

Looking Backward but Moving Forward: Honoring the Sacred and Asserting the Sovereign in Indigenous Evaluation

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Abstract

Culturally responsive evaluation and culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation (CRIE) within the broader field of evaluation are not often included in Western literature nor are they known or used by the majority of mainstream evaluators. In order to address this literature and practice gap, this article offers an overview and a broader origin story of CRIE prior to colonial or European contact in the United States and gives an overview of the historical, theoretical, and practical foundations for conducting CRIE in a contemporary evaluation context. Examples of evidence-based models, theories, and resources are provided to connect CRIE to Western evaluation designs and provide concrete strategies for the field of evaluation going forward. The article concludes with systemic and policy evaluation considerations as agencies from federal (i.e., United States), tribal, and international governments and partners from private or nonprofit sectors collaborate to carry out Indigenous evaluations in the future. Collectively this multijurisdictional, culturally responsive, and community-centered CRIE approach gives evaluators a new way to move forward.

Keywords

evaluation, evaluation theory, evaluation methods, evaluation use, systems evaluation, racial framing, racism, culturally responsive evaluation, culturally responsive indigenous evaluation, government evaluation, indigenous, tribal government, American Indian, Native American

Introduction

Dr. Ernest House (1999, 2015) provided three suppositions in his American Evaluation Association (AEA) keynote outlining his scholarship on racial bias and identity and several key components that

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influence racial framing, specifically a White racial and systemic frame (Feagin, 2013), within the field of evaluation (House, 2017):

- *Supposition #1: If a society sees itself as democratic, and in many ways is democratic, yet is racist and does not recognize the extent or nature of the racism, that society will promulgate programs and policies that purport to help the affected minorities, but many programs and policies will damage the minorities significantly.*
- *Supposition #2: Racism in America is not a simple vestige of the past. Rather, American racism is created and recreated in the present. Several identifiable social entities, mechanisms, processes, and structures currently generate racist beliefs and behaviors.*
- *Supposition #3: Evaluation plays an important role in these processes. Evaluation is not a cause of the racism but for racist processes to have their effects, the evaluation function must be distorted, co-opted, or corrupted.*

Given my education and experience as an evaluator, and my own Indigenous cultural identity (Mohican and Lunaape-Munsee) located within North America, these suppositions resonate deeply. In this article, I seek to help my fellow evaluators recognize the extent and nature of the racism (Supposition #1) that affects Indigenous people in North America. I examine both its historic roots and the ways in which this racism is created and recreated in the present (Supposition #2), particularly in terms of Tribal nation exclusion by governance and sovereignty subject matter experts in the literature (Schoenfeld & Jordan, 2017). This basic understanding of historical and contemporary context vis-à-vis Indigenous populations and Tribal Nations is an essential grounding for any evaluators' knowledge, competencies, and skills when conducting evaluations with Indigenous participants.

This article also seeks to outline methods for recognizing and combatting the ways in which the evaluation function is distorted, co-opted, and corrupted (Supposition #3) in the Indigenous context when non-Tribal or unexpected evaluators lead and conduct evaluations with Tribal Nations and participants. I hope to contribute toward building both cultural competencies and scientific skills of my evaluation colleagues. Given the increasing awareness that scholars in our field exhibit toward social justice as it pertains to evaluation, we need to critically examine whether intended responsive and Western evaluations actually practice what we now preach. As evaluators, we must discern our level of accountability for distorting, co-opting, corrupting, or racially biasing the evaluation process in Indigenous contexts. If we do not have awareness, education, or understanding of this history, then we cannot function at our highest level as technically competent and culturally responsive evaluators—and we may even be causing harm, as House asserts in his 2015 keynote. To address this content gap and perpetuation of harm due to lack of cultural and technical knowledge and skills, this article shares Indigenous contributions and culturally responsive strategies that evaluators can bring to their future work with Indigenous populations. The discussion primarily focuses on the context of Indigenous peoples in the current United States of America, but models and resources from other Indigenous contexts are also shared with an explicit focus on Indigenous evaluation (IE) program or project evaluation strategies.

