



***Intergenerational Activities from a Native American Perspective***

by

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## ***Preface***

The intergenerational sharing component of The Native Path to Wellness Project is reflective of our purpose – to bring all generations together to experience the mutual benefits of strengthening and supporting cultural learning in the Minneapolis Native American Community. We recognize the need for all age groups to feel included, feel cared about, and safe.

The wisdom of our way of life dictates our stories and continued experiences to retain and nourish our identity as Native American people and, thereby, our cultures are assured to persevere. The commonality of the Intergenerational Sharing Activities is conversation and oral tradition.

You are welcome and encouraged to be innovative and make your own modifications considering your interests, resources, circumstances, and the interests and abilities of the participants.

## ***Acknowledgements***

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Some of the activities have been modified from the "Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook," which was written by Matt Kaplan and Lydia Hanhardt, and published by The Pennsylvania State University in 2003.

Intergenerational Activities from a Native American Perspective is available on-line at: <http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/Docs/NASourcebook.pdf>.

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## Intergenerational Activity 1

### ***Unity of Perspectives***

#### ***Overview***

Participants of this group activity gather in a circle and share their view of a culturally significant object placed in the middle.

#### ***Objectives***

- Establish a sense of cohesion in an intergenerational group.
- Enhance appreciation and respect for how other people around the world see a common object from diverse viewpoints.

#### ***Materials/Resources***

- Writing paper
- Pencils

#### ***Steps***

1. Encourage everyone to sit in a circle.
2. Place an object in the center of the circle. Ask each person to quietly think about what they see in front of him or her. During this quiet time, the facilitator will burn sage and purify the circle in silence.
3. Ask each person to do the following:
  - a. Draw a picture of what you see. Write one word beneath the picture that best describes the thought that was foremost in your mind and heart during your quiet time and drawing time.
  - b. Have each person share a story with the others in the circle about what they saw, what they drew, and the word they wrote.

#### ***Reflection***

Everyone will see different points of views based on the direction they occupy in the circle. If we are willing to listen to everyone's perspective, then we can get a more accurate description of the object in the center. This is one way to put our minds together. When we get increased clarity from each other, we should give thanks and be grateful to each other.

#### ***Suggestions for the object in the center of the room***

- A drum, set on its side with drumsticks on top
- An eagle feather on sage, cedar, sweet grass braid, tobacco
- A pair of moccasins (infant, child, adult, or elders)
- Cradleboard (beaded or plain hide)
- A simulated star
- Earthball

## Intergenerational Activity 2

### **Data Match**

#### **Overview**

In this activity, participants answer simple questions about their lives and look to find others who share their experiences.

#### **Objectives**

- Draw attention to how people of different generations often share interests and life experiences.
- Promote casual conversation.

#### **Preparation**

Print copies of sheets of paper with the following questions written on them in the form below. (These are examples of questions you can use.)

<b>YOU</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>GROUP MEMBER</b>
	Favorite Season?	
	Favorite Direction?	
	Middle, Youngest, Oldest, Only Child?	
	Favorite animal?	
	Birth Month?	
	Tribe?	
	Favorite Color?	
	Favorite Language?	
	Favorite Food?	

#### **Steps**

1. Provide each participant with one sheet and have him or her fill out the answers to questions under the YOU column so that one side will be filled in.
2. Once everyone has answered the questions, have them move around the room and look for people who share the same answers, and have them put their names in the GROUP MEMBER column.
3. Have everyone find one person of a different generation from the GROUP MEMBER column so they are broken into pairs.
4. In these two-member teams, have participants make up a story, skit, or song about the question they had in common.
5. Invite participants to do mini-presentations to the full group.

#### **Considerations**

To further extend the activity, young and older adult participants who have much in common can work together on creating a poem or a short article for a school or community newspaper to highlight the fact that people of different generations have much in common.

## Intergenerational Activity 3

### **Concentric Circles**

“Everything I know I learned by listening and watching.”  
*Vernon Cooper, LUMBEE*

#### **Overview**

This activity allows young and old participants to have a series of brief one-on-one discussions in which they share experiences and feelings on a variety of topics.

#### **Objectives**

- Build rapport between young people and older adults.
- Develop participant recognition and appreciation of other people’s experiences.

