



Dog Management with Tribal Nations

- The Native American Humane Society (NAHS) works to empower Native American communities to become healthier, happier, and safer by providing information, support and resources for animal care programs in Indian country

NAHS connects Tribal communities and animal welfare service providers, NGOs, foundations, and other agencies to assist Tribal communities in resolving their challenges with animals through regular animal care, population management, and community activities.

www.nativeamericanhumane.org



1. Introduction

- Native American people and dogs have coexisted for thousands of years, with important relationships traditionally shaped by each other’s needs and roles. While many Tribal members experience complex problems living safe and healthy lives with dogs, dogs remain a valued part of their shared community. Though dog issues are often characterized in a similar way across nations, every community is unique in location, geography, population size, culture, and approach to living with dogs. Each dog guardian is also individual in their way of owning and caring for their dog based on their personal experiences, perceptions, and norms. Finding ways to build, or support, a nation’s dog management program to meet the different expectations of leadership and individual community members is paramount to improved long-term health and welfare for both dogs and people.

Successful dog programming results from working in partnership with communities to build respectful, culturally relevant programs that recognize and value the role that people play in dogs’ lives. Dogs are domestic animals who depend on people to care for them and keep them safe. It also falls to communities and dog owners to keep fellow community members safe around dogs. People make decisions about how and how well dogs will live based on the knowledge, skills, and resources that they have available to them. When animal welfare organizations (AWOs) work with dogs, their ability to improve the lives of dogs depends heavily on each group’s ability to work effectively with people.

Today, social and economic challenges of many Tribal nations have overshadowed the care of, and respect for, companion animals leading to a rise in neglect of individual animals and the unmanaged growth of companion animal populations. Intergenerational challenges resulting from historical trauma of displacement from traditional homelands by European settlers and removal to reservations by the government have further contributed to a changed relationship between people and their dogs. As a result, many animal welfare organizations and individuals work with Tribal nations in an effort to help individual dogs and dog populations by providing service and support.

Working in Native American communities - Tribal nations and urban Native communities - comes with a responsibility to learn about the past in order to understand and respect the present. Animal welfare individuals and organizations often come from outside the Tribal nation with culture and biases that can be contrary, and even harmful, to those they aim to help. Working with Tribal nations to find ways for dogs and people to live better lives together is most successful when animal welfare organizations bring with them a thorough understanding of the value of what they bring, and a deep appreciation for what is already there. This includes understanding a Tribal nation’s active displacement by Europeans and the role that history played in changing the relationship of mutual work and care between people and their dogs. Working on dog issues is about coming together as partners with Tribal members to chart a new path where dogs and people can find a way towards a mutually beneficial life together. What follows is information meant to help non-Native animal welfare practitioners understand dog population management, honor the Native American context, and find their role in this work.

As AWOs, there is a responsibility to better understand themselves and the communities they support, to be transparent and inclusive, and to provide space for those they serve to take the lead in deciding how they want to chart the next part of their journey with dogs.



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2. Getting to Know the Community

- In order to work effectively on dog issues on Tribal nations or in urban Native communities, it is imperative to know and understand the community. Getting to know the community means becoming familiar with the whole community – the dogs and the people. How the two intersect and affect one another, directly and indirectly, is the only way to understand what is happening in the community and to build a dog program that fits.

Getting to Know the Dogs

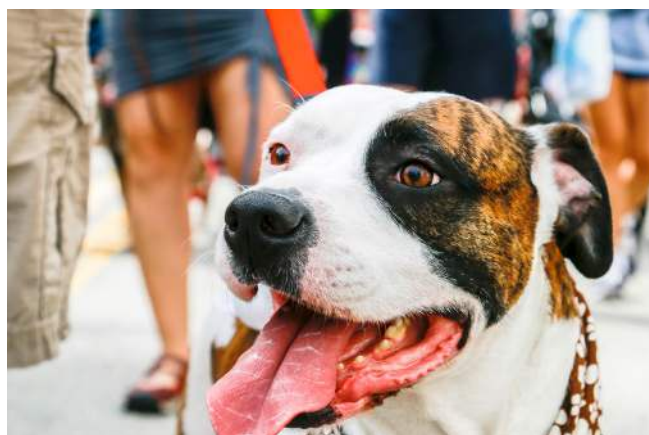
Working on dog issues requires an understanding of the connection between individual dogs, overall dog populations, and the human community. The characteristic and behaviors of each dog influence the overall dog population, and in turn the dog population impacts, and is impacted by, people. For example, if most of the dogs on the Tribal nation are spayed and neutered, there will be fewer puppies born and fewer fights between intact males over females in heat.

