What Has Extension Been Doing in Arizona and New Mexico Indian Country?

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Introduction

Extension methods that have proven successful in the dominant culture in the United States may not be effective in Native American communities. Most reservations are socially, economically, and physically isolated from mainstream society. Although these societies are undergoing modernization, the process of transformation in these traditional, non-western societies has often caused great conflict and upheaval. The history of domination and discrimination by the mainstream culture has created cultural confusion, with some adhering to traditional ways, and others becoming more “modern” by varying degrees. Due to this history, Indian reservations also experience high unemployment and lower economic capacity.

Purpose of the Poster

The Indian Country Extension (ICE) working group formed in 2003, with the realization that Extension Indian Reservation Program Agents have a unique position within the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Extension agents working on the Navajo, San Carlos Apache, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Hualapai, and Hopi reservations work with sovereign nations, each with its own unique culture, that often differ drastically from the dominant U.S. culture. One of the purposes of our working group is to educate others about the needs and resources of our reservation communities. The other intention of our group is to foster and increased understanding of the motivations of tribal audiences.

Major Points of Information to be Shared

The poster will describe the various programs provided on selected Native American reservations in Arizona and New Mexico, and how these programs may differ from typical extension programs in the United States. It will show an outline of programs offered on each reservation with photos of extension activities, and will illustrate some of the cultural, social and educational differences that exist among Native American clientele.

Conclusions and Educational Importance

Extension agents on the reservations work with clients that often do not have access to adequate transportation, or housing and that have a higher incidence of diabetes, alcoholism, and drug addiction. Agents must adapt educational methods to account for different languages, cultural norms, and learning styles, while facing pressure from the university community to reach large numbers of clientele and to show impacts which are often slow in coming due to barriers not often present in other extension audiences.