I use the term *Indigenous* to describe myself and other members of communities of the Original Inhabitants of the land, in this instance, Takwáx Mūnáhan (Turtle Island, aka North America). As Smith (2012) notes, the term *Indigenous* has historic resonance as “‘Indigenous peoples’ is a 1970s term from the American Indian Movement to internationalize experiences of Indigenous peoples around Mother Earth. It represents our collective voices to finish the unfinished business of decolonization” (p. 7). Where I am able and as appropriate, I use my Lunaape (Delaware) or Moh-he-con-nuk (Mohican) language, traditional knowledge, and terms within this article. This conscious act of literary decolonization honors my Lunaape, Mohican, and Indigenous ancestors and relatives who are voiceless and/or who can only be with me in spirit, fulfilling the responsibility I have been given as Waapalaneexkweew (Flying Eagle Woman, accompanied by the Four Eagles) to

promote the teachings that accompany my Indigenous spirit name. My academic and professional work is grounded in community, language, and culture because it respects the past, acknowledges the present, and affirms my commitment to the future seven generations.¹

Using the traditional “four doors” from the Lunaape/Mohican seven directions cultural teachings (used during Indigenous longhouse teachings, in sweat lodges, or other ceremonies), I have organized this article’s content around four themes or doors to demonstrate the use of traditional knowledge and its application to contemporary practice:

1. *Ktanaxkihlaak (Kah-taw-nah-x-kee-lock)—Eastern Door: Origin Story—Situating Evaluation Within a Broader Historical Context.* This section situates IE within a broader historical context and offers an Indigenous perspective to the historic narrative that is often missing in our academic literature or professional development and higher education curricula.
2. *Shaawaneewang (Shaw-one-neh-wung)—Southern Door: Political, Legal, and Institutionalized Postcolonial Impacts.* This section explains postcolonial contact impacts, showing how interactions from early treaties to contemporary policy shaped colonial/United States and Tribal Nation government relations and how these political/legal components are often ignored but case-law findings/judgments are shaping policies and therefore should be considered in evaluation profession and practice.
3. *Wsihkaang (wh-see-kong)—Western Door: Perseverance and Unknown Potentiality.* This section shares the untapped potential available to persevere and rebuild colonial and tribal relations. Examples of Indigenous theories, methods, and evidence-based models demonstrate how evaluation practice can change and how IE is connected to or can modify many of the Western models and strategies that evaluators use.
4. *Loowaneewang (Low-one-neh-wung)—Northern Door: Elder Wisdom to Guide New Beginnings.* This section brings us full circle, offering guidance for our professional evaluation practice and broadly to the field of evaluation.

This article offers a broad framing of evaluation theories, methods, and frameworks that are culturally responsive and have worked well within Indigenous contexts. This broad framing, with examples, is situated within an historical context so readers understand how culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation (CRIE) was influenced and is a needed response to other activities, methods, theories, and lived experiences that have not worked well for Indigenous communities and Tribal Nations. So, the article should be considered a resource for understanding evaluation that has been used within Indigenous contexts (primarily within the Indigenous north of the United States of America) that have helped, caused harm, or leaves gaps still that the field of evaluation can consider. A deeper dive into an emerging evidence-based and applied culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) model can be further understood via Bowman (2016, 2017); Bowman, Dodge-Francis, and Tyndall (2015); and Waapalaneexkweew (Nicole Bowman, Mohican/Lunaape) and Dodge-Francis (2018). The article concludes with an overview of methods, theories, frameworks, and tools that can be used for CRIE when working with Indigenous populations and Tribal Nations. See also Appendix C of this article for additional Tribal and Indigenous Institutional Review Board (IRB) and journal articles and resources.

Ktanaxkihlaak (Kah-taw-nah-x-kee-lock)—Eastern Door: Origin Story—Situating Evaluation Within a Broader Historical Context

Lunaape Eastern Door teachings (the Original “red” people indigenous to this land are awake with the rising of the sun and are born new like in springtime in this Eastern direction). This section presents an Indigenous version of the origin story of “democracy” in the United States, helping us recognize the

extent and nature of the racism underpinning interactions between Indigenous peoples and their colonizers that continues to this day, and how that shared history shapes contemporary evaluation.