Dog population dynamics (DPD) take into account the characteristics of individual dogs but explore them in relation to what is happening in the dog population - how individual dogs are entering the population, what dogs are doing in the community and how they are behaving, how they leave the population, and how their guardians own and care for them. Who the dogs are and how they behave influences how people feel about them and act towards them – this makes understanding the dogs and the population a necessary component of understanding the community's dog issues.

How one community lives with dogs and the challenges they face will be different from another community. What one community may tolerate, another may not. For example, we can explore two different scenarios.

Southwestern Tribal Nation

In a rural community in the southwestern states, the majority of the dogs are owned and free



roaming. Most of the dogs are born locally and people tend to give puppies away to family members and friends. There are community members who appreciate the free roaming dogs and believe it is a natural way for them to live. Others would rather the dogs be contained and they do not like to see the dogs fighting, hanging out at the school, or chasing cars. Because of the location and climate, there are a lot of ticks and fleas on the dogs which has prompted the Public Safety, Housing and Health Departments to look for ways to keep people safe from tick borne diseases and keep nation housing free from tick infestations.

Northern Alaska Native Village

In a northern village, the way dogs live and the issues that affect the community are quite different. The cold climate generally prevents external

parasites such as ticks or fleas, but the dogs have tapeworms due to their more traditional diet. In this remote village, many of the dogs live tied up unless they are working with their people. Rabies has been an issue in the past because of the remote location and proximity to wildlife. Teachers who come from outside the community to work are concerned about the dogs' welfare because they are not provided with consistent food, water, doghouses, or time off their tethers.

In these examples, both communities have their own ways of living with dogs and both experience different issues with dogs individually and as a population. By learning about the characteristics and behaviors of the dogs and how they fit into the overall community in each of the scenarios, AWOs can help to decide what dog management tools to use and how the tools (e.g. spay/neuter, education) will affect the dogs and their people.

Important information to collect may include:

- population size
- where the dogs are coming from (e.g. inside the community, from another community)
- how long guardians keep their dogs
- what dogs die from
- if they are tied or free roaming
- how many dogs are removed by animal welfare groups
- vaccination status
- owner knowledge about dog care

For an AWO to know if they are making a difference, they need this baseline information to understand where they started and when they have achieved their goal.

Dog population management (DPM) takes all of this information - what is happening with dogs and their dynamics in the population - and puts it into a workable plan from which to choose which tools will work together to change what is happening with dogs and people. While dog management is founded on information about dogs, when it is implemented at the community level, it is grounded in a deep understanding of the community and augmented by a solid communication plan, a comprehensive set of tools, data collection and community engagement principals.

When an AWO works with a Tribe to build a humane and comprehensive dog management program, they are helping the nation to rebuild and to heal

their community.

Getting to Know the Human Community

At the core of working with dogs is working with people. Individual community members are the ultimate guides, mentors, and knowledge holders, and good relationships with them contribute to respectful, empathetic, and engaged partnerships. At the Tribal nation level, leadership is responsible for creating dog management infrastructure such as holding facilitates and dog bylaws that help community members to practice good dog guardianship. By working together, AWOs, Tribal leadership and individual community members can bring together their collective skills and energy to change how dogs and people coexist.

Each Tribal nation and community has a unique combination of history, culture, language(s), demographics, social norms, systems, and structures. It is an AWO's responsibility to learn about the realities and histories of the people they work with, including how they live with dogs today and if they may want to change that. No two communities are the same but there will be overlap such as shared language or similar traditions. Every external service provider is in charge of their own personal learning about the community in which they work, as this is an important part of understanding how to work there. Each person should seek out information, listen, and look for ways to incorporate what they learn into their relationships and work in the community.

To make time spent with the Tribe more meaningful:

- Learn about the community. Tribal nations vary in number of members, geographic area, location, governance, and other unique characteristics that define where and how community members live and engage with each other. Gain insight into the community, its history, culture, and other relevant information that may help demonstrate respect for the Tribal nation and assist with building credibility. Most Tribes have had experiences that affect their willingness to accept help from outside organizations.

“At the Pueblo, we have seen firsthand the value and impact of NAHS' efforts to organize animal health care services such as vaccinations, spay and neuter services, and community education on animal care for our community.”

- Gain approval to work with the community. Have a local representative from the Tribal nation to help facilitate the steps needed to gain approval for conducting work of any kind. At many Tribal nations, the Tribal council must be consulted for approval for any outside organization to conduct activities within the community. The Tribe's willingness to work with an organization or individual may depend on experiences they have had with other groups.
- Work with a local representative to identify traditional approaches and protocols. For example, opening and closing comments, prayers, or other traditional ways to open a conversation or meeting. Be aware of traditional holidays or events and work around them. Consider if making an offering is appropriate and if it is, how to do it.
- Learn about the importance of dogs and animals within the Tribe's clans, traditions, and history. Ask about storytelling and if it is appropriate to incorporate it into the work.
- Learn who to go to for information and advice. People with knowledge, wisdom, and insights can also be connectors.

