

CHAPTER 16

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INDIGENOUS EVALUATION

A Practical Approach for Evaluating Indigenous Projects in Tribal Reservation Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Culturally responsive evaluations in Indigenous or Tribal government reservation geographic contexts are complex and multifaceted studies. These contexts include the intersection of multiple legal jurisdictions across federal, state, and Tribal governments based on funding source(s) and implemen-

tation site(s). Additionally, the cultural and linguistic components of Indigenous contexts vary greatly across communities where program evaluations are being conducted. Through a contemporary case example, the authors provide a framework for co-constructing a culturally responsive evaluation design and describe practical strategies for evaluating a federally funded program implemented within a Tribal government reservation context. Implications for replicating future culturally responsive evaluations are shared to move toward building a larger body of empirical studies guided by Indigenous evaluation frameworks, theories, and formal policies (i.e., the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights).

Understanding Indigenous¹ culture and contexts is critically important in developing an effective Indigenous evaluation or research design. Awareness of diversity within and across Indigenous communities, understanding of the unique cultural and traditional norms, and ability to navigate the various contexts in which an Indigenous evaluation is carried out all contribute to successful research and evaluation. These contexts include the intersection of multiple legal jurisdictions across federal, state, and Tribal governments based on funding source(s) and implementation site(s). Too often, the absence and exclusion of Indigenous epistemologies, frameworks, methodologies, communities, and other resources from Western or mainstream academic research significantly contributes to gaps in policy, programming, and intended outcomes for Indigenous people.

Indigenous research conducted by Indigenous or non-Indigenous scholars must be ethical, culturally sensitive (Tillman, 2002) and appropriate for the communities where the research is conducted (Grande, 2004; Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005; Kovach, 2010; LaFrance & Nichols, 2009; LaFrance, Nichols, & Kirkhart, 2012; Oakes, Riewe, Edmunds, Dubois, & Wilde, 2003; Smith, 2012). By including culture and context in a study's design, researchers and evaluators create a rigorous and responsive method (Hood et al., 2005), which increases opportunities for documenting the truth, allows for authentic participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, and increases the multicultural validity of a study (Kirkhart 1995a, 1995b, 2005; LaFrance et al., 2012).

Understanding historical context in this field is essential: researchers must acknowledge and address the dynamics of power (Gitlin, 1994) and disempowerment when creating research or evaluation studies conducted with Indigenous people. Prior to European contact, Indigenous people inhabiting North America used their own systems of self-governance to sustain high levels of health, education, social, and community welfare of Tribal people. Each tribe was unique in its culture; customs, worldview, traditions, and other teachings were grounded in a way of life that was distinct to each particular tribe. From Tribal histories, documents, and other Indigenous artifacts, we understand that life was not merely maintained, but Indian people thrived prior to European contact. Tribes met the needs of

their people through a blend of self-governance and cultural traditions in which the community members participated and provided accountability.

European contact forced North American tribes from their ancestral homelands, destroyed their communities (culturally and literally), and forced assimilation to a European way of life that is now considered mainstream North American culture. As centuries passed, tribes made treaty agreements with the federal government in which they gave up lands and other resources; in return, the federal government was to provide for their health, education, and general welfare. Eventually, under sovereignty and self-determination laws, tribes established Federal Indian Policy with the U.S. government.

Given this historical context, it is understandable that sovereignty and self-determination are paramount concerns in evaluations in Indigenous contexts. Tribal sovereignty and self-determination are not merely federal-level legal distinctions, but also have implications in terms of documenting, monitoring, improving, and supporting nation-building efforts carried out by Tribal governments and Tribal programs (Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2008; Jorgensen, 2007). Tribal identity, culture, health, education, and long-term socioeconomic success depend on nation-building efforts in which evaluation can be a key factor. Truly effective evaluation requires respect for and ability to navigate within this multijurisdictional (federal, state, local, and Tribal) environment.

In this chapter, we discuss what constitutes culturally responsive evaluation in the Indigenous context, focusing on theory, research, and policy that inform construction of culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation frameworks, political/legal considerations in Indigenous evaluation, and cultural/traditional concerns. We also describe the current state of culturally responsive evaluation in the Indigenous context, explain barriers to culturally responsive evaluation, and explore how those barriers are being addressed. We then use a case example to illustrate how principles of culturally responsive evaluation can be employed in a real-world Indigenous context in order to “see the world through the eyes of our ancestors and translate the best knowledge of the world into acceptable modern scientific terminology” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 28). In conclusion, we discuss progress toward culturally responsive evaluation in Indigenous contexts and steps for future growth.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION IN THE INDIGENOUS CONTEXT

Overview

Evaluators and researchers must understand that Indigenous people, programs, and communities exist within various geographic contexts: rural,

urban, and Tribal reservation lands. Tribal reservations are part of the 565 federally recognized tribes acknowledged by the U.S. government. Each of these Tribal governments has their own set of elected officials, their own Tribal governance operational structure, and their own laws, policies, and procedures. Beyond Tribal governments, the focus of the case example in this chapter, there are also urban Indian communities. Urban Indian communities are found in large cities across the United States (e.g., New York, NY; San Francisco Bay Area, CA; Minneapolis, MN, Chicago, IL). Urban Indian communities normally have a community center, health center, and other urban Indian programming offices where services and resources are available to Indigenous people living off the reservation. Off-reservation Indians also reside in rural and suburban areas; generally, these people either go to Tribal reservations or urban Indian centers to receive services and programming. All these communities have varying legal jurisdictions, implement policy and programs differently, and have unique cultural norms set by the community members living in the geographic space.

