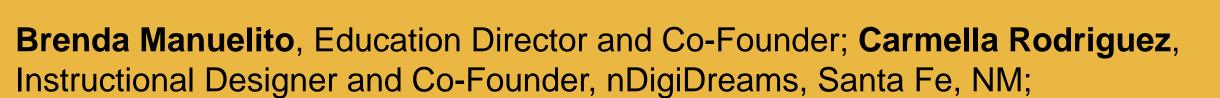
Digital Storytelling:

A New Media Tool for Engaging American Indians

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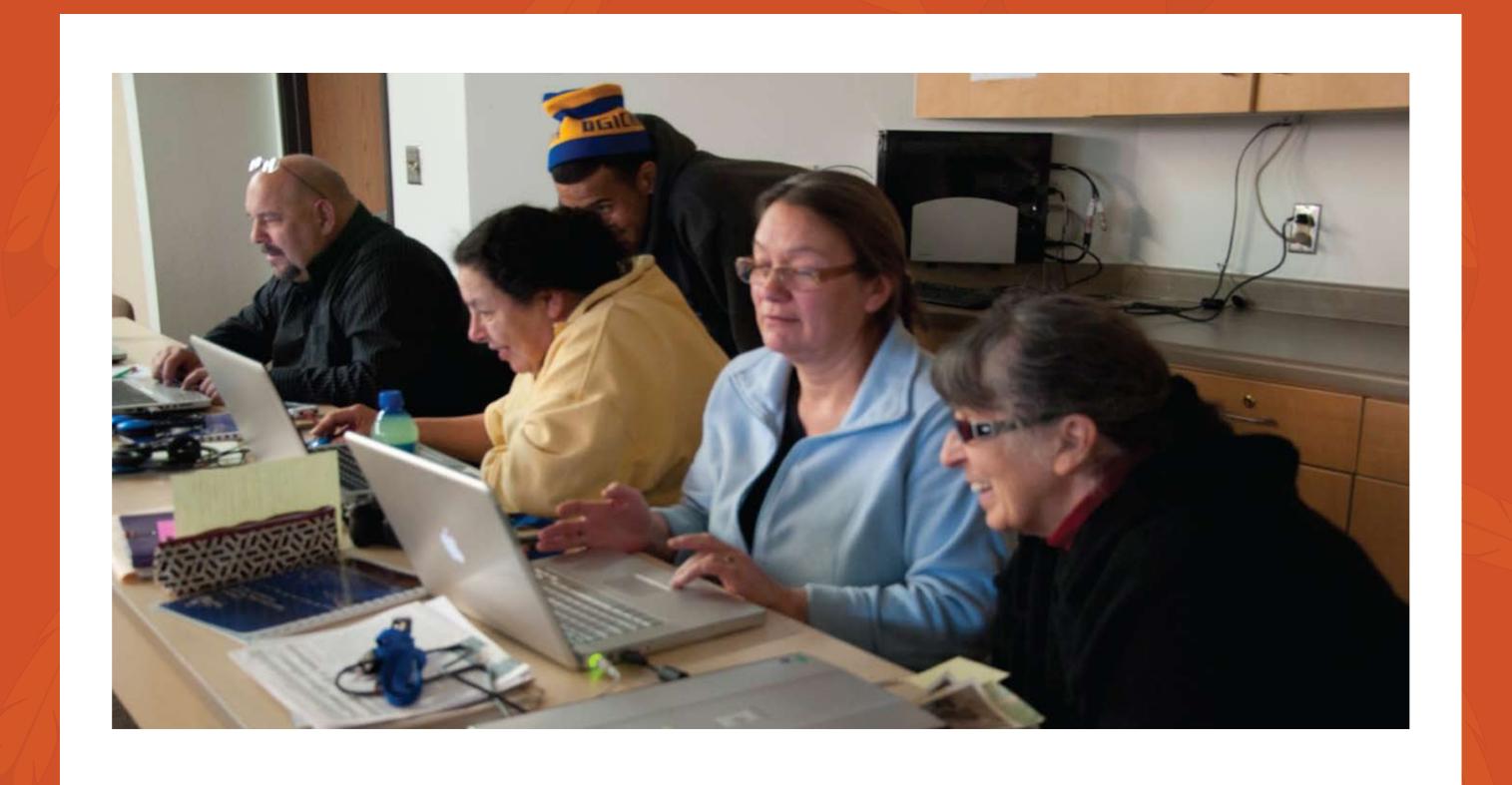






Objective:

American Indian Health (AIH) is an information portal dedicated to issues affecting health and wellness of American Indians. The National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the AIH User Group work collaboratively to apply best practices in bringing health information to this population. The latest objective was finding new and unique ways to keep the portal relevant to users.



Methods:

To enhance the portal and incorporate American Indian oral traditions, the AIH User Group and NLM developed a section, "Our Stories." User surveys and focus groups validated the idea. Stories available on the Internet were added, but the need existed for more focused stories. Research on constructing personal health stories revealed digital storytelling



was an effective technique. These story bytes bring health and wellness issues alive for storytellers and listeners. nDigiDreams was selected to train community members at a Minnesota reservation to create digital stories. A four-day workshop included reviewing elements of storytelling, story circle, and script writing; managing files, using storyboards, and gathering media; recording voice and producing mini-movies; and screening, evaluating, and disseminating the stories.

Results:

The digital stories created average three to five minutes. They include the script in the storyteller's voice enhanced by photos, art, and music. The stories become personal cohesive units that bring "voice" to experiences. By writing, creating, and distributing the stories, their experiences become alive and bring life back into the truths, strengths, and ways that native people use to stay well. Many of the storytellers agreed to share their stories for educational purposes on AIH.

Conclusions:

Digital stories are a meaningful and unique way to share health and wellness experiences. As a new media, they promote health, educate others, and can become effective advocacy tools. nDigiDreams works with rural and underserved American Indian communities to build local capacity to continue the production of digital stories beyond the initial training workshop. A backpack equipped with production tools was created as a portable means for creating future digital stories.