Keep in mind that working with any Tribal nation as a non-Native person means acknowledging past harms and injustices and understanding how this legacy informs the present for each person in the community. Striving for inclusivity and reconciliation extends to any work, including helping dogs – it is the foundation for how non-community members contribute to meaningful and contextual dog programs.



The Role of Tribal Sovereignty

Most Native American Tribes are recognized by the federal government as sovereign nations, a legal status that resulted from treaties and negotiations that occurred during the settlement of their lands by Europeans. Tribal sovereignty in the United States means that like states, each Tribal nation has the right to self-government. However, Tribal government, laws, and agencies can also be subject to Federal authority, which means there can be complex issues of jurisdiction and responsibility when working with Tribes.

In theory, any decisions about Tribes concerning their property and citizens should be made with their participation and consent. Historically, however, sovereign status, self-government and self-determination have been overlooked by the Federal government and outside agencies. As a result, Tribes have been subject to inequitable policies and to decisions made without consultation, which has led to Tribal nations viewing some outside interventions with distrust and antagonism.

In 2000, then President Clinton issued Executive Order 13175 reaffirming the federal government's commitment to a government-to-government relationship with American Indian Tribes, and directed federal agencies to establish procedures to consult and collaborate with Tribal governments. Consultation has been cited as part of the federal government's trust responsibility since early treaties

and each successive President has reiterated their commitment to the principles of the Executive Order, yet compliance and accountability remain a problem. AWOs working with Native American communities may not be subject to the legal requirement of Tribal consultation but should recognize the need to consult as part of respectful and inclusive work practices to achieve improved animal health and welfare.

Animal welfare organizations assisting with dog management can learn more about Tribal sovereignty by:

- Reading about Native American history.
- Reading the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Learning about these rights from community knowledge keepers or scholars.
- Understanding and acknowledging the trauma caused by government legislation and colonization.
- Recognizing the intergenerational harm of Indian policy.
- Learning the sovereignty aspirations of each partner community and recognizing that work done together with dogs is part of that.

Cultural and Community Norms and Protocols

Beyond the legal and political implications of Tribal sovereignty, there also exist the cultural and community norms and protocols that are unique to each Tribal nation. Norms are shared behaviors and beliefs that a group of people follow, but they may be unspoken or even unconscious. The norms in one community may be different from those in another so recognizing and following them is a sign of respect. Following the cultural and traditional norms of the community keeps AWOs from imposing their own norms on Tribal nations, which can lead to frustration and an inability to find common ground.

Following protocols, such as how to introduce oneself or offer a gift, is also a sign of awareness and respect. Protocols vary widely between and within native communities and like norms, are learned through experience and often with the help of a

guide. Visiting AWOs should find someone in the community to help navigate the ways of being and who can help to integrate protocols into their shared work.

Working Together

Building an effective, respectful, and lasting dog management program means working together with communities to create a program that is governed by a specific nation, their culture, and context. This is considered “community-based” work and is essential to supporting good dog programs with Native American communities.

Though dog issues often end up in conversations with both community members and leadership, dogs may not be a top priority for nation government. AWOs are in a community to work with dogs and on dog issues, whereas Tribal government is responsible for running a nation.

It is important to understand the administrative processes of the Tribe, band, nation or village as getting things done requires working together. Like most governments, Tribes change leadership every few years so integrating humane companion animal management programs into the community



consciousness as well as into Tribal operations can improve the opportunity of achieving long-term success. AWOs should be prepared to advocate for the dog program every few years with a new Chair, President, or Governor, his or her Tribal Council, and staff.

AWOs can build trusting relationships with the community by:

- Getting permission from the Tribal nation to be in the community for any dog-related work.
- Understanding how the community works, staying up to date on community issues, and always following through.
- Understanding where dog problems fit within the broader community context and priorities – lack of resources, sexual assault, domestic violence, addiction, and mental health challenges.
- Recognizing that there has been damage done by past AWO interventions due to cultural mistrust, lack of community engagement, and broken promises.
- Knowing that working with Tribal nations on dog issues is a long-term commitment.

Short-term planning will not show results and will make it that much harder for the next AWO to work in the community. AWOs should not embark on work with a nation if there is no intention of working on a long-term partnership.

