



National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences  
*Your Environment. Your Health.*

# The Value of Tribal Ecological Knowledge

## Workshop Background, Purpose, and Aims

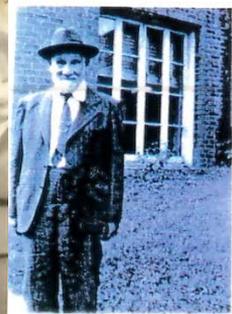


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**National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences**



# Background

## Honoring our Ancestors and Culture



Finn (1881-1951)



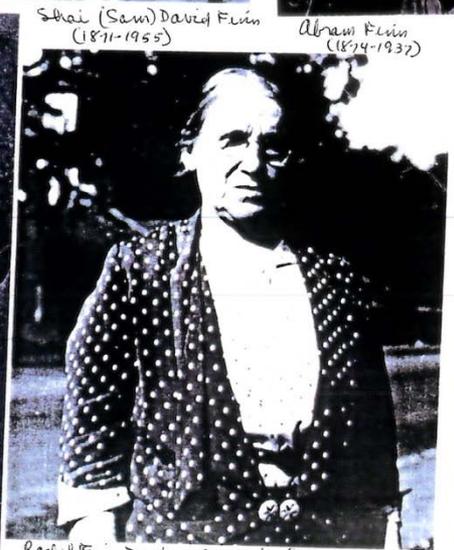
Shai (Sam) David Finn (1871-1955)



Abram Finn (1874-1937)



Max Finn (1880-1940)



Rechel Finn Denton, Bennett (1867-1946)



# Background

## Speaking on Behalf of Tribal Members and Communities



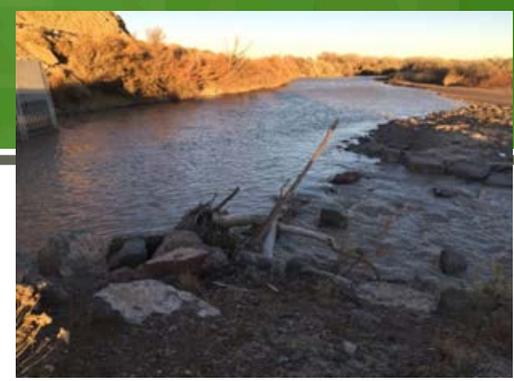


# Background

## Smithsonian Working Group on Native Health and Culture



2015 Working Group Meeting, Western Carolina University  
Fish Fry with Community Members  
in Cherokee, North Carolina



## What is TEK?

### Different Definitions

TEK is traditional knowledge and, like Western science, is based on accumulation of observations. It entails a cumulative body of **knowledge** transmitted through generations, **practice** in how tribes carry out resource use practices, and **beliefs** about how people fit into ecosystems. (Berkes, 2000)

TEK is holistic in outlook and adaptive by nature,

- gathered by generations by observers whose lives depended on this information and its use (Ohmagari and Berkes, 1997).
- reintroduced by tribal elders to help teach and better understand historic relationships between the environment and people (BIA website, 2014).

TEK exists as a result of a particular *way of life* – one that assumes that humans are one of the many inter-related components of an ecological system. TEK is also a product of generations of observation and experimentation in a place, and the intimate connections that are made with the non-human world, as reflected in oral traditions and spiritual/religious beliefs. (Carroll, 2015)