Theory, Research, and Policy Informing Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation

Because the academic base of Indigenous evaluation theory is not as robust or long-standing as work in other fields, we look to Indigenous guidelines from the research, education, and policy fields to anchor our evaluation work. Our chapter, like many of our Indigenous evaluation colleagues' presentations and published works, humbly offers our perspectives to further contribute to this knowledge base.

Tribal Critical Theory is a theoretical framework and method used to examine Indigenous people throughout the world for personal and Tribal empowerment and liberation (Brayboy, 2005; Pulitano, 2003). Unlike Critical Race Theory (CRT), which asserts that racism is endemic to society, TCT holds that colonization² is endemic to society (Brayboy, 2005). Brayboy's (2005) summary of TCT explains that this theory recognizes that Indigenous peoples strive toward Tribal sovereignty, Tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification; this can conflict with governmental policies that are tied to the problematic goal of assimilation. TCT emphasizes the importance of Tribal beliefs, philosophies, and customs for understanding the lived reality of Indigenous people as well as the differences among individuals and groups. It also recognizes the importance of story as a legitimate data source and building block of theory, and insists that the interconnected nature of theory and practice demands that researchers work toward social change.

Evaluation designs influenced by TCT have the potential to employ Indigenous strategies that are authentic and alternative ways of knowing (Jacobs, 2008; Mertens & Cram, 2013; Mertens & Wilson, 2012) as well as contextually responsive, culturally relevant, and educationally empowering now and for the next seven generations³ (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003; LaFrance & Nichols, 2009).

Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks (IEF) situates an evaluation in context and relationship to the place, setting, and community in which the evaluation is carried out (LaFrance et al., 2012). In their work, LaFrance and Nichols (2010) identify four key values that must be included in creating IEF: being a people of a place, recognizing gifts, honoring family and community, and respecting sovereignty. IEF is a holistic framework that is conceptualized, designed, and carried out in a nonlinear way, with relationships and subrelationships concurrently informing one another and the evaluation as a whole. As Indigenous evaluators and authors, we often say, “We work with you, not on you” when serving an Indigenous community or client with an evaluation study. An analogy used by elders to describe this process is to envision sitting in a circle around the lodge or campfire and talking equally about perspectives, strategies, decisions, and usefulness of information for now and the next seven future generations. This philosophy differs from many Western theories and methods where evaluation and research is deemed an objective, disconnected, “study” of a program, project, community, or people.

The principles of TCT and IEF align with a larger, national, “Tribally driven” Indian research agenda (National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center [NCAI PRC], 2013) that incorporates the following Indigenous guidelines (Strang & von Glatz, 2001):

- embracing the spirit of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination within [an evaluation] context;
- providing educational research [and evaluation] for Tribal student, family, and community empowerment;
- legitimizing and liberating the Indigenous voice and perspective while deconstructing majority educational paradigms; and
- purposefully instructing and disseminating scholarly discourse within Native and non-Native publications, research and policy forums, public debates, educational or academic [and evaluation] communities and contexts.

As Indigenous evaluators, we consider these principles of Tribal control of a research agenda and evaluation central to our professional and academic evaluation work.

The Political/Legal Context of Indigenous Evaluation

Sovereignty and self-determination.

The late Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. Senator from Hawaii, testified many times that, “the sovereign status of Indian Nations predates the formation of the United States” (Wilkinson, 2004, p. xi). As a lifetime advocate for the political and legal rights of Indigenous people in the United States (Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, and Native Americans), Senator Inouye understood the fundamental right of Tribal nations and Indian people to self-governance. Sovereignty (broadly), under federal law, recognizes that Indian nations are sovereign governments separate from the federal and state government, with their own inherent and unique rights to govern (Cohen, 1942; Pevar, 2012; U.S. Department of the Interior [DOI], 2013a; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001). Internationally, these distinct and legal protections extend to Indigenous people to safeguard their economic, social, cultural, linguistic, and political freedoms through the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UN, 2008), including tribes or Indigenous governments in the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Researchers and evaluators must understand that when they conduct research within Tribal contexts, they are no longer under the jurisdiction of the state or federal government but rather that of the Tribal government. Thus, recognizing the tenets of Tribal sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination, how these tenets intersect with state and federal laws and programs and their practical and logistical implications is critical to conducting culturally responsive, competent, and practical evaluations in Indian Country.

Multijurisdictional approaches to Indigenous evaluation.