- Keeping up to date on traditional activities or events and participating if invited.
- Finding ways to connect with each community and individual in authentic and meaningful ways.
- Matching terminology to that which the community uses. Using acronyms or technical terms can be intimidating and lead to misunderstandings.

Working together also includes working with other AWOs, especially if the Tribal nation is large. Not all groups offer all dog management tools or understand the value that comprehensive, community-based dog management provides to the overall community. Build partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals to provide more support and service to the nation.



3. Tools of Dog Management

■ An integral part of building a lasting dog program is knowing the benefits and limitations of each dog management tool. No one tool, or intervention, can solve a Tribal nation’s dog problems. Dog problems are not simply about dogs – dogs’ lives are deeply intertwined with the lives of people and it is the interplay between dogs and people that causes conflict. As domestic animals, dogs depend on people and as result, people make most decisions about their care and wellbeing. For tools to be effective, some must target dogs and some must target people, and if utilized fully, most tools can target both.

Because dog problems are complex, they require a comprehensive approach that targets multiple dog and people driven issues at their root. As visitors to a community, AWOs can support a nation with knowledge, experience, and resources but they cannot, and should not, run dog management programs or expect that the single tool they offer will solve complicated problems. The following dog management tools can be used together to create change in a community for the long term.

1. Dog Rehoming

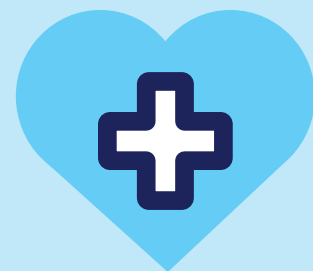
Rehoming dogs, also called dog rescue, is a popular intervention used by many animal welfare groups working on nation land. Tribal governments also lean on dog rescues to assist them with removing dogs, particularly when dog complaints reach a heightened threshold. Because this intervention is broadly used, there is a lot of experience using it and many ways of doing it. Taking dogs from communities can help community members, Tribes,



REHOMING



LEGISLATION & ENFORCEMENT



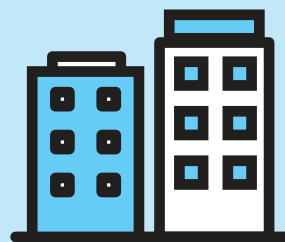
VETRINARY HEALTH CARE



DONATED SUPPLIES



IDENTIFICATION & REGISTRATION



HOLDING FACILITIES



EDUCATION

and individual dogs while creating an opportunity for AWOs to get to know dog guardians, animal control staff, and leadership.

The objective of rehoming dogs needs to be removing dogs in a respectful way with permission from the nation and from individual dog owners. Having proper permission protects everyone from misunderstandings. Taking dogs without appropriate permission amounts to stealing.

Effective dog rehoming can:

- Provide dog guardians with a compassionate alternative for their unwanted, injured, or sick dogs
- Provide a humane alternative for community's unwanted dog(s) if lethal methods are being used to manage dog populations
- Help individual dogs who are unwanted, unclaimed, injured, or homeless
- Create a short-term reduction in dog population size
- Assist Animal Care and Control by taking dogs from their shelter who have not been claimed



Because rehoming is a commonly used intervention, it is important for dog rescue groups and Tribes to understand what it can and cannot achieve. Dog rescue depends heavily on the AWOs who provide the service and often does not include long-term engagement, commitment, or resources from the nation or dog guardians. For this reason, dog rescue is effective at providing quick relief of the symptoms (e.g. mobilizing after a dog bite or dog hit by car), but does not address the root causes of a community's dog problems. Removing dogs

from communities is not the answer to complex dog problems. Dog problems are a complicated mix of human and dog behaviors that require a thoughtful, integrated approach using multiple tools that deeply involve community input and action. When dogs are removed, the remaining dogs in the community continue to:

- have litters of puppies
- fight over females
- chase cars, bark, form groups, get into garbage
- experience welfare challenges and neglect
- live tied up 24/7
- get hit by cars
- die from disease

As well, when dogs are removed, peoples' feelings and behaviors towards the remaining dogs do not change – people continue to be afraid of dogs, live with nuisance behaviors, face challenges such as finding affordable dog food and vet services, etc. Taking dogs out of the community does not motivate Tribal government to create dog management infrastructure such as animal care and control services, dog bylaws, or community vet services. Only comprehensive dog programs can address both the human and dog aspects of complaints against dogs.

Very few Tribal nations have animal control services and rely on Tribal law enforcement or public safety or human health agencies for dog management. These agencies are generally tasked by default to handle dog management problems on top of their regular duties.