The history of Indigenous populations is rarely taught in classrooms, universities, or professional evaluation curricula. Newcomb (2008), writing from an Indigenous perspective, characterizes the standard, Western historical narrative as the conqueror model (p. 23–36), a narrative framework of conquest, ownership, and discovery based in a Western, Christian story that justifies domination of Indigenous people who are viewed as less than human. Under this narrative, historical texts are premised on the idea that colonials and Christians from Europe “discovered” a “new world,” a world they viewed as uninhabited by humans. Indigenous people were seen as savages rather than human because they were pagan rather than Christian, per the Doctrine of Discovery (Alexander VI, 1493). This Western narrative continues to marginalize and distort the experiences of Indigenous people to this day. Examples include contemporary, romanticized stories of the first Thanksgiving where everyone got along, and the mistaken notion that Indigenous people should somehow “get over” the harm caused by colonization given the so-called benefits to society provided by the industrialization of the United States via Manifest Destiny.

The historic narrative is different when viewed through an Indigenous perspective. The pre- and post-contact map below clearly illustrates one aspect of the impact of colonial contact and the theft of economic, political, and natural resources accomplished through forced removal, assimilation, termination, and allotment policies created and enforced by the U.S. government. Additionally, these policies of assimilation and forced removal resulted in death, loss of culture and language, and undermined the political, economic, and social power that Tribes had under Treaty Law (early contact) and constitutional law (contemporary times; Figure 1; see also Appendix A).

These pre- and post-colonial contact maps teach us about the impacts of colonialism upon Indigenous people and their relationship to the land and land ownership. It is difficult, but important, to acknowledge the cruelty and brutality with which this land grab was enacted: scalping, raping, torturing, hanging, poisoning, freezing, and killing Indigenous people were preliminary methods (Brown, 1970; Deloria, 1985; Ehle, 1988; Furse & Miller, 2008; Lyons, Mohawk, Inouye, & Mathhiessen, 1998; Stannard, 1992; Wilson, 1998), while the destruction of culture, language, and family and tribal structures through forced assimilation and boarding schools were more “civilized” tactics used to “kill the Indian and save the man” (“Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans,” n.d.) while taking his land. Destruction of ceremonies and significance of the place of origin by forced removal not only “kills the Indian” but also imperils the men, women, and children of current or future generations because the culture, language, and traditional knowledge needed for healthy survival have been decimated.

Indigenous intergenerational trauma is a response to the past and present unacknowledged and unaddressed effects of colonial and contemporary contact with non-Indigenous people, organizations, and systems. A large body of research supports this assertion; postcolonial trauma may be the foundational reason for disproportionately high levels of suicide, lateral or other violence, substance abuse, and incarceration rates for Indigenous populations (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brown-Rice, 2013; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003; d’Errico, 2016; Evans-Campbell, 2008; Myhra, 2011). Understanding historical, cultural, and community content can help evaluators to design appropriate and responsive evaluation studies.

Thus, evaluators who approach an Indigenous community should not expect to impose a model, evaluation design, instruments, or tools upon the members of that community. Vast differences between Western and Indigenous cultures are highlighted in the context of evaluation. For example, evaluations have privileged written and published evidence over oral history and traditional knowledge passed down through language, ceremonies, and songs. As well, evaluations have prioritized Western concepts of ownership such as data, knowledge, and intellectual property of individuals over acting as caretakers of knowledge, community, or family over individualism, and relational interactions and responsibilities to all things in nature, the spirit world, and each other. Similarly,

