

# Matt Ehlman

---

## Research Interests:

- The donor relationship to organizations, specifically what are donor intentions and motivations, is my primary research interest. Additionally, understanding the donor perspective of an organization and how does that lead to major gifts. I am particularly interested in organizations that do not have typical or traditional donor pools.

## Research Methodologies:

- An emergent qualitative design will be used for this bounded case study using ethnography methods

**Tentative Dissertation Title:** A Bounded Case Study using ethnographic methods researching Red Cloud Indian Schools Philanthropic Activity

**Primary Advisor:** Dr. Dwight Burlingame

## Research Statement:

Holy Rosary truly financially thrived between 2006 and 2011, which prompts the question: In what ways do high net worth individual supporters understand their relationship to the charitable organization, Red Cloud Indian School during August 2006 through June 2011? This research, through individual interviews and focus groups, will seek to understand what is behind the actions and motivations by understanding the culture of the organization and donors. This work will attempt to do this by diving deep into the Lakota culture, Red Cloud Indian School as an organization, the donor, the donors' characteristics, and the dynamic interaction among all these.

The unique reality that a nonprofit organization remotely located on the poorest Native American reservation in North America during the worst recession since the Great Depression was able to engage high net worth donors in a way that increased financial contributions by forty-four percent over a five year period lends itself to a bounded case study using ethnographic methods. This study will be advocacy and participatory in nature with ethnographic methods, as Geertz (1973) states, because it will be a thick description. As a participant in the organization during these five years, managing the fundraising effort, and as a resident on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, I bring a unique anthropological and ethnographic approach to this case study

An emergent qualitative design will be used to allow for the study to evolve and be as malleable as possible in order to follow the interviewees and information uncovered during each data point to be optimally explored (Patton, 2002). Like Geertz, I seek to understand and dive in and an emergent qualitative design provides the flexibility to explore where the information might lead.

## Personal Info:

I graduated from St. Ambrose University with a finance degree and received a MPA from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, Bloomington. I have lived and worked on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota for seven years. Five of those years, I had the privilege of overseeing the fundraising effort for Red Cloud Indian School where we increased contributions by 44% and raised over \$70 million and reduced fundraising costs to below 2005 levels despite the great recession. In July 2011 with two colleagues, we created The Numad Group, a consulting firm that works with nonprofits across the country to develop true philanthropic partnerships, raise funds and communicate their mission.