In those nations with animal control services, dog rescues may assist animal care and control by taking unclaimed or problem dogs from a full shelter, but in communities without animal control services, the skills, knowledge, and capacity for dog rescue are brought in by the AWO and they leave with the AWO. While there is an appetite inside the community and by dog rescues to remove dogs, it is important to recognize that pulling dogs does not change a dog guardian's behavior or their ability to care for their dogs, nor does it motivate Tribal government to look for long-term options.

When working with a Tribal nation on dog rescue, look for ways to increase engagement and responsibility in the community and to work collaboratively with animal care and control. The

more the nation is involved in the process, the more likely they are to experience the successes and want to sustain them.

A few ways to increase agency include:

- Remind the Tribe that they have a duty of transparency to their membership – community members should be aware of the process for removing dogs and understand their role in it. In all situations, owners should be part of the process of relinquishing their dog.
- Obtain a signed relinquishment form from each guardian, or from animal control. This shows respect and helps people to be responsible for their choices. Relinquishment forms and conversations with guardians help AWOs to understand dog ownership norms and practices and safeguard everyone from misunderstandings.
- Engage with dog guardians or animal control staff when taking dogs from them. Find out if they require support in some way. Some dog owners may be uncomfortable asking for assistance. Animal control staff may be overwhelmed. Take time to find out more about the situation to better assist each person in the process. In the end, dog rescue is not always about taking the dog.
- Share the logistics of picking up dogs with the community. Collaborating means doing things together. This strengthens relations, improves understanding, and builds capacity in the community.
- Rehoming can be a helpful tool but be thoughtful about how and where it works best and what other tools to use with it.

While some dogs, people, and communities benefit from dog rescue, removing dogs comes with responsibility. Removing dogs separates them from their people and way of life, breaks bonds between dogs in their household and neighborhood, and carries with it the idea that a dog has been ‘rescued’ from a bad situation and will find a better life in a different life. These assumptions underscore the importance for transparent, reconciliatory, and community focused approaches to dog rescue.



2. Legislation and Enforcement

Legislation and enforcement are integral to a successful dog management program – they take away the random nature of managing dogs and lay out a plan for government and guardians to follow. Legislation, through a dog bylaw, outlines a guardian’s responsibility for the care and behavior of their dog(s). Dog bylaws protect people, livestock, and other animals from dogs and protect dogs from people by outlining for community members what is expected of them, and ultimately, what will be enforced. To be effective, legislation and enforcement go together: a dog bylaw outlines expectations while enforcement puts the bylaw into practice.

Dog bylaws require significant communication with dog owners to help them understand what is expected of them and to help them achieve it. Effective implementation encourages people to behave according to the bylaw, while enforcement uses a system of penalties when they fail to do so. In many communities, lack of staffing and resources leads to enforcement priorities such as attacks on livestock and dog bite incidents, rather than on guardian behaviors.

Enacted Tribal dog legislation is a legal document that should reflect the unique realities of the nation it serves. Tribal governments maintain the power to determine their own governance structures, pass laws, and enforce laws and as such, a dog bylaw is an act of sovereignty and inherent rights to of self-determination and should be treated accordingly. It is not appropriate for an AWO to draft or implement bylaws for the nation they are working with - this is an important responsibility for the Tribal government and the community who will be living with, and affected by, the bylaw. There are some Tribal nations with dog bylaws, highly trained

animal care and control officers, and resources to run the department. However, for Tribal nations without a formal animal control department, AWOs can support the nation by addressing the value of dog legislation and enforcement to dogs, community members, and leadership.

An AWO with experience and knowledge in legislation and enforcement can assist the nation with:

- Housing impounded dogs for hold periods if there are no holding facilities
- Rehoming unclaimed or unwanted dogs
- Supporting the training of officers in humane animal control (e.g. National Animal Care and Control Association training), animal handling, trapping, general first aid for common injuries and dog behavior
- Assisting with community consultation during the development of the bylaw
- Information and support such as dog population management information during the drafting stage of the new bylaw
- Development of animal care and control job description
- Input on the annual budget for the animal care and control services department

Where dogs and their guardians are concerned, legislation and implementation/enforcement create the foundation for what is done, who does it, and how. Bylaws capture unique nation needs specific to dog guardians and outline expectations such as impound fees, how many dogs per household, if spay/neuter is mandatory, etc. When a nation builds internal skills, knowledge, and capacity around the development of dog laws and their implementation, it is a significant step in sustainability and self-determination in the context of dog management.

3. Primary Veterinary Health Care

Primary veterinary health care (PVHC) is a well-known intervention and includes spay/neuter, vaccinations, parasite control, disease prevention and treatment (e.g. Parvovirus), surgeries, treatment of traumatic injuries (e.g. injury from a dogfight), emergencies, and public health considerations (e.g. tick information). Appropriate and timely veterinary care is one of the fundamental welfare requirements for animals who depend on their

people for guardianship. While each nation and dog population is different, primary veterinary health care is foundational to creating stable, healthy dog populations by improving the health and welfare of individual animals, safeguarding humans from zoonotic diseases, supporting humane dog population management, and promoting healthy relationships between dogs and their guardians.