#### **Steps**

1. Arrange the chairs in two concentric circles, with chairs from the inner and outer circles facing each other.
2. Ask the older half of the participants to sit in the inner circle and the younger half to sit in the outer one facing them. Everyone should have a partner.
3. Ask a question for each pair to discuss. When they’ve had just enough time for each partner to speak (usually about 3-4 minutes) ask either the younger participants or the older participants to move one seat to the right. Now everyone has a new partner. Ask a new question. Continue this for at least four rounds.

#### **Reflective Questions:**

1. What makes you proud to be Native American?
2. What do you most want to learn about Native American culture?
3. What are you most eager to learn about from people in other age groups?
4. What is the most important thing an elder has taught you?
5. What is the most important thing a young person has taught you?
6. What is your favorite childhood memory?

## Intergenerational Activity 4

### ***Two Truths and a Could Be***

#### ***Overview***

“Two Truths and a Could Be” provides an intergenerational group of participants with a fun, non-pressured way to introduce them and meet others.

#### ***Objectives***

- Facilitate discussion between people who are at first strangers to each other.

#### ***Steps***

1. Create intergenerational pairings or small groups of up to four participants.
2. Inform participants that they are to come up with three statements about themselves; two are to be truths, and one is to be something that did not take place, but just as well could have.
3. Each person gets a turn saying their three statements, followed by a period in which their partner(s) have to guess which of the three statements is a “could be.”
4. Reconvening in a large group, ask participants how well they did distinguishing between fact and a “could be.” Invite participants to share particularly interesting or funny occurrences with the larger group.

#### ***Considerations***

Some of the younger participants may have reluctance to participate in this activity; perhaps due to shyness and perhaps due to not having ideas about what to say. As facilitator for the activity, one way to help is to demonstrate the activity.

To model the process, present very different types of information (e.g., I had a dog named Speed Bump when I was a kid; I am a champion hoop dancer (jingle dress dancer); I met the President of the United States last year.) Invite the group to guess which statement is the “could be.”

This activity also presents an opportunity to have a conversation about the ethics of not telling the truth.

## Intergenerational Activity 5

### **Circle of life**

#### **Overview**

In this activity participants share their feelings about their own age and aging in general.

#### **Objectives**

- Elicit participants' perceptions about aging.
- Stimulate dialogue about age-related issues.

#### **Steps**

1. Ask everybody (participants, staff, volunteers, etc.) to place themselves in a circle facing inward, from the oldest to the youngest member of the group. Start with the oldest participant standing by the next oldest, and so forth, until the youngest participant is standing directly beside the oldest participant. (To add an element of difficulty, have people find their places in the circle without saying a word to each other.)
2. Taking turns, have each person state their age and state a strength associated with their age.
3. Now, invite participants to find a new place in the circle, but this time, suggest they may move in the circle to the age they would like to be. Verbal interaction is encouraged.
4. Taking turns, have each person state their desired age and why they chose to be that age.

#### **Reflective Questions**

1. What does it mean to be that age?
2. What are some of the benefits of your "new" age?
3. What are some of the limitations of your "new" age?
4. Is there anything you think you could do at that age that you can't do now? If so, what?
5. How can physical cues be accurate or inaccurate in judging someone's age?

#### **Considerations**

One theme that usually comes out in this activity is that each age has its advantages and disadvantages. In other words, no one age group is inherently better or worse than other age groups. Another powerful theme is how there are similarities across age groups, such as how we all enjoy socializing with other people.



## Intergenerational Activity 6

### ***Did You Ever.....?***

#### **Overview**

This is a game in which young people and older adults share an assortment of personal experiences. This activity can work with children as young as five years of age and with a wide range of adults, as long as they are willing and able to share all sorts of memories.

#### **Objectives**

- Stimulate young people and older adults to remember and share memories.

#### **Steps**

1. Asking, "Tell me about your life," is usually a little too broad to evoke memories. Instead, choose one of the topic's below, or create your own specific topic.
2. Each person in a group tells a true story about one of the topics below. These stories should be in as much detail as possible. Remember the incident like a movie in your head, and explain what you see one step at a time: what happened, what you thought, and what you felt before, during, and after. If they don't come up with specific, real memories on a certain topic, encourage them to make a story up. Tell the story as if it really happened.