Tribal governments follow their unique Tribal constitutions and are responsible for upholding Tribal law as well as protecting Tribal members’ safety, rights, and well-being from non-Indian governments, organizations, and people. However, there is uneven capacity for evaluation across the 565 Tribal governments in the United States (DOI, 2013b). Tribal Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and other human subject protocols are not consistent across Tribal governments or other Tribal organizations, and the comprehensiveness and formality of these ordinances, policies, and procedures vary widely. For example, fewer than 10% (Bowman, 2006a) of 565 recognized Tribal governments (Norris, Vines, & Hoeffel, 2012) have IRBs. Furthermore, of the 35 Tribal colleges operating in the United States, only 25% of them have their own IRB (Bowman, 2006a). Fewer than 1% of the Tribal governments have Tribal policies or Tribal IRBs for research, evaluation, and policy studies (Bowman, 2006a), and roughly 1% had ordinances, policies, and procedures formally developed for their Tribal IRB to work

in conjunction with non-Tribal partners (DOI, 2013b). This is problematic because when Tribal governments or Indigenous organizations (Tribal colleges, Tribal nonprofits, etc.) do not establish their own IRBs and other evaluation policies, they are more susceptible to designs, data, and programs that are not valid or effective for Indian populations in the long term (Bowman, 2006a; Deloria, 2002; NCAI PRC, 2013). The current lack of capacity and infrastructure to support culturally responsive evaluation that is led or overseen by Indigenous organizations or Tribal governments contributes to confusion and misunderstanding in the political/legal context of evaluation.

This confusion around the political/legal context is compounded by the current disconnect and lack of clarity between Indian and non-Indian people in terms of how policies are carried out through programming, documenting best practices, conducting appropriate evaluations, and human subject protection in Indigenous contexts at the institutional and systemic level. Often, federal and state governments do not recognize or understand the collective responsibilities and power of Tribal government IRBs (National Institute of Justice, 2013). In terms of education, the jurisdiction and authority for the education of Indian students who do not reside on a reservation has not been clearly established by case law (Native American Rights Fund, 2000), leaving it unclear as to who is responsible for ethical and culturally appropriate research on and off the reservation—external funding agencies or tribes? This lack of clarity leaves legal gaps and little leverage for Tribal governments or Indigenous organizations to negotiate or protect their human subjects and Tribal intellectual property, or keep cultural protection safeguards in place when working on programs funded by non-Indian governments, universities, and other nonprofit or for profit organizations.

We can look to work done in the justice and health fields for practical guidance in this regard when creating evaluations in Indigenous legal/political contexts. *Multijurisdictionality* is a legal term applied most often in justice contexts (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012). The federal government, usually through the justice and health departments, uses a multijurisdictional approach with state, municipal, and Tribal governments. This multijurisdictional approach links all forms of government into an interconnected system that helps agencies form policy task forces and working groups; develop information and resource sharing practices; form political alliances, create memos of understanding and legal ordinances or structures; and carry out research and evaluation studies to properly document evidence-based programs and practices carried out in municipal, state, federal, and Tribal contexts.

The evaluation community could benefit from a multijurisdictional framework when working in Indian Country, and much work has been

done to identify and establish the foundations of a multijurisdictional approach to evaluation in the Indigenous context (Bowman, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2011; Bowman & Dodge Francis, 2014; Bowman & Tyndall, 2014). From multijurisdictional work in other fields, we have determined that good evaluation design and implementation in the Indigenous context

- considers Tribal, state, federal, and international laws and policies for human subject protection, research or evaluation, intellectual and cultural property rights, data sharing agreements, and/or ownership, publication, and dissemination agreements that already exist;
- identifies connections and differences between Tribal grantee and non-Tribal funding agency policies and procedures;
- acknowledges current infrastructure and builds on commonalities and strengths in policies, reporting formats, and expectations;
- identifies and articulates policy and procedure gaps or differences in order to bridge gaps to achieve consensus;
- provides visual examples of forms, instruments, or other databases to demonstrate the grantee's potential evaluation methodology;
- uses or modifies existing Tribal instruments, databases, or processes;
- considers from the Tribal perspective how evaluation may enhance the development of current or new capacities, policies, or protocols for sustaining programming after the grant has ended;
- shares successes and best practices with other Tribal governments and Indigenous organizations, with the knowledge, consent, and participation of Tribal constituents;
- obtains permission to share, present on, or publish information outside of the Indigenous context in order to protect human subjects, cultural protections, and intellectual property rights.

By incorporating these best practices, the formal component of Indigenous evaluation recognizes existing Tribal capacity, considers local evaluation needs, and addresses what the funder requires. Both the funder's requirements and the needs of the governing local agency (Tribal government, Tribal nonprofit board, Tribal school board, etc.) are considered and included in the evaluation design.

The Cultural/Traditional Context of Indigenous Evaluation

In this section, we explore the cultural/traditional context of indigenous evaluation. The cultural/traditional context takes into account the community's shared collection of learned and socially transmitted behaviors,

beliefs, and institutions that act as a template to shape behavior and consciousness from generation to generation.

Evaluation and evaluators in the cultural/traditional context.

Evaluation completes the circle of research, development, and practice. However, an evaluator must possess the skills, knowledge, and competencies to design and carry out a culturally responsive evaluation that uniquely addresses an Indigenous context and project. An evaluator must be prepared to include multicultural validity (Kirkhart, 2005) because it is central to creating an evaluation design that produces valid, reliable, culturally responsive, and contextually appropriate findings. Cultural incompetency or lack of a multicultural and contextual lens in evaluation leads to non-responsive evaluation designs and methods that can generate inaccurate, inappropriate, or even harmful findings.