In rural, remote, and underserved communities, owners face challenges accessing PVHC - they may live far from regular or emergency veterinary care, lack transportation, face unaffordable veterinarian fees, be unable to find local veterinarians who practice cultural awareness and safety practices, or their cultural beliefs may exclude sterilizing their animals. Due to cultural mistrust, historical trauma from past outside interventions, and poor community engagement, service provision has rarely been successful in significantly impacting the issue of free roaming dogs on Tribal lands. As a result, guardians are often left dealing with their dogs' medical needs on their own or accessing vet services on an occasional basis. Inherent to working with native communities is understanding and reducing barriers to accessing practical veterinary care options - inside the community if it is provided or outside if not. Some of the larger nations run their own veterinary programs but have trouble with staff capacity and in generating income when a significant portion of their clientele live below the poverty line. As a result, dogs continue to pose health and safety risks to people because they are unvaccinated, untreated for parasites, and intact.

Many Tribal nations rely on partnerships or service agreements with veterinary colleges or AWOs to provide spay/neuter and wellness clinics on Tribal lands. Vet services are often provided by veterinarians and veterinary technicians who are non-Native, leaving community members with little say in how service is provided, or if it is done in a culturally relevant and safe manner. For many community members, visiting a vet clinic can feel intimidating and overwhelming. While veterinary medicine is a science, interacting with dog owners is about compassion and connection. Providing veterinary care to Native American communities is not enough - integrating culturally aware practices of care, information sharing, and support that embrace the way people in the community live with their dogs should be a priority for anyone providing service. When this is achieved, dog owners can experience the benefits of improved health and welfare for their

dogs, as well as improved human health and safety for themselves and their community.

Primary veterinary care is provided in numerous ways, at different stages of a dog management program, and for varying reasons. Vet provision on the nation should meet the same standard of care as vet services provided elsewhere. Whether animals are ill or receiving routine vaccinations, animals and their people deserve to be provided compassionate care that prioritizes their comfort and well-being.

While veterinary services are a popular tool offered by external service providers and asked for by nation government, it is important to support community members to find ways of providing care to their animals when formal services are not available. There is great value in taking time to learn about traditional ways of healing that are being used by community members and share this with others. AWOs can also find ways to leave practical first aid knowledge in the community and look for ways to support native-led vaccination programs or community-based medicine.



4. Donated Supplies

Many AWOs have access to donations such as dog food, treats, toys, leashes, collars, bedding, doghouses, medical supplies/medicine (e.g. dewormer, flea treatment), and tie outs that can be useful to dog owners and their dogs. Companies, charities, other AWOs, and individuals are often looking for a home for dog-related supplies that they can no longer use or that are opened, expired, or damaged. Many AWOs offer donated dog food and supplies as add-ons to other interventions on the nation such as dog rescue or provision of veterinary services, or as incentives to begin working in a Tribal nation. It is also common for individual dog owners or animal care and control staff to ask for donations to offset the high cost of food and supplies from the local store. People who are feeding dogs in

the community such as teachers, nurses, and construction crews also appreciate donations, especially dog food and medical supplies.



Because many dogs spend much time unsupervised, donations that are distributed in the community must be appropriate for dogs who spend a significant amount of time without their people. Whether free roaming or tied, dogs who are at the receiving end of donated items need to be safe when using them. Behind every donation is a checklist of considerations to keep in mind before handing supplies out to owners or to a food/supply bank. Items such as choke collars and pinch collars can cause injury or death if they tighten or become caught on something. Rawhide and smoked bones should not be distributed because they can become stuck in a dog’s throat, cause a blockage, or splinter. Dogs can also eat toys and most of them end up in shreds around the neighborhood. Managing donations means knowing how dogs live and how people live with them to sort through and provide only useful and safe products in good condition. In some cases, it seems as though more donations are discarded than are taken into the community - this can signal how well an AWO knows the dogs and people.

Some good practices to follow with donated food include:

- Donated food should never be sold to community members or the nation.
- Not everyone welcomes donated food for their dogs. Let people decide how they prefer to feed their dog (e.g. traditional diets or leftovers).
- Ripped, opened, or unmarked containers of food can be rancid or tainted and should be thrown away.



