



# Hopi Women's Voices: Perspectives on Traditional Knowledge

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## ABSTRACT

• A needs assessment for the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office (HCPO) was conducted on what traditional knowledge Hopi women elders think are not being passed on and how they would like them to be brought back.

• The aim of the needs assessment was to inform HCPO policy and projects in the future. As well, the data gathered from the needs assessment will be used to help stem the tied of Hopi traditional knowledge loss.

## INTRODUCTION

Across the world traditional indigenous knowledge is vanishing and irreplaceable pieces of the human experience along with it.

### Traditional Knowledge and the Hopi of Northern Arizona

• The Hopi are losing their traditional knowledge at a rapid rate. For the Hopi, traditional knowledge explains not only the origin of all peoples but provides lessons for how to live today.

### Hopi Women

- In Hopi society, women are considered fire keepers whose role is to preserve values, traditions and customs of the family.
- According to Hopi women elders, Hopis lost traditional knowledge when the western culture permeated their way of life.

“Women didn't have a voice in anything, in making decisions and anything big. We were just suppose to just stay back and let the men take care of it. But now it's very different. Our voices are heard everywhere now. We always have something to say...We have to speak up.”

– Hopi woman elder from first mesa

## METHODOLOGY

The data for the needs assessment was collected through participant observation of Hopi women elders as well as:

### Open-ended Interviews

- 9 open-ended interviews of Hopi women elders
- Conducted between June and December 2009

### Survey

- 6 questions, short answer survey
- 13 surveys where completed by Hopi women at the Museum of Northern Arizona's Hopi Festival in July 2009

## CONCLUSIONS

### Dual Worlds

Hopis have to live in two worlds, the traditional world and the Western world. In order to bridge these two worlds they must become experts at weaving them together to create one balanced reality. When Hopis aren't able to bridge these worlds alcoholism, drug use, gangs and domestic violence occur.

### Hopi Women

- Hopi women play a large part in helping weave the traditional and western worlds together as well as preserving traditional knowledge.
- However, this role and therefore their culture is breaking down due to the pressures of having to live in two worlds.

### Future of Hopi

- Even with these challenges, the Hopi are surviving and trying to find ways to bridge their traditional and western lifestyles. They are trying to diversify their economy and bring in new capital without compromising their values and preserve their culture.

