

Housing in Indian Country

Teaching Notes

Issues/Topics case includes:

1. Federal trust land status of reservations
2. Impact of land status on efforts to secure funding for housing.
3. Policies at the federal level and how they impact communities at the local level.
4. How individuals can become and act as change agents
5. Innovative approaches to increase the housing supply.

Case Objectives:

1. To help students to understand how policies impact communities and how policies serve to resolve or create community conflicts.
2. To provide students with the tools to begin addressing and resolving social problems in tribal communities.
3. To explore the process of community-based decision making using a community development setting.
4. To teach students basic research skills.

Intended audience: This case is suitable for use in courses in education, public policy, community organizing, community development, economic development, sociology, dispute resolution, public administration, Native American studies, and social work.

Field Test Results: This case was presented to a group of 75 students who are primarily place-bound Native Americans who live and/or work at one of several tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Students were arranged in small groups with six-to-eight people at a table, and received and read the case study first. They answered a group of questions similar to the first set of discussion questions, and leaders from each group presented the findings to the larger group, made a poster of their conclusions, and posted them around the room. Next, students were provided stories included in the appendixes section of housing programs that went well and not so well. Students remained in their break-out groups and responded to the second set of questions.

In their evaluations of the case, students especially noted the value of:

- learning about housing in Indian Country.
- understanding available resources and how they can be used for community benefit many people when used in a wise way.
- Students enjoyed seeing the end result of how accessing federal and state funding can benefit the tribes' ongoing efforts to build the housing stock.

Some comments:

- Providing current information from the National American Indian Housing Council, and HUD's website on Indian housing (see appendixes), particularly national statistics, is recommended for hand-outs and/or visuals.
- For those less familiar with the topic, or just to add voices to the presentation, instructors are encouraged to invite guest speakers from the local office of Indian housing from HUD as well as housing staff from local tribal reservations. The HUD website has each state's local contact person.
- It is also helpful to consider bringing in speakers from your local low-income housing program, either at the state or local level, to share what they have done in innovative ways to create more housing for tribal reservations.
- The feedback from students and faculty suggested this case really worked because it was an issue of strong local relevance.

Implementation and use: This case works well in a three-hour period. In the initial field testing, background information was provided by the presenter.¹ It would probably be best if students had some, if not all, of the available information prior to arriving, to allow the time to read through the materials and to begin framing a response. The case study could also be used to assign follow-up essays by distributing the hand-outs with supplemental references and websites. In addition, much has happened since this case study was developed and students could go to websites such as the National American Indian Housing Council, to learn about more recent information, as well as conferences and other training events. Students could also interview different tribes to compare and contrast housing programs in selected reservation communities.

This case study would also work very well for students studying public administration. The references includes the logic model used by HUD as well as a logic model developed by the author for employing interventions at the local, regional, and national level that result in increased housing stock for tribal communities (see appendixes; the logic model is included as a separate attachment)

This case study could also be developed through role-playing by having students offer to play each individual person who speaks in case study. It could also be quite effective as an interrupted case study, where:

- A) Background information and speakers discuss their work and the situation with respect to housing in Indian Country.
- B) The case study and the Indian Housing Fact sheet (see appendix section) are distributed. Students read the case study and dialogue on the questions entitled "Discussion Questions – Housing Case Study," giving students opportunity to dialogue on how the case study compares with current practices in each of the

¹ This included the presenter's professional experience as a community organizer and community housing specialist, and visuals which shared archived photos of early forms of housing for Indian people, housing at the time of contact, current photos of housing on tribal reservations, information on serving the housing needs of specialized populations (elders, people with mobility needs, single-parent households, and the like), building plans for housing, instructional books for Native Americans on how to manage personal finances, and pictures of people moving in to their new homes.

communities served. Students make a poster about their ideas and conclusions and share them with the larger group.

- C) The remaining information from the appendixes section could be distributed and students could discuss the following:
1. What barriers get in the way of Indian people having homes (Appendix B)?
 2. What factors influence the strength of local coalitions and what innovative partnerships can be formed to increase housing in Indian communities (Appendix C and D)?
 3. What action is needed at the federal level to address the steady eroding of funding for Indian housing (See Appendix E)?
 4. What can local tribes do about the changing approaches with respect to obtaining housing (Appendix F)?

The presenter or guest speakers then conclude with information on housing options from local, state, and national levels, concluding by encouraging students to get involved at the individual, tribal, and national levels to advocate for efforts to create more housing.

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