AWOs who respect the independence of dog guardians to make their own decisions about what they want to feed their dogs, are careful not to make donated items a permanent source of food for people. If a supplies bank is set up in the community, it is best for it to be run by community members who can make decisions about what donations are useful and who should receive them. Community members know each other best and can realistically gauge who needs what kind of assistance and how best to support them. While donations can be helpful, their use should help dogs but not create a dependency for owners.

5. Identification and Registration

Identifying a dog and creating a central registration system that connects the dog to their guardian, is part of the broader process of holding owners accountable for their dog's whereabouts and behaviors. Identification and registration are both required to link a dog to their guardian. When a dog is injured or sick, lost, or has bitten someone, being able to connect the dog's ID to the

owner's information in an up-to-date registration system enables the owner and dog to be reunited. Identification can be temporary, such as a collar and tag, or permanent such as a microchip or tattoo. Knowing who the guardian is allows the nation to reinforce ownership behaviors that are set out in the dog bylaw and can stop guardians from abandoning their dogs – when a dog and person are linked through ID and registration, it is difficult for someone to deny that the dog in question is their dog. Information in a typical dog registration includes: owner information, dog ID number, dog age/sex/breed, contained or free roaming, spayed/neutered, vaccination status and other information the community deems essential.

While ID and registration usually fall to animal care and control, AWOs can assist the Tribal nation with building the initial registration system and managing the data until someone is available to run it internally. Access to registration form data can assist AWOs at wellness clinics or spay/neuter events (e.g. catalogue which dog has received vaccinations, determine how many dogs are expected for spay/neuter) and information from these events - and from other data sources (e.g. ownership relinquishment forms) - can feed back into registration data (e.g. update vaccination status, change owner's address).

While keeping the dog registration database up to date can be challenging, most communities quickly experience the benefits that come with connecting dogs back to their people. Depending on the size of the nation, going door-to-door to register dogs is often the most effective way to start off an ID and registration program. Information collected in this way helps everyone to understand the shifts in a community's dog population size and demographics, enables conversations with guardians, and helps foster relationships.

6. Holding Facilities

Having a space to hold dogs may not seem critical to running a dog program, but not having one can stop a Tribal nation from taking the next step forward in their dog management program. Some communities have formal shelters run by National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) trained staff to hold dogs who are sick, injured, or impounded. Others use more informal spaces such as foster homes or doghouses with tie-outs, and some contract outside municipalities to hold dogs. Once there is a place

for dogs to go, dog bylaws can be implemented, identification and registration kicks in, and the infrastructure that underlies the dog program cascades into place.

An AWO's role is not to be involved in building or running a holding facility or shelter but to understand the role it can play in a dog management program and the psyche of the nation. A holding facility should provide a secure place for a dog while they wait to be reunited with their owner, receive medical attention, quarantine, or move on to a dog rescue. No matter how formal or informal a holding facility is, it must meet minimum animal welfare standards and dogs should receive adequate care while in holding.

7. Education

Education for youth is a key tool for any Native American dog management program that aims to create long-term change. Because of this, education is considered one of the most valuable tools by both AWOs and nation governance and often accompanies other popular tools, namely dog rescue and spay/neuter. Education

programs can take place in schools, at veterinary clinics, when delivering dog food donations, or while doing a dog survey on the street - in other words, opportunities to share and learn from youth happen everywhere. Education programs that provide culturally applicable information in a practical way can change the way kids feel and act around dogs, and pave the way for changing how they care for their dogs now and in the future.

While AWOs and governments often prioritize teaching youth about dog care and living safely with dogs, everyone should recognize that kids are teachers too. Kids are not just living with dogs, they are growing up together, and in many cases, they are dog owners themselves. The youth perspective is valuable and insightful, and AWOs can learn a lot from the way they live with dogs and what information may add to their already profound knowledge.



Kids have ongoing positive and negative experiences with dogs every day of their lives, especially in communities with free roaming dogs. Kids and dogs interact freely with one another, and their relationships are authentic and practical. Because dogs are often unsupervised, they can choose where they want to go and who they want to be with, and it is common for dogs to choose to be near children. Kids on bikes with dogs, kids walking with dogs, kids playing with puppies. Because kids grow up with dogs in ways that non-Native community members have never experienced and probably cannot imagine, it is important to invest in being curious and listening. Not all interactions between kids and dogs are welcome or safe, so youth develop

strategies early in their lives to manage the interactions - AWOs need to fully embrace the different needs that youth have because of the way they live with dogs. At the same time, dogs learn to interact safely with kids and AWOs can learn a lot about the dogs through the kids.