# TEK in Context

**Traditional Folk Knowledge**

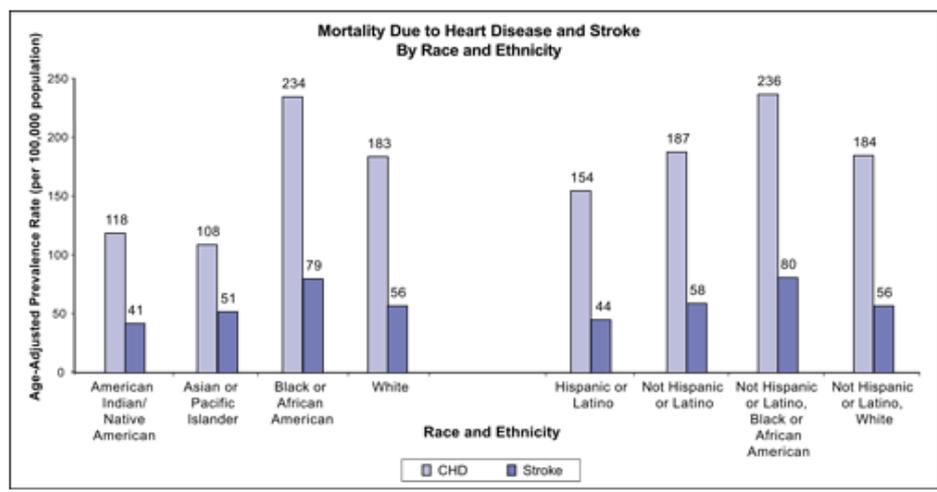
**Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK)**

**Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK)**

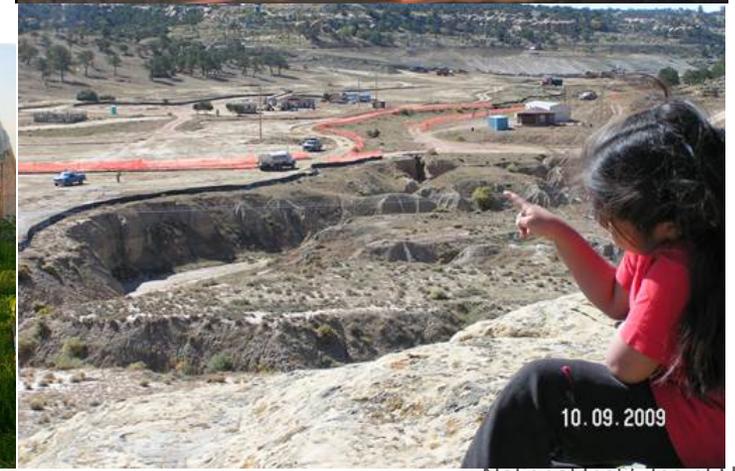
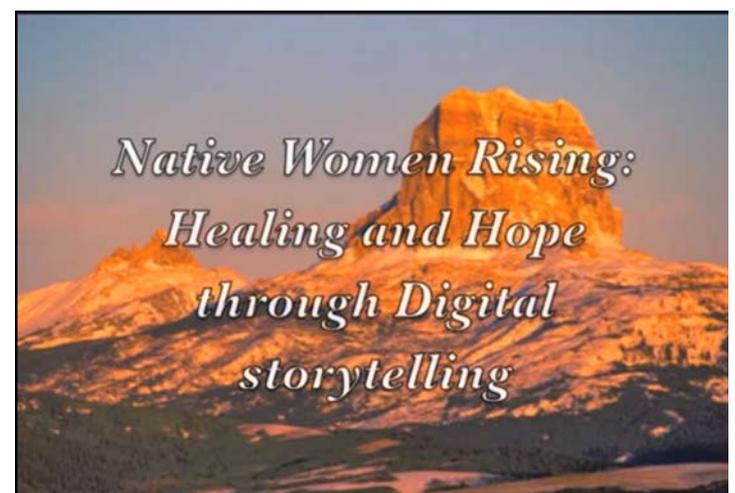


# TEK in Context

## Narratives, Stories and Scientific Presentations



Source: CDC Wonder. DATA2010...the Healthy People 2010 Database. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2004



10.09.2009

## Workshop Aims



San Juan River, Navajo Nation

- To explore ways to **improve trust** in academic-tribal partnerships by honoring and valuing TEK
- To identify specific methods for **incorporating community-acquired data and local TEK** into environmental health and biomedical research studies
- To **identify methods for validating TEK**
- To **consider ethical approaches** for tribal specific data collection and **legal and social issues of ownership of data**
- To **build capacity** for tribal communities to respond to long term and immediate disaster events.



THANK YOU!

**Send Questions and Comments with Subject Line “TEK Question” to:**

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