# Native American Listening Sessions

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Introduction

The Native SAWPA team out of California State University was first initiated in the late spring of 2017 when the CSU WRI Director approached the Director of the Center for Indigenous Peoples Studies, both at the California State University, San Bernardino campus, about developing and conducting listening sessions about water (and land) issues for Native Americans, California tribal groups and Indigenous-descent peoples in the region.

Data Collection

Each Meeting opened with introductions from attendees, a prayer/acknowledgement followed by Birdsongs to honor the land. Birdsongs focused on water and acknowledging our connection to the land to set the meeting tone. Introductions followed traditional protocols where tribal affiliations, family lineages and birth places were shared. This communicated how each person was uniquely connected to water issues as an act of resistance to the general stereotypes of indigenous peoples.

Each person shared their experiences with local water resources and how water quality has degraded due to industrial development. The meeting then broke into small groups that listed issues of environmental concern around indigenous sovereignty, water quality and specific locations that need attention. Once lists were formed, small groups took turns sharing their concerns and created categories of prioritization. Lists were drawn up in real time with active feedback from group members on environmental urgency and how indigenous knowledge systems can unite pedagogy and activism.

The data collected in community listening sessions included fieldnotes and audio recordings of the listening sessions that happened before and after I became a part of the research team.

Data Transcription

At the listening sessions I was in charge of the audio recordings, then, I transcribed some of the audio files into written text. The team at CSUSB had to ensure that the audios were properly transcribed. The transcription was a very hard and time-consuming process. The team had each listening session transcribed by two different student assistants to corroborate word for word and sentence all information and experiences shared among tribal members. After listening to the listening sessions audio recording a few times I was able to recognized the voices of the different tribal members and made the process a bit easier. Reading the final transcriptions allowed the student assistants to take note of specific topics that were mentioned.
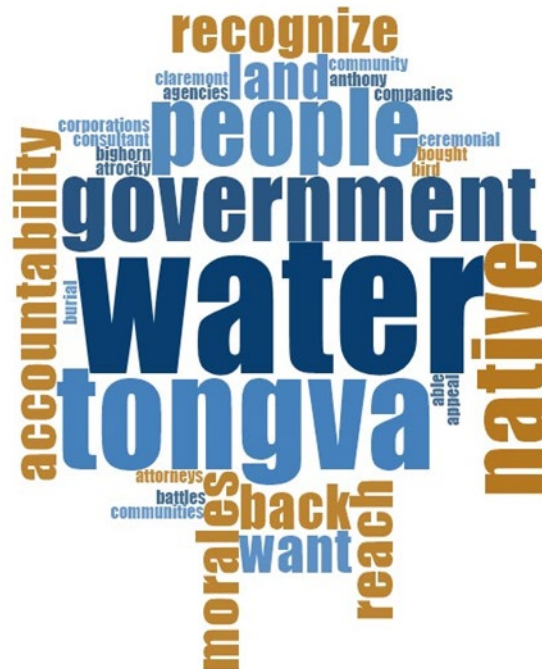
NVivo 12

NVivo was used for the data collection and the data analysis. NVivo is a software program used for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Specifically, it is used for the analysis of unstructured text, audio, video, and image data. NVivo has a mixture of qualitative and quantitative analysis features: in particular, it can compute inter-coder reliability and use cluster analysis to examine text or coding similarities.

Data Analysis

We found 12 Categorical response areas, accompanying phrases, (Legal, Consultation, Societal structures, Signs of discrimination, Spiritual, Environment, Social class, Cause and effect, Sovereignty, Water Issues, Water Authority or Agency, and Water Rights), and 2 Methodological areas (Environmental Degradation, and Discrimination and Resistance).
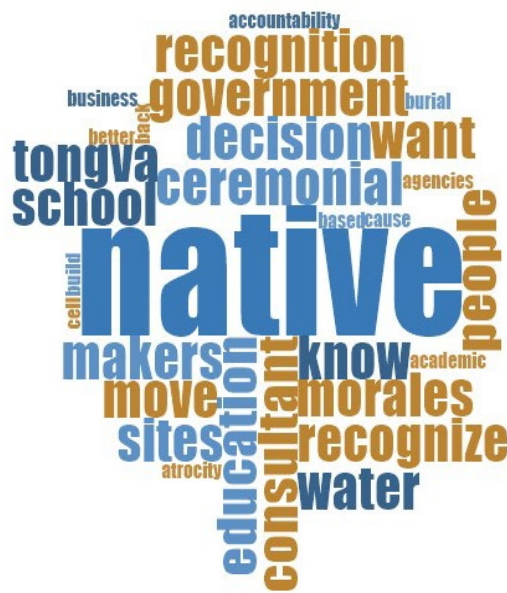
Conclusion

Working with Native American requires an awareness, approach and preparatory perspectives (including Respect) that we have identified in a number of methodological issues, including maintaining Cultural and Spiritual as well as Socio-Political Sovereignty, both in particular activities and how to treat sensitive (even sacred) views.