Tribal governments and Indigenous organizations must often rely upon outsiders and/or a non-Indian person, public agency, or other organization to conduct evaluation work. Currently, there are few Indigenous evaluation scholars trained to participate in evaluation-related activities. Of course, their near absence in the community of evaluation scholars is due in part to their near absence on the faculties of our colleges and universities (Turner, 2002) and in graduate programs that serve as a pipeline for evaluation practitioners and/or scholars. Native Americans are by far the least represented of all racial/ethnic groups in U.S. graduate programs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), which helps explain why we lack a sufficient pool of technically and culturally responsive evaluators⁴ for and from Indian Country.

Therefore, in these situations, the evaluator for an Indigenous project in an Indigenous context becomes responsible not only for designing the evaluation, but for being a trusted teacher who can help facilitate capacity building with the community being evaluated and the project members carrying out the grant or program being evaluated. A culturally responsive evaluator has the knowledge, skills, and abilities for evaluation but also is intentional and inclusive when selecting and implementing evaluation design and methods based on the cultural and contextual needs of the project, context, participants, and stakeholders.

Defining the cultural/traditional context.

Cajete (1994) reminds **Indigenous people to Look to the Mountain** for guidance, where the mountain represents traditional Indigenous knowledge. This knowledge is located within the cultural/traditional context, which is equally as important as the political/legal (or formal Tribal government) context. This context includes beliefs, behaviors, and institutions, and is governed by core values and protocols carried out by the community's traditional leaders, elders, and students. It has elements that predate the influence

[QA: This looks to be a direct quotation. If so, please insert quotation marks. If not, capitalization is unnecessary.]

of European cultures and the assimilation policies administered by colonial and modern America. Despite efforts to colonize Indigenous peoples, their epistemologies in one form or another continue to exist today.

The cultural/traditional context includes formal and informal but traditional teachings and leadership most often held by elders, medicine men or women, linguists, and other knowledge keepers of Tribal history and culture. These are not elected officials; rather, they are leaders dictated by cultural protocols, oral histories, and familial lines. The cultural/traditional context for an Indigenous evaluation design also includes members living on or off the reservation who are not traditional or cultural leaders or elected officials of the Tribal government. Most often these are the members of the Tribal population who coexist daily with others who are engaged in regular community (sociocultural) activities, are the participants in or recipients of Tribal programming and resources, and are responsible for holding accountable the elected and employed members of the Tribal government.

The Indigenous epistemic culture distinguishes between various settings of knowledge production and emphasizes their contextual aspects (Knorr Cetina, 1999); this differs from the Western epistemic culture. The Indigenous protocols around how knowledge is gained, used, shared, protected, and respected must be acknowledged and upheld above all other epistemic cultural protocols. Indigenous epistemic culture is not monolithic; each Indigenous community has a unique way of learning, thinking, and doing; influenced by language, culture, and beliefs, that must be taken into account.

For Indigenous communities, simply measuring outcomes and evaluating what needs improvement is not considered a comprehensive design. Inclusion of process data, documentation of what is working, and including measurements for sustainability after the grant monies are gone or the evaluation study has concluded is considered a balanced approach to evaluation in Indigenous contexts. Therefore, the process of carrying out an evaluation is just as important—if not more so—than the final evaluation products (reports, instruments, presentations, publications, etc.); in other words, the journey is as important as the destination. Both the process and the products of an evaluation study must be sustainable and useful to the Tribal government and community it serves long after the evaluation or research project has been completed.

Components of the cultural/traditional context.

Components of the cultural/traditional context include geographic location; cultural and language protocols; heritage, lineage, and familial relationships; access rights to knowledge and to disseminate that knowledge; and review and endorsement from community cultural/traditional practitioners. All these components inform what cultural information can or cannot be collected and how, in order to produce a version of the community cultural/

traditional knowledge that is valid and appropriate for a broader audience outside of the local Indigenous community. The discussion that follows is not comprehensive, but provides an overview of several of the cultural considerations that must be addressed in the cultural/traditional context.

Access rights to knowledge.

In addition to working with elected Tribal officials or Tribal employees, it is important to also seek out those community leaders, elders, and traditional teachers who uphold informal but powerful cultural protocols. Culturally responsive evaluation in the Indigenous context goes beyond the legal and academic structures of an evaluation by including cultural, linguistic, and other community safeguards that protect Indigenous communities knowledge and data. Providing a traditional gift (which may be tobacco, venison, cloth, or something else, depending on the cultural practices of the Tribal community) as permission or a thank you for considering the evaluation design and participating in the study is an example of a community safeguard. Discussing in advance the proposed study and methods and asking what the community would like in return for participating in and supporting the study are examples of respecting the safety of the community.