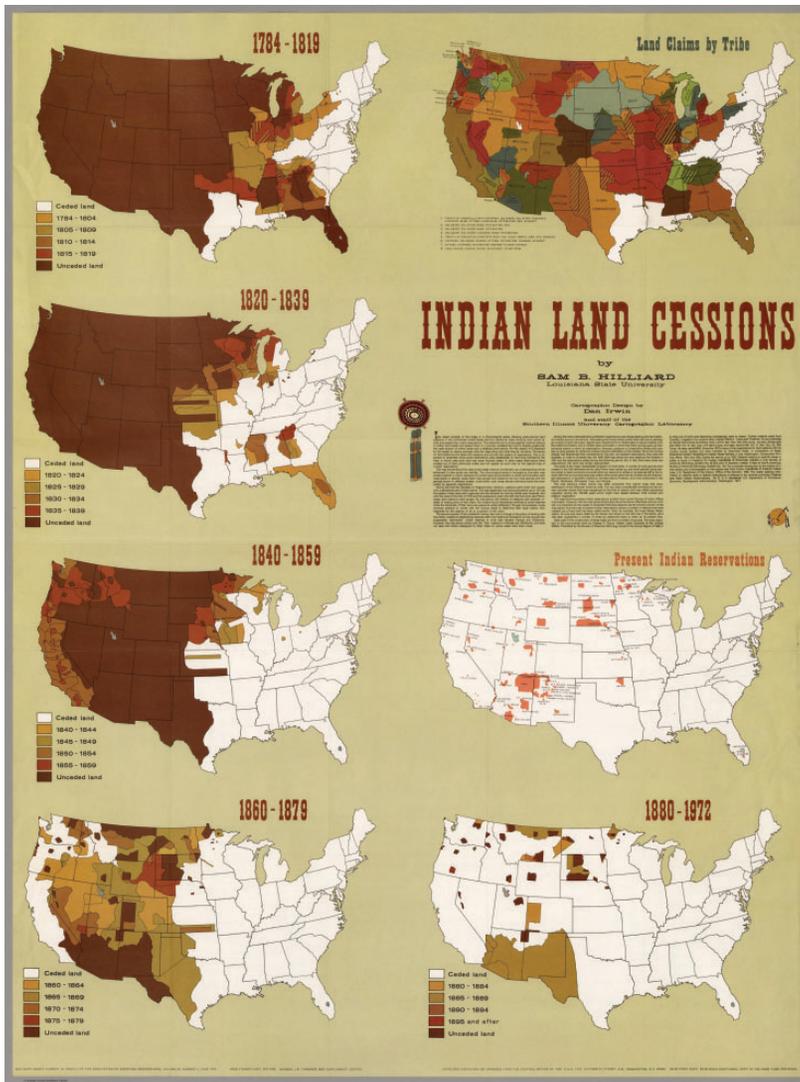


Figure 1. Indian Land Cessions. Reproduced from Hilliard and Irwin (1972; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>).

assuming that outside evaluators are the only “subject matter experts” (SMEs); reporting findings only in formats and venues that are accessible to evaluators, academics, or study funders; and having Western notions of extracting and “owning” the data are all examples of how colonialist practices are replicated in the present-day evaluation.

Without Indigenous voices in the academic discourse, the field of evaluation either replicates incorrect assumptions about Indigenous communities or operates ineffectively without the proper skills, content knowledge, or a contextualized understanding learned through experience. Listening to these voices and working to understand the history and effects of colonialism on Indigenous populations from the past can serve to ensure that evaluation practice does not replicate these destructive historic patterns and practices in the present. Traditional cultural practices and knowledge persist to this day in different forms, held by elders, traditional community teachers, and those

to whom they entrust this wisdom. These traditions, where appropriate and available for public sharing, should be incorporated into our evaluation knowledge, competencies, and skills as technical and culturally responsive evaluators.

Inclusion of Indigenous traditions is a start, but I believe our profession is called to be proactive—to change mind-sets, behaviors, and resources to reach a critical mass for addressing institutionalized and systemic change. As a profession, we need to critically question the structures and systems that perpetuate or legitimize implicit or explicit racism. Using a strengths-based approach, the evaluation field can start by including Indigenous SMEs on key initiatives and make access and resources more available, so that truly collaborative studies with Indigenous scholars can contribute to the “evidence-based” policies, programming, committees, and practice. Together, we can be more purposeful, active, and accountable with these inputs, so that the outputs, outcomes, and studies produce new knowledge from which Indigenous communities, our profession, and academia can all benefit.