#### **Here are some topic ideas:**

Did you ever?

- Go to a pow-wow?
- Pick sweet grass or sage?
- Go fishing?
- Learn something from an elder?
- Learn something from a child?
- Sleep in a tipi or wigwam?
- Go swimming?
- Go berry or vegetable picking?
- See a buffalo, moose, or bear?
- Make fry bread?
- Sing at a drum?

#### **Reflective Questions**

1. Did you learn something new from this activity?
2. What was the most surprising thing you learned today?
3. Did you hear anything that made you laugh? If yes, what?
4. How would you feel if some of the things you learned about happened to you?

#### **Considerations**

Both children and adults are likely to have memories from different times. To stimulate more sharing, ask them the following "reflective questions":

## Intergenerational Activity 7

### Quotes

"I have seen that in any great undertaking it is not enough for a man to depend simply upon himself."  
Lone Man (Isna-la-wica)

"There can never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace which is within the  
souls of men."  
Black Elk

### Overview

This activity brings people together to share their conceptions about Native American values.

### Materials/Resources

- Poster size paper
- Markers
- Tape

### Steps

1. Divide the participants into small intergenerational groups. The number of groups depends on the total of participants.
2. Ask each group to select one word from the list provided below or collectively identify an alternate word not shown in the list that is significant to all of them.

### Suggested Words

Earth	Strength
Sky	Wisdom
Animals	Understanding
Respect	Beauty
Honor	Courage

3. Have each group create a meaningful and powerful, one-sentence quote based on the word they've selected and write it on poster-sized paper. Have each small group select a spokesperson.
4. Reconvene in a large group, and have the spokesperson from each small group hold up and recite their quotes, also sharing some of the meaningful highlights from their group discussion.
5. In the large group discuss how to sequence all the quotes in an order that flows together.
6. Gather the group together in a circle and ask the oldest participant to read the integrated quote from the heart. Going clockwise, ask each of the other participants to also recite the quote from the heart as well until the circle is complete.

### Considerations

Encourage adults to resist the temptation to take over the exercise, and be sure to encourage the children/youth to participate actively.

## Intergenerational Activity 8

### **Awensi (Animal) Bingo**

#### **Overview**

Awensi (Animal) Bingo not only encourages intergenerational sharing, but is also a way to bring languages to people in a fun, entertaining way. We have included the words for various animals in both Ojibwe and Dakota; however, the activity can be adapted to introduce words of any language.

#### **Steps**

1. Find the Animal Bingo cards, Forrest Animal Cards, and instructions at [www.bogglesworld.com](http://www.bogglesworld.com).
2. Practice using Dakota and Ojibwe words for the following 12 animals. These words can be displayed in front of the room or just read out loud to the best of your ability.

#### ***Dakota Vocabulary on Animals for Animal Bingo***

Porcupine	-	pahin
Skunk	-	maka
Raccoon	-	wica
Rabbit	-	mastincala
Beaver	-	chapa
Fox	-	sungidan
Bear	-	mahto
Deer	-	tahca
Moose	-	ta
Wolf	-	sunkmanitu
Owl	-	hihan
Squirrel	-	zica

#### ***Ojibwe Vocabulary on Animals for Animal Bingo***

Porcupine	-	gaag
Skunk	-	zhigaag
Raccoon	-	esiban
Rabbit	-	waabooz
Beaver	-	amik
Fox	-	waagosh
Bear	-	makwa
Deer	-	waawaashkeshi
Moose	-	mooz
Wolf	-	ma'iingan
Owl	-	gookooko'oo
Squirrel	-	ajidamoo

3. Choose a Bingo caller. This person should be familiar with the language used in your community.
4. After the caller calls the animals, have the participants repeat the words as a group in the Language being learned. This gives everyone the opportunity to practice speaking the language of your community and culture.

***Considerations***

This activity can be modified to teach and have fun with any language.

## Intergenerational Activity 9

### **Good Living**

#### **Overview**

This activity brings young people and older adults together to share their conceptions about what it means to live a “good life.”

#### **Participant Requirements**

This activity is good for any sized intergenerational group, as long as participants are willing to share personal values and listen to those held by others.

#### **Objective**

- Provide a venue in which a group of young people and older adults can openly and non-judgmentally discuss their values.

#### **Materials/Resources**

- Paper
- Pencil
- Blackboard or poster paper

#### **Steps**

1. Introduction: Read the following:  
“There are many ways to live one’s life. Many people look to spirituality for guidance in making decisions about how to behave. In our Native American culture, traditions represent values to live by. In this activity, we will ask you to work with others to create your own list of values to live by. Afterwards, you will share and discuss your ideas with each other.”
2. Form intergenerational groups, each with three to eight participants.
3. Group discussion:  
Have each group start with a general discussion about what it means to be a “good” or “respectful” person. Then, have each group write down their ideas about items individuals feel should be included in a listing of “values for good living.” Instruct participants to list as many items as they see fit, as long as the majority of group members agree with each item.
4. Reconvene in a large group. One at a time, have groups present their lists and share some of the highlights from their discussion. (If desired, an additional step could be included in which the overall group attempts to develop an integrated list that reflects the input provided by the various groups.)

#### **Considerations**

Encourage participants to think of all aspects of “good living.”

This activity is likely to lead to a lively discussion of strongly held points of view. Ensure that the atmosphere remains open and that all participants feel comfortable about voicing their views.

For this project to work well in a public school setting, make sure to emphasize that this is a values clarification exercise rather than one of moral instruction.

## Intergenerational Activity 10

### **Spelling Game**

#### **Overview**

Whereas spelling bees are often competitive, this “spelling game” emphasizes teamwork.

#### **Objectives**

- Provide participants with a fun opportunity to demonstrate intergenerational cooperation.

#### **Steps**

1. Obtain four volunteers for a spelling team; two younger and two older from an intergenerational audience.
2. The facilitator asks the audience a broad question that relates to the themes of age, aging, or intergenerational relations in the Native American community such as, “Tell me a word that makes you think of Native Americans” or, “Tell me a word that describes activities that Native American people of different generations do together.” Audience members should shout out words. The facilitator selects a word and gives the word to the spelling team.
3. The team should verbally spell the word, one person and one letter at a time. Once they have spelled the word, they should collectively shout out the word together.

Example: The word is pow wow.

Person 1: P

Person 2: O

Person 3: W

Person 4: W

Person 1: O

Person 2: W

All: “POW WOW!”

4. Next, the spellers, as a group, make up a sentence using the word; one person, one word (not letter) at a time. Then, the group finishes by loudly repeating the sentence as a group.

This is done several times; one or two additional audience members may join the spellers. The facilitator asks the full group what the exercise is really about, guiding them to realize that it is not about accurate spelling or grammar, but rather about teamwork, collaboration, and trust.

## Intergenerational Activity 11

### **Creative Writing**

#### **Overview**

This is a creative writing activity in which younger and older participants share various experiences and perceptions with each other.

#### **Objectives**

- Provide participants with a relaxed, fun way to learn about the ideas and feelings of members of another generation. They will practice their public speaking and creative writing skills.

#### **Materials**

- A large sheet of paper
- A marker
- One piece of paper per person
- One pencil or pen per person

#### **Steps**

1. Select a theme:  
Either in a large group or several small intergenerational groups, have participants brainstorm a list of topics that have personal meaning and/or significance. Some examples are: pow wows, culture, relatives, seasons, life as a Native American, tribal life, and Native American ceremonies (sun dance, sweat lodge, big drum). Pick one using a simple majority vote. (Keep in mind, that not all participants will have an easy time writing, so make sure that the topic is one of interest to participants.)
2. Preliminary discussion:  
Ask participants to describe the theme using ideas of things that they associate with it such as smells, foods, clothing, and events. Encourage participants of all ages to help one another write down their ideas. If necessary, ask prompting questions. For example, if the theme is “a pow wow” asks questions such as:
  - a. What did your family do at the pow wow?
  - b. In what ways has the meaning of pow wow changed for you over the years?
  - c. What do you do during the pow wow?
  - d. What is your favorite thing to eat at the pow wow? (Do you eat a lot of fried bread and wild rice soup?)
  - e. What do you enjoy most about the dancing?
  - f. Did you pay admission? Why or why not?

#### **Develop an Acronym**

1. Give each group a sheet of paper and ask them to write the name of the theme in capital letters going down the left side of the paper.
2. Instruct the group to work together in figuring out a series of sentences, phrases, or words, each starting with one of the letters of the theme word, and reflecting a specific aspect of how the group feels about the theme. For example, if the theme were the “pow-wow,” an example might look like this.

## **POW WOW**

**P**ublic announcement

**O**utdoors

**W**ind blowing softly

**W**ords of wisdom and humor

**O**-the circle of life

**W**elcome feelings

3. Give the group fifteen minutes to work, and then ask a couple of people to share with the rest of the group.
4. Letter writing:  
Ask participants to close their eyes and then say to them, "Imagine that it is the first day of \_\_\_\_\_ (the pow wow, spring, school, etc.) You leave your house and walk around outside. As you walk, you remember your favorite thing about the (pow wow, spring, school, etc.) You rush home to tell someone about it, but nobody is there. You decide to write a letter to someone in your family to tell them about how you are feeling. Write the letter now."
5. Hand out paper and pencil/pen to each participant, and give them twenty minutes to write.
6. When they are done, ask a couple of people to share their letters with their group or with the overall group.

### ***Considerations***

A good way to help participants think of words to describe how they feel about an object or event is to bring pictures of these things. Participants can focus on a picture of pow-wow dancers, family, or flowers as a way to get them started.



## Intergenerational Activity 12

### ***Inter-Tribal Dance***

#### ***Overview***

This activity brings young people and older adults together in fun and celebration as they share their favorite dances with one another.

#### ***Participant Requirements***

A group of young people and a group of older adults knowledgeable of dances such as: fancy shawl, jingle, two step, boys fancy, men's and women's traditional, etc.

#### ***Objectives***

- Participants share the dances they know, learn new dances, and gain some insight into the cultural trends that have influenced others.

#### ***Materials/Resources***

- Music to dance to – on compact disc (CD), audio tape, drum group, or other format.
- Entertainment system to play the music

#### ***Steps***

1. Preparation:  
Find two groups: one of young people and one of older adults willing to be involved in a jointly planned, intergenerational dance event. Most participants should have knowledge of a dance form, be willing to share it with others, and be open to learning new dances.
2. Have members of each group (perhaps a subcommittee of group members) develop a plan to introduce their favorite dances to the other group. They should decide what music they need, how they will demonstrate the dance forms(s), and strategies they will use to teach their dances (e.g., taking learners through a progression of simple steps to more complex ones).
3. Have representatives of both groups meet and plan the joint dance event. Things to be worked out at this meeting include: determining which dance forms will be highlighted at the event (try to achieve balance between both groups' favorite dance forms), creating an agenda for the event, and establishing general plans for refreshments and decorations.
4. Have participants select a Master of Ceremonies who will say a few words at the beginning of the event, introduce the dance groups, and keep things on schedule. At the beginning and end of the event, this individual will thank everyone who has made the event possible, and throughout the dance, encourage all participants to try new dances.
5. Conducting the intertribal event. There are many ways to organize an intertribal dance event. Here is one way to introduce each dance or dance form. Have the group introducing/performing the dance do the following:
  - a. Say a few words to introduce a dance. Share any special social, cultural, or historical meanings associated with the dance or dance form.
  - b. Provide a brief demonstration of the dance form.

- c. Provide instruction either in a large group or in small groups. If members of the audience are hesitant to try the dance, have members of the demonstrating group enter the audience and make personal requests for partners.
  - d. If everyone is picking up the dance nicely, provide some time (at least the length of a song) for people to enjoy the dance.
6. Optional: Include some dances to teach the overall group (e.g., intertribal, jingle, men's bussel.)

### ***Considerations***

A successful intertribal event does not have to be a one-time event. One way to build upon an intergenerational group's enthusiasm for dance exchange is to plan intergenerational dance performances for community and other public events. If the group is very ambitious, consider establishing an "intergenerational dance troupe." To make the troupe idea a reality, however, it will help to have one institution: school, community center, senior citizens organization, take the lead with a head male or female dancer, floor director, dance leaders, and a intergenerational committee, all highly committed to this vision and program.

## Intergenerational Activity 13

### ***Discussions and Deliberation***

#### **Overview**

In this activity, youth and older adults participate in an open discussion and deliberate on issues that are of common concern. Through adopting a format of deliberation, rather than a debate or mere dialogue, participants will learn more about the issue and have the opportunity to consider solutions from an intergenerational perspective.