In terms of data collection, evaluators must be aware that knowledge is shared in negotiated spaces; for example, information gleaned in a sacred space like a sweat lodge or teaching circle may not be available to or shared with outside investigators and the wider world in the way that information from more public ceremonies or discussions might be. It is worth noting that the protection of Indigenous knowledge has taken on even more significance as the number of industries or commercialized businesses seeking to use biodiversity and the Indigenous knowledge related to it have grown. Given the historical treatment of Indigenous people, incorporating this component into Indigenous evaluation design is critical to building trust with communities who have been and continue to be disempowered, disenfranchised, and decimated by non-Indian policies, organizations, and governments.

Oral versus written knowledge transmission.

Traditionally, for Indigenous people, knowledge development, collection, and transfer are primarily oral processes. Western or European processes for data collection and evaluation privileges statistics and the written word as the principal ways of documenting data, transferring knowledge, or citing evidence in research or evaluation studies. Not only is this a cultural and methodological disconnect, but it also creates capacity, infrastructure, and resource issues for improving the policy process or program impact through evaluation and raises methodological questions. For instance, are oral history methods better suited for assessment and evaluation versus an

online survey? How do linguistic translations from the Native language differ among participants and how does this interpretation impact the evaluation data being collected?

Culturally responsive evaluation in this context does not privilege the written word but understands that oral traditions in Indigenous contexts are often more sacred, respected, and protected than the written protocols. Safeguards can be orally transmitted (Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism, 2004; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Smith, 2012) but can also be created in writing with shared memorandums of understanding, formally approved IRB or Tribal government protocols, and other human subject protection processes agreed upon by the Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and organizations. Samples of such protocols and formal agreements can be found by contacting Tribal government agencies and Indigenous scholars, or through checking Indigenous websites from Tribal colleges, Tribal nonprofits, and other Tribal for-profit organizations that conduct regular research in Indian Country.

Social and political status.

Evaluators must remember that context matters and that safeguards vary because Tribal communities, organizations, and governments are not monolithic. The cultural and linguistic practices of each Tribal community (and within families or clans of a Tribal community) dictate political status, social responsibilities through family and clans, and leadership based on matrilineal or patrilineal grounds. Evaluators must understand and address the fact that their own personal characteristics (male or female, insider or outsider, traditional or nontraditional, Native or non-Native, elder or adult, etc.) can all affect the safeguards needed by the Tribal community in a research context as well as the level of access a researcher has within the Indigenous context.

To summarize, cultural context must inform the evaluation design, processes, and methods. Without these knowledge, skills, and competencies, an evaluator will potentially create evaluation studies, use approaches, and generate findings that are inconsistent, incongruent, and/or are invalid with the Indian people and community that the program is supposed to serve.

Benefits of incorporating the cultural/traditional context.

The incorporation of the cultural/traditional context in the evaluation process is essential to Tribal communities, due to the shared belief or truth that by maintaining, respecting, and continually incorporating the beliefs, protocols, and practices of our traditional Tribal ways we can, “see the world through the eyes of our ancestors and translate the best knowledge of the world into acceptable modern scientific terminology” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 28).

This cultural knowledge may inform evaluators of goals, measurable outcomes, and impact indicators that otherwise would not have been foreseen. Using resources available to a culturally responsive evaluator from the cultural/traditional context (in conjunction with the political/legal context and funder requirements) helps to build a comprehensive evaluation design, one that truly reveals and captures the underlying cultural knowledge, challenges, and experiences that influence the lives of Indigenous peoples living in the local and broad community from the Tribal participants who are part of the evaluation.

Recognizing and using elements from a cultural/traditional context is a process for decolonizing (Wilson & Yellowbird, 2005) an evaluation in an authentic attempt to re-write and re-right (Smith, 2012) history and create capacity for better decision-making in the future to benefit Indigenous communities and participants. Responsive evaluation approaches will generate useful program information, authentically engage all participants, and will help to shape future policy and practice that will positively affect the next seven generations.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION: A CASE EXAMPLE

In this section of the chapter, we use a case example from our work to illustrate how the culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation strategies, frameworks, and competencies discussed earlier in the chapter can be applied in real-world Indigenous contexts.

Background

In 2005, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a funding opportunity, entitled *Health Promotion and Diabetes Prevention Projects for AI/AN Communities: Adaptations of Practical Community Environmental Indicators* (CDC, 2005), NDWP/DDT/NCCDPHP. The funding opportunity was to establish 3-year cooperative agreements within Tribal communities. The program purpose of the CDC grant was to “strengthen local capacity of AI/AN communities in implementing limited, practical community environmental interventions for health promotion and diabetes prevention” (CDC, 2005, p. 29761). It should be noted that this grant did not constitute a research methodology but reflected a public health perspective (CDC, 2008). The Indigenous community in which our work was conducted was one of eight CDC grantees.