Shaawaneewang (Shaw-one-neh-wung)—Southern Door: Political, Legal, and Institutionalized Postcolonial Impacts

Lunaape Southern Door teachings (the people are growing stronger and continue learning under the yellow splendor of the sun). The Lunaape prophesized the coming of the shēwanàkw (people from the salty water, long knife, Colonists). Lunaape and Mohican creation stories explained that some Indigenous people would stay and fight while others would move or be removed to other places on Turtle Island. After learning, struggling, and growing, the people would then come back together to learn from one another and traditional teachings to survive in a contemporary world. The Southern door explains why postcolonial contact political and legal interactions must be considered when designing evaluations with Indigenous communities.

House and Howe (2000) stress the importance of understanding context when conducting deliberative democratic evaluations, “Evaluation always exists within some authority structure, some particular social system. It is not simply a logic or a methodology free of time and space, and it is certainly not free of values or interests. Rather evaluation practices are firmly embedded in and inextricably tied to particular social and institutional structures and practices” (p. 3). It is critical for professional evaluators to understand the origins of the “authority structure” in which we practice evaluation with Indigenous people. The philosophies justifying the means by which resources, political power, and governance were taken from Indigenous people from the early 1400s to the present have shaped our evaluation practice today. The legal and political components unique to sovereign tribal governments, which also extend to Indigenous programs and community members, are little known and rarely considered when conducting evaluation with Indigenous populations.

From the past to the present, Indigenous people and sovereign tribal governments have been marginalized and excluded at best. What are the roots of this historic and continuing marginalization? The earliest “relationship” between Indigenous people and communities was enshrined in Christian and European policies related to the Catholic Church’s Doctrine of Discovery (Alexander VI, 1493; Newcomb, 1992). This religious and political doctrine supported Spain’s right to lands that Columbus discovered in 1492, stating “that any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be ‘discovered,’ claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers” (Newcomb, 1992) and declared that “the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations [Indigenous people] be overthrown and brought to the faith itself” (Alexander VI, 1493, para. 1). This doctrine was the justification for Europe’s conquest of Turtle Island (North America) and was the legal foundation used for the United States’ philosophy of westward expansion. It also underpins contemporary rationales for legal and political relationships with Tribes through treaties and the U.S. Constitution.

language, and community context are *all* integral to designing and carrying out rigorous and responsive evaluation studies.

Sadly, political manifestations of the conqueror model (Newcomb, 2008, pp. 23–36) are alive and well. Left unchallenged, the conqueror model supports “a state of domination which correlates with the original founding of the USA as the American empire” (Newcomb, 2008, p. 23). For example, despite their sovereign status under treaties with the United States, the Standing Rock people and tribal government have been unable to halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) on sovereign tribal lands, which are also environmentally sensitive sacred burial and cultural grounds for the Sioux Nation. Since the DAPL protest (NoDAPL) began in January 2016 (National Public Radio, 2017), multiple federal court cases have ruled against the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Indigenous people, allowing incarceration of and harm to them and their non-Indigenous supporters (National Public Radio, 2017) to continue. At the hands of the state and federal government, many people were physically and psychologically harmed, tribal cultural artifacts were destroyed, and sacred sites were burned. Even when conquered and forcibly removed to reservation lands, sovereign Indigenous governments are denied sovereignty when it conflicts with what colonists and modern-day corporate or nontribal government partners want.

The field of evaluation is not exempt from these political manifestations of colonial might against tribal sovereignty. Colonialism continues in terms of appropriation of Indigenous intellectual property as well. A new U.S. federal rule (Federal policy for the protection of human subjects, 82 FR 7261, 2017) exempts oral history from IRB review (Flaherty, 2017) and has dire implications for Indigenous populations and tribal governments. The final document defines research as, “A systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and *evaluation* designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities that meet this federal definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program that is considered research for other purposes” (Federal policy for the protection of human subjects, 82 FR 7261, 2017). This decision was reached without any legal or formal consultation with tribal governments; the representation of Indigenous populations regarding this decision was low or nonexistent, as with most the scientific activities of the federal government. Other provisions of the FR that further erode the value of Indigenous voices state that the following activities are not “deemed to be research”: “(1) scholarly and journalistic activities (e.g., