emergencies?** The question rating experience working on issues related to disasters and public health emergencies in Indigenous communities on a scale of 1-5 was difficult to estimate visually.

**How would you characterize your experience engaging with Tribal Nations?** About seven participants stated they were ready to learn and begin engaging with Tribal representatives. A few already worked directly with one or a few Tribes on a project or initiative. A lot of participants mentioned they oversee or work on projects that include Tribal engagement. About ten participants stated that they regularly work closely with professional Tribal colleagues. About seven participants stated that they work with Tribes as one of their primary professional duties/goals. About seven participants have spent the majority of their personal or professional life engaging with Tribes. About seven participants were enrolled Tribal members or work for a Tribal government or organization.

Next, one audience member asked what the virtual listening sessions were about, and one of the facilitators explained. One audience member expressed a desire for the links to recorded listening sessions to be made more easily accessible as they were not aware of the listening sessions series. They emphasized the work is so important and should not get lost.

The rest of the session was spent on introductions. The list of institutions or professions that the notetaker was able to write down included:

**Indigenous-centered nonprofits:** Urban Indigenous Leadership Partners, Sustainable Native Communities Design Lab, Native-owned firm that provides technical assistance in applying for funding (student from University of California Berkeley), First Peoples Conservation Council, Indigenous Youth Training in Emergency Response program [Preparing Our Home](#).

**State or federal government:** Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), FEMA Hazards Mitigation Planning Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States Geological Survey (USGS), USGS Hazards Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CDC Readiness and Response Program, Army Corps of Engineers, State of Hawaii Department of Hawaiian Homelands for Native Hawaiian Beneficiaries, United States Small Business Administration Office of Resilience and Response, Forest Service, Oregon State Resilience Officer, United States Department of Veteran Affairs.

**Private sector:** Legal Services Corporation, PRESTIGE Analytics, Innovative Emergency Management

**Academic or academic-affiliated:**

Positions: Four Research Assistants, Many Undergraduates, Four Graduate Students, One Postdoc, Four Professors (structural engineering, anthropology),

Centers or organizations: Natural Hazards Center (NHC), Center for Disaster Resilience and Recovery, Rising Voices, Hazard Mitigation Center

Universities: Caribbean University, California State University, University of California Berkeley, University of Delaware, Michigan State, University of Colorado Boulder, University in Japan + more.

**Non-profit:** Lutheran Disaster Response, Feeding America, Red Cross, Lowlander Center

**Tribal nation affiliation:** Lakota (Sioux), Navajo, Canadian First Nation's

**Other, or partially captured:** Energy Resilience Specialist, National Hazards Mitigation Association, Construction Management, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies grantee, Groups who focus on LGBTQ+ support

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During introductions, participants were asked to provide one sentence on what brought them to the session or what they think they can offer to the conversation.

The most mentioned reason for attending was to listen and learn (12 participants), and to learn how to respectfully engage with Indigenous communities and Tribal Nations or incorporate equity and inclusion issues into their work (12 participants). Of the 12 people who mentioned a desire to learn how to better work with and engage Indigenous groups or nations, two were affiliated with nonprofits (Red Cross, Feeding America), three were affiliated with Universities or University centers, and four were affiliated with the federal government (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA National Mitigation Planning Program, U.S. Geological Survey). The notetaker could not catch the rest of the affiliations.

The next three most mentioned reasons for attending the session were (1) a desire to connect different ways of knowing, ensure Western science recognizes Indigenous knowledge, communicate science to Indigenous communities, or incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their work (7 participants); (2) to share information and experiences from their work with Indigenous communities and nations (6 participants); and (3) to share resources more generally (8 participants). See Appendix B for a list of resources shared in all five Listening Sessions.

(1) Of the seven participants who voiced a desire to better incorporate Indigenous knowledges into their work, three were affiliated with universities, two were affiliated with state and federal government (Forest Service, State of Hawaii Department of Hawaiian Homelands for Native Hawaiian beneficiaries), one was from Puerto Rico, one with a nonprofit (affiliated also with a university), and one that the notetaker did not catch. Relatedly, six participants attended the session to gain understanding of Indigenous perspectives on disasters, climate change, resilience, health, and housing. One participant wished to know words for disaster in Indigenous languages. Another participant relayed the Cree word for disaster which more directly translates to "when things go wrong."

(2) Of the six participants who wished to share information and experiences about their work with Native nations and peoples, two were affiliated with universities, one identified themselves as Lakota, one was a member of state government, one a Navajo nation member engaged in design work for tribal communities as a Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies grantee, and the rest the notetaker did not catch. One participant had been working with Native communities for over 30 years.

Some of the wisdom that was shared included clarifying that Indigenous peoples and nations are not all the same and have different ceremonies and different cultural aspects, and that a lot of racism and misunderstanding is rooted in ignorance. Additionally, one participant recommended

that those who wish to do research with any Native Nations review Canada's [Tricouncil Policy Statement](#), which researchers are required to comply with in Canada, and in particular, [Chapter 9](#), which was built on international standards and developed in consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and explains how to interact with these communities. One Lakota participant mentioned that the “old way just doesn't work for Tribes” and that they hope to bring a different perspective to prepare their people to survive with bottom-up, not top-down, approaches. They plan to train members of their community to take ownership in their own communities because “the real professionals are in those communities... and we just give them the tools.” Finally, FEMA's office of National Mitigation Planning Program is [consulting with tribes](#), and advertised this as an opportunity for collaboration.

(3) Of the eight participants who shared resources, several noted that their institutions hold opportunities for funding directed towards or available to Native communities or supporting Native communities (Rural Communities Act, Oceanic Services, FEMA National Hazards Mitigation Planning Program, CDC, NHC). One participant mentioned a Native-owned firm geared toward providing technical assistance in applying for funding to Native populations. Another mentioned a free, self-paced core curriculum about disaster health. Finally, one noted that they have funding to help with legal services.

Other reasons for attending included breaking siloed efforts to create networks and learning opportunities. One PhD student was concerned about how to engage in research in the least exploitative way possible. One participant attended because they saw a land acknowledgment in the program, similar to one at their university, and wanted to learn more. One participant was reckoning with what it means to be a descendant of colonized peoples on colonized lands, as well as wondering what they could offer as a consultant and how to make their services more relevant and valuable to Indigenous communities. A local artist, part of [Stitching the Situation](#), was working with some people living on traditional tribal lands and sees creativity and textiles as a bridge to connect with many communities.

### III. Appendix A: Listening Session 5 - List of Participants

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#### IV. Appendix B: Resources (Including Sessions 1-5)

- Adams, R.M., Evans, C.M., Mathews, M.C., Wolkin, A., & Peek, L. (2020). Mortality From Forces of Nature Among Older Adults by Race/Ethnicity. *Journal of Applied Gerontology* **40**:11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464820954676>
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