Given the unique political/legal and cultural/traditional distinctions of Indigenous people and communities, our evaluations most often use a responsive Indigenous case study design. Case studies address why decisions or strategies were used, how they were implemented, and describes what type of results there were (Schramm, 1971). Research or evaluation in Western contexts is usually experiential, prioritizing the impressions of the observer, standardized measures, and statistical aggregation (Stake, 1986). In contrast, in this instance, the Indigenous project evaluation model incorporated distinct Tribal voices from the breadth of community and the health promotion and prevention project. The evaluation focused on assets, barriers, and the incorporation of traditional teachings into programming, and employed a mixed and multimethod evaluation to the design. Our study design used data collection instruments to collect and confirm data throughout the project. Evaluation findings helped shape data-driven discussions, were used to modify program implementation efforts, and also annually revealed best practices associated with the most effective program activities. This design allowed continuous program evaluation and built upon the human and infrastructure capacities for future evaluations. A constant and comparative process for analysis was used throughout the evaluation, and continual community member-checking for formative and summative evaluation findings was employed throughout the evaluation process.

Evaluation Participants

The Indigenous community is a federally recognized Indian tribe occupying a reservation that was established by treaty agreements between the Tribal government and U.S. federal government. The Tribal government operates pursuant to a constitution promulgated under the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934. The tribe's land base exists within the Midwest. The reservation boundaries encompass two townships where approximately 21,000 acres are either held in trust or owned by the tribe. The villages closest to the reservation have a population no greater than 600 residents. Moderate-to-large urban Indian communities that have impact on social and economic conditions of the tribe are located 60–170 miles away. Like many tribes, this Indigenous community was displaced from the ancestral territory, which they inhabited for millennia, by colonial forces. Losing Tribal lands and ways of life that depended on them resulted in a culture shift away from a long-established economy and system of governance that was elaborate and complex.

Fewer than 3,000 people live within the reservation boundaries. Demographics from the 2010 Census noted an unemployment rate of 14.6% on the tribe's reservation. The median household income level in 2009 was

\$36,908. For female full-time year-round workers, the median earning level was \$23,917; for male full-time year-round workers, the median earning level was \$28,365. The average per capita income was \$15,272. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 15.1% of Tribal families living on the reservation lived in poverty in 2009; all of these families had children under age 18.

Case Study Evaluation Design

The four project goals of the CDC grant for this particular grantee were to assist the community in identifying, implementing, and evaluating environmental health interventions for youth; assist youth in establishing lifelong healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors; involve parents in all aspects of the proposed program; and impact and positively influence the community for establishing lifelong healthy eating and physical activity behaviors through programs, activities, and environmental changes (policies). In order to evaluate this project, we used the following culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation methods.

Community collaborations.

Self-determination respects, recognizes, and values the inherent worth of Indian culture; is responsive to the community's needs as voiced by all members of society; builds programs around Indian assets and resources; and employs Indians in every part of the process including, program, policy, implementation, and evaluation. Based upon this foundation, we moved forward with co-planning our evaluation with the key assumption that everyone shares responsibility for achieving positive community wellness. Our evaluation process honored and incorporated the value of self-determination in several ways.

Before the evaluation research began, evaluators and participants worked together to create a culturally relevant evaluation plan in a dialogue and brainstorming process that honored the “seven-generations” teachings of including elders', community members', and youth perspectives as we consider how current actions and behaviors impact future generations. Rather than imposing outside data collection methods upon the community, we asked community members to help identify existing data sources (e.g., agendas, media releases, community center sign-in sheets, etc.) to use in our evaluation as a community collaboration and means to consensus-based decision making. Monthly work and advisory meetings with project participants continually revisited how program implementation was meeting or not meeting the self-identified needs of the community resulting in a flexible evaluation design that continued to address real-life issues through realistic and locally viable solutions.

The evaluator and project stakeholders worked together to jointly communicate successes and involve local schools, community organizations, and other Tribal governmental offices and programs. Communicating successful outcomes with Tribal and community partners leveraged more growth, secured shared resources, and strengthened sustainable program efforts for continuing positive changes and programming long after the grant ended. For example, grant work done to upgrade ballfields inspired local government spending on upgraded fencing around the fields as well as new uniforms for ballplayers. When new playground equipment was installed at the at pow wow grounds, the Tribal Roads and Planning Department contributed extra funds for wood chips for the playground area.

Cultural relevance.

Ensuring that evaluations are culturally relevant allows communities to heal, strengthen, and preserve Indigenous societies now and for the next seven generations. Our evaluation process honored the unique culture and traditions of this community in many ways. We began the evaluation process by approaching elders and community leaders with appropriate gifts (in this case, tobacco and traditional foods like venison and berries) as we asked their permission to begin and for their help in this project.

In particular, we ensured that our evaluation used culturally appropriate data collection methods and instruments. As discussed above, we worked with the program participants to identify existing data sources that meet evaluation needs rather than imposing our own measurement methodology. Where we did identify data collection gaps, we worked together with community members to find new, culturally relevant ways to collect data. For example, students in the community who participated in the collaborative process identified themselves as “data warriors” (a culturally resonant term) and brainstormed ways to gather needed data, including collecting local restaurant menus and taking pictures of vending machines used in the community to document their contents. “Pow wow pedometers” measured the number of steps taken and calories burned by fancy dancers versus traditional dancers at ceremonies. These data collection methods and instruments quantified healthy behavioral changes and involved participants in a way that honored the principal of “working with” rather than “working on.” These data collection methods were unique to the grantee but also became an opportunity to expand Indigenous knowledge and understanding from the funders’ perspective.