Kids also grow up seeing violent

events involving dogs such as a pack of males fighting over a female or a dog being hit by a car, and these incidents become a normalized part of their relationships with dogs. Because relationships with dogs start when kids are young and are based on real-life, day-to-day, positive, and negative interactions with all kinds of different dogs in different scenarios, kids' behaviors and feelings about dogs are broad, varied, and complex. AWOs must challenge themselves to understand and appreciate all that goes into how youth and dogs live together. Most importantly, what an AWO shares with youth must be valuable and additive to what they know and how they already live with dogs. AWOs who work with youth require a deep and unbiased understanding of context and a genuine interest in learning from this important demographic.

Everyone agrees that providing youth education is important to any dog management program but many AWOs lack skilled people for this important work.

Some things to think about when sharing information with youth about dogs:

- Connect with knowledge keepers so they can share their stories with youth. There is much to learn from the traditional ways that people and dogs worked together and took care of one another before colonization.
- Provide content that recognizes and honors how kids and dogs live together. Providing programming about dogs from a colonial perspective is not appropriate or helpful.
- Kids are teachers. Take the time to be curious and listen to what youth are sharing.
- Be engaging, interesting, interactive, open, and flexible. Make the time spent with kids is a privilege. Enjoy the journey.
- Teachers are busy people. If going into the schools, plan ahead and help teachers meet their needs by linking your program to their curriculum.

- Consider leaving resources with teachers. AWOs do not have to be the only ones to share resources about dogs. Teachers can see how their students live with dogs and may also be interested in dog related resources.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms that Indigenous youth around the world have a right to an education that respects their culture, language and identity and ensures revitalization and reconciliation of traditional knowledge. AWOs can do their part by adopting an education mind frame that is meaningful for community work with the nation's children. They can learn about, and incorporate, values about living in a good way with all relations, including dogs, and embed traditional teaching methods and authentic content into the approach of those who work with indigenous children and youth. When AWOs use resources developed by Native Americans for Native American youth, they are engaging in better education practices as well as supporting sovereignty and the process of reconciliation, both of which are essential to dog work.



5. The Path Forward

■ “Healing our animals heals our people.” Diana Webster (White Earth Band of Ojibwe), founder, Native America Humane Society.

Working on dog management in Native American communities means working with and for people, as well as dogs. While health and safety issues related to animal conflicts have led to degraded relationships between community members and animals within their boundaries, implementing community-based dog management programming provides Tribal nations and urban Native communities with a path forward. AWOs have a duty to provide culturally appropriate support and commit to true collaboration in order to create change within the communities.

While there is a need for humane and sustainable management programs, most dog health and welfare solutions have failed to take hold in communities due in part to an “outside-in” approach. Moving forward, AWOs have an opportunity to turn conventional service-based assistance into meaningful dog management with real community engagement and respect for each nation’s history and culture. To be sustainable, AWOs can build community-based partnerships that work to the realities, context, and vision of each nation. Such collaborative programming can help to build leaders and strengthen Tribal nation self-determination and self-governance and create new pathways for dogs and people to share their communities.

Successful dog management means working in partnership with the Tribal nation to choose which tools to use and when, in order to amplify their effectiveness. Each dog population is different, each human community is unique, and each Tribal nation has different priorities and resources. As a result, each dog program must be tailored to suit the needs of the community. With the Tribal nation, plan

which tools will have the most impact and collect data along the way to uncover what works and what needs to change.

Regardless of how long an AWO has been providing support, everyone who works with Tribal nations can find ways to improve what they do and how they do it. Each person is responsible for learning more about the dogs, community members, and the community. Each person can act more respectfully and with more cultural awareness and interest. Each person can improve their understanding of dog management and strive to be part of creating a well-planned and executed dog program that builds in-nation capacity, expertise, and optimism. When communities experience the benefits of a changed way of living with dogs, it becomes more of a priority to sustain dog programs and provide the resources required to run them.

The Native American Humane Society believes that creating humane dog management solutions through self-determined, culturally respectful, and collaborative efforts can improve conditions for people as well as animals. Through such programming, Tribal nations can build social capital, create jobs, and restore hope and healing to their members. This work signifies a commitment to each member of the community—two-legged or four-legged—that they will not be abandoned, mistreated, or left to suffer regardless of their circumstances and serves as a powerful return to embracing traditional beliefs and reaffirming community values.

“Healing our animals heals our people.”

~ Diana Webster (White Earth Band of Ojibwe), Founder, Native America Humane Society.





Healing our animals heals our people!

The Native America Humane Society (NAHS)

shares our expertise to help Tribal communities learn how to humanely manage and care for the animal populations in their own communities. NAHS connects Tribal communities and animal welfare service providers, NGOs, foundations, and other agencies to assist Tribal communities in resolving their challenges with animals through regular animal care, population management, and community activities.



For more information about our work and services, please contact us at:
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