#### **Participant Requirements**

Ideally, have a minimum of 12 participants. This activity is best suited for older youth (14 – 18 years old) due to the mature nature of many of the current issues.

#### **Objectives**

- Educate participants about current issues.
- Strengthen participants' critical thinking and discussion skills.
- Encourage participants to become less judgmental about the ways in which people of other generations feel about controversial topics.

#### **Materials/Resources**

- Chairs
- Flip chart on adjustable easel
- Markers
- Photocopies of two to three articles or information sheets about the topic selected

#### **Steps**

##### 1. Preparation:

Before the group meets, select a topic for the deliberation. Selection can be made by providing all participants with a ballot containing topic options and asking them to select three that interest them.

Some examples of topics that work well are: sovereignty, land seizures, sacred sites, mascots, alcoholism, affirmative action, immigration, the death penalty, violence in the media, Indian education, diabetes, gang activity, teen pregnancy, elders, foster care, Native Cultural traditions, language, environment, global warming, and racism. Note that these are larger issues rather than current events that are tied to a single news item.

For the topic that receives the most votes, the facilitator locates two to three articles and a fact sheet. The best materials will be ones that represent different views on the same issue. A good set of sources would include an objective statistical source, and two editorials or sources that are clearly arguing one side of the issue, so as to provide both pro and con perspectives. Distribute these sources to participants in advance, but bring copies for people who forget theirs at home.

2. Introductions and procedure:  
Seat the entire group in a large circle, and ask one member of the group to volunteer as the recorder. (Place the flip chart beside the volunteer so that they can take notes for the group.) Ask participants to take out the reading, so they can reference them during the discussion.
3. Introduce yourself, and explain to the group that the discussion is designed to be open and friendly. Participants need to show respect to one another by:
  - a. Criticizing the comment, not the person.
  - b. Listening when someone else is speaking. Limit “side-bar” conversation
  - c. Being patient. Don’t interrupt the speaker.
  - d. Keeping what is discussed private. People should feel comfortable sharing personal experiences without worrying that others will share these stories with strangers.
4. Ask all the members of the group to introduce themselves and say why they think the selected topic is an important one to discuss.
5. Deliberation:  
Lead the group discussion. Structure the discussion around the various perspectives on the topic. This is possible by preparing questions in advance that are both general and specific to the sources for the topic. Good questions include:
  - a. What are the different viewpoints that people have about this topic?
  - b. What are the arguments for/against this issue?
  - c. What do opponents/supporters feel is the problem behind this issue?
  - d. Why is this issue important today? Why wasn’t it a problem in the past? (Or, was it an issue in the past, and how was it dealt with or not dealt with then?)
  - e. Where do you stand on this issue?
  - f. What accounts for the different ways that people think about this topic?
  - g. What do you think about the statement that the author of the article made regarding \_\_\_\_\_? (Optional)
  - h. How would a supporter/critic of this issue respond to the criticism given by \_\_\_\_\_? (Optional)
6. During this discussion, make sure to encourage all age groups to contribute. This discussion should be at least 45 minutes to one hour to allow for a thorough discussion. After the group has discussed the issue, have them begin to look at a workable solution. It is important to keep in mind that the best idea that comes from this deliberation may be a solution that only helps, but does not solve, the problem. Helpful questions include:
  - a. What are the different ways in which people think we should address this issue?
  - b. Do these different “solutions” have anything in common? Any shared beliefs about the problems?
  - c. Are there any workable solutions all participants could live with? (Many times, solutions involving education programs are ones that all sides can live with. The facilitator may want to point the group toward looking in this direction for a common direction that all can agree upon.)

***Considerations***

The group may decide to continue meeting. The next step might involve having the group develop an action plan for addressing the problem. Together, the group may develop an idea for a legislative bill and send it to their representatives in federal, state, or local government. They may create a pamphlet, make a video, or create a curriculum for schools. If the topic is teenage pregnancy, for example, they could develop an intergenerational skit that they would perform at local schools.

Many resources are available to help plan and conduct deliberation-type activities. Some valuable Internet resources are: AIROS, Native American Calls, American Indian Policy Center, Indian Country Today, National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association, and Indian Child Welfare Association.