As the grant program continued, evaluators worked with participants to identify ways that program elements could be culturally relevant and meet program goals. New policies were created around traditional food use and access. Participants worked to acquire ancestral food knowledge and incorporate traditional healthy food into daily menus as well as special

social-cultural events like pow wows, field trips, and ceremonies. Student data collectors, their families, and actively engaged project participants influenced policy around healthy choices in community center vending machines and food provided at community center events. The goal of all program elements was to incorporate healthy lifestyle choices in ways that were culturally relevant and sustainable after the CDC program concluded.

Dissemination.

Sharing knowledge and respect for Indigenous knowledge rights is another key component of culturally responsive evaluation. At each stage of the project implementation and evaluation process, evaluators worked to communicate program status to participants and to listen and respond to participants' ideas and concerns. Monthly work and advisory meetings ensured that information was shared for decision making, assessing impacts, and for making project or program modifications in an ongoing process. Our evaluation team worked to share project data with the wider community in multiple formats. We were sure to encompass the oral dimension of Indigenous knowledge sharing in meetings, presentations, traditional talking circles, and participation in community events. Project staff prepared reports for the local Tribal government, school district boards of education, in the Tribal newspaper, on the Tribal website, and the national funding agency on a quarterly to semiannual basis. One program element was monthly demonstrations showing how to make Indigenous and traditional food in healthier ways; another was a cookbook that highlighted new knowledge about healthy traditional foods. Visual formats, such as GIS mapping related to the project, as well as project photographs, helped tell the story of this project to the community. We also used more traditional Western practices, such as sharing information through non-Tribal newsletters, press releases, and written reports to communicate with the project participants and the wider community. Open communication within the Tribal community helped shape new choices in Tribal programming, Tribal recreation center menus, and through the local school's health curriculum and cafeteria menus.

With careful and respectful consideration of the appropriate use and sharing of knowledge in this context, we worked with participants to share our findings with the wider public. Co-authored reports and presentations by Tribal and non-Tribal organizations and staff members increased trust, built relationships, built capacities for technical reports and presentations, and gave credibility to and shared responsibility for the evaluation study findings. The data was used in further grants, collaborative programming, and leveraging additional resources to carry out health initiatives extending to Tribal and non-Tribal schools, restaurants, parks, and other communal spaces or contexts.

This example of a culturally responsive evaluation demonstrates how evaluators can empower Indigenous communities and individuals through evaluation by honoring traditional knowledge, making evaluation useful to community needs, and by respecting Indigenous ownership of evaluation data.

DISCUSSION

“Indiginizing” Evaluation

As illustrated by the case study above, culturally responsive evaluation can help build capacity throughout the evaluation process if empowerment (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996), Indigenous, (Bowman, 2006a; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Kovach, 2010; LaFrance & Nichols, 2009; LaFrance et al., 2012; Mertens & Cram, 2013; Smith, 2012), and utilization focused (Patton, 2012) approaches are used.

Table 16.1 demonstrates how we transform the seven steps of colonialism as defined by Frideres and Gadacz (2000) to create a more culturally responsive case design and process for conducting Indigenous evaluations.

Progress Toward Culturally Responsive Evaluation in the Indigenous Context

Currently, few Tribal governments or Indigenous organizations use evaluation data as an effective tool for shaping Tribal or multijurisdictional public policy, making budgetary decisions, and/or to drive programmatic decision making. In any work toward this goal, the tenets of trust, data ownership, and sovereign rights of Tribal people on or off the reservation need to be part of a concerted dialogue by all parties (Tsosie, 2007). Building this capacity will require a significant investment in time and money for restructuring, building infrastructures (technology, data collection systems, creating ordinances, policies, etc.), providing staff development, and supporting organizational development to carry out new ordinances, policies, and procedures across Tribal government or Indigenous organizations and systems. The scope of training, technical assistance, and interfacing of Indian and non-Indian governments, systems, and programs needed to develop common evaluation policy, culturally responsive evaluation designs, and data collection or sharing systems is staggering. But without evaluation capacity building within, across, and outside of Indian Country, the pattern of long-term educational, economic, health, and other disparities that Indian people have endured will likely continue.

TABLE 16.1 Indigenizing Evaluation

Seven Steps of Colonialism (Frideres & Gadacz, 2000)	Seven Steps to Decolonialize and Indigenize (Bowman, 2007a)
1. Uninvited arrival of colonizers into territory	1. Utilization of a traditional knowledge council and community elders work together in the community
2. Destruction of Indigenous social and cultural institutions	2. Use of traditional knowledge (oral and written), Indigenous institutions, and non-Indian organizations if endorsed by Tribal community as a process to add to local Indigenous knowledge base
3. Creation of economic dependency of Indigenous people on colonizers	3. Providing traditional gifts as part of the evaluation process for allowing me to work in the community and for their participation in the research
4. Establishment of external political control	4. Indigenous intellectual knowledge, approval of evaluation, and ownership of data by Tribal community is controlled by Indigenous community and is formalized through memos of understanding with researcher and research organization
5. Provision of low level social services	5. Evaluation data provides information to inform and improve local services being provided by Tribal and non-Tribal governments for Indigenous community members
6. Use of a color line; i.e., racism, to justify the above	6. Critical examination by an external traditional knowledge council and participants to prohibit racism, end colonist practices in evaluation, and promote the value and use of Indigenous knowledge and processes
7. Weaken the resistance of the Indigenous people	7. Empower Indigenous communities and individuals through evaluation by honoring traditional knowledge, making evaluation useful to community needs, and through Indigenous control/ownership of evaluation data

Despite challenges, we see hopeful progress toward more culturally responsive evaluation practices. Tribes, along with many professional and political support organizations like the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Native American Rights Fund (NARF), and Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA), have politically engaged state and federal government systems and non-Indian organizations to help address capacity issues. For instance, NCAI, NARF, and TEDNA have worked with non-Indian governments and organizations to help develop Tribal policy, facilitated Tribal consultation sessions with non-Tribal governments, and have convened training and technical assistance sessions. An increasing number of tribes are moving proactively to create their own IRBs under the Department of Health and Human Services, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45 Public Welfare, Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects, which was first issued in 1974 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). These federal, tribal, and other international (UN, 2008) ordinances, policies, and guidelines in promoting and designing culturally responsive

evaluation approaches can be used to move us toward addressing current low capacity and resource issues as well as building a stronger empirical literature base for academia.

To broaden the pool of culturally responsive Indigenous evaluators, varying levels of collaboration are essential to ensure current and future programming growth for the inclusion of Indigenous evaluators and to fill the publication gaps in evaluation literature and academic studies. There are long- and short-term impacts to be considered: creating a formal plan, task force, or coalition of like-minded colleagues in combination with Tribal colleges, Tribal governments, and other Tribal organizations (nonprofit or corporate) would be a good way to begin this journey.

For Tribal communities, culturally responsive evaluation models and practices have heightened the awareness of bridging cultural context issues of Native/non-Native, federal/self-governance, Western/Indigenous epistemology and consideration of the evaluators' own world perspective. It is critically important that Tribal governments and Indigenous organizations have the right, ability, and responsibility to adapt and use their cultural knowledge; the power to create ordinances, policies, and protocols for intellectual and cultural protection, preservation, and monitoring of evaluation projects; and the authority to establish, implement, and hold accountable the use of standardized measures for program effectiveness and services to create political and cultural norms that are reflective of their people on and off the reservation.

As Tribal communities move forward into the world of program evaluation, a hybrid model of Westernized institutional structures and an authentic culturally responsive system should be the goal. As in many transformations, the question that usually surfaces is "How does the angst of acculturation stay balanced and true to American Indian ideologies?" (Dodge Francis, 2009, p. 87). The impact of academia, evaluators, and community partnerships outside of Tribal communities will play a significant role in defining, shaping, and supporting the contextual framework of evaluation methodology, implementation, and outcomes of an evaluation approach selected within a Tribal setting. Tribal communities must not lose sight of the quest to create or attain a culturally responsive evaluation system that embraces their hegemonic ability to dictate the mission, infrastructure, or organizational framework. This does not always come easily or overnight given the challenges noted earlier in the chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter synthesizes available Indigenous evaluation theories, knowledge, and frameworks in combination with evaluation resources provided to us from other disciplines and non-Indigenous sources. We do this with the hopeful vision of "continuing the journey." Our work and that of others, both named and unnamed in our chapter, inspires us to be part of the work of building the theoretical and empirical basis of

Indigenous evaluation. We will continue to “position” ourselves as professionals working toward a deeper academic base for Indigenous evaluation with the help of our evaluation community, colleagues, and friends. In the natural time and process, we look forward to how we may eventually “reposition” ourselves as we continue on the journey to construct, deconstruct, practice, and learn more deeply about the Indigenous footprint for evaluation theory and practice. It is our prayer that together we may continue walking this good path. *Anushiik.*

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NOTES

1. We use multiple terms in this chapter for describing Native Americans or Native American communities. Indigenous is used as a general term; it is also used interchangeably with Indian, Native American, American Indian, First Nation, by naming a specific tribal affiliation or languages, and/or via other Indigenous phrases as we deemed appropriate or as noted within cited source materials.
2. Colonization is when an alien people invade the territory inhabited by people of a different race and culture and establish political, social, spiritual, intellectual, and economic domination over that territory (Yellow Bird, 1999). Colonization is a political act that marginalizes Indigenous people (Adams, 1997).
3. The expression “seven generations” is a widely accepted Indigenous cultural understanding. This metaphor refers to a sustainability theory based upon ancient epistemology shared among multiple Woodland and Indigenous Nations (Benton-Banai, 1988; Bergstrom et al., 2003). The seven generation model argues that leadership, communities, and individuals need to be mindful that decisions they make affect the livelihood of all future generations (Dumont, 1996), including humans, animals, and plants. (LaDuke & Alexander, 2004). The model also advocates for leadership to take actions that sustain best practices in governance (Williams & Works, 2007) in order to ensure wellness for all in creation.
4. We deliberately chose the term “culturally responsive evaluator” versus “culturally competent evaluator.” An evaluator may be culturally competent but may not always choose to be responsive when conducting Indigenous evaluations.

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