Adult Education for Native Americans

Historically, most adult education for Native Americans was tied to the goal of assimilation and was aimed toward individual economic improvement. In the 1950s, for example, programs designed to improve adult English literacy and provide adult vocational training were introduced (Szasz 1999). In recent years, adult education for Native Americans has reflected broader goals and has been concerned with playing a role in preserving native language and culture rather than encouraging assimilation (e.g., Lockard 1999; Schultz and Kroeger 1996; Still Smoking 1999).


The diffuse nature of the literature on adult education for Native Americans is a serious issue. It is true that a number of sources are available, but the literature base itself lacks depth. No strands of research and theory building can be detected: the literature does not seem to build on itself. The topics of race and culture have received attention in the literature of adult education during the past decade. It appears, however, that Native Americans have not yet received the attention that other groups, such as African Americans, have. Before the field of adult education can serve Native Americans adequately, this deficiency must be addressed.

Resources


A framework for designing, developing, and implementing formal educational experiences for Native American adult learners is proposed. The framework is based on an assessment of Native American adult learning styles from community college and university settings representing tribes from across the United States and Canada.


Alternative models, approaches, and perspectives to consider in working with ethnic minority students are offered in this volume. Among issues addressed are assessment, career and educational goals, learning enhancement, success courses, mentoring programs, educational technology, and the integration of nonminority instructors into the minority environment.


Native American oral tradition provides a literacy for lifelong learning that promotes perspective transformation. This approach is particularly suited to justice and wellness education because participants engage multiple ways of being and knowing. Oral traditions can be understood in the context of transformative learning that has implications for adult education.


Following an overview of the historical development of the Chicago Native American community, the origins of the Native American Educational Services (NAES) College in Chicago are described. Discusses how adult education with its focus on transformation and consciousness raising has had an impact on the way education is viewed at NAES College.


Ethical and cultural issues related to adult educators conducting research in Aboriginal communities are explored based on the authors’ experiences. Researchers need to be viewed as co-learners rather than as experts.


The effects of needs assessment or larger system change efforts on Native American communities have not been well documented. This article outlines a research project undertaken in one urban Native American community, documenting specific community-based strategies employed by a research team composed primarily of Native Americans conducting a needs assessment.


Adults engaged in active resistance can effect a recharacterization of recorded histories that define social and political relationships across generations. The relationship between social action and recharacterization of the events in the historical context of the Native American struggle for self-determination is examined.


The bicultural Identity Development Model is described and illustrated in relation to the narrative of a Native American elder. The narrative or life-story elaborates upon the informal educational influences of a traditional Native American approach to “learning the Medicine.”

By Susan Imel
2001

This study explored and examined the learning techniques used by Native American learners in higher education and the factors that they believed contributed to their success as Native learners. Mentoring relationships, Native American-based support systems, determination to give back to the community, and spirituality were strategies employed by successful Native learners.


This book presents the results of an ethnographic study of the Native Education Centre (NEC), an urban adult education center, in Vancouver, British Columbia. It focuses on the people at the NEC—First Nations students, board members, and teachers—and reveals their beliefs about First Nations' control of education and how they put those beliefs into practice.


The importance of language and culture in providing culturally relevant instruction for Native American adults is stressed. Examples of adult education programs serving Navajo adults are discussed.


Native American students were paired with Native American university professionals, and students worked on self-directed activities related to their mentoring goals. The investigation of the self-directed learning activities revealed that students would continue them.


One purpose of this edited collection of papers is to expose academic communities to indigenous learning and indigenous knowledge. Collectively, the papers illustrate the related problems of authenticity and authority and suggest that the best way to understand indigenous knowledge is through the eyes of indigenous peoples.


Adult educators can learn from Native peoples’ focus on the four directions of the medicine wheel: the emotional, physical, spiritual, and cognitive. Examples from Native American adult education programs are used to illustrate the chapter.


Indigenous people participated actively at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in 1997 and, as a result, the UNESCO Institute for Education initiated an international survey on adult education and indigenous peoples. The Canadian portion of the survey is reported in this paper. A number of interviews were carried out with experts in the field in an effort to capture some of the knowledge, lessons learned, and observations of those in the field who lack time to write about their experiences.


The potential uses of distance learning for maintaining and sustaining Native American tribal communities within the United States are explored. Included are a discussion of traditional education in tribal contexts and its relationship to tribal uses of distance education technology and an analysis of the potential outcomes and consequences of these practices.


This practical handbook covers a number of areas including culturally relevant curriculum, strategies for teaching Native Americans, contrasting values, cultural concepts and lessons, and cultural awareness. Examples and lesson suggestions are included throughout.


How Little Big Horn College (LBHC) is meeting the needs of its students in providing tribal college education is documented in this paper that presents student perceptions. LBHC has been successful in meeting the needs of its adult population and, in many respects, the adult learners at LBHC are like other adult learners who attend tribal and mainstream colleges.


A study described the perceptions of selected Blackfeet elders concerning what constitutes the traditional Blackfeet knowledge base and how they believe it should be transmitted through formal and informal institutions in the Blackfeet community. Results revealed the belief that formal education has failed to include Blackfeet learning and teachings. Elders expressed an urgency for the Blackfeet language to be used more often in transmitting knowledge.


Adult education is covered in this study of federal Indian education. Included in the third edition is an analysis and interpretation of trends that have shaped Native American education in the 1980s and 1990s.


Reports on a study to identify factors that supported educational success of American Indian baccalaureate nursing graduates. Four interactive core variables emerged: individual American Indian student, instructor, institutions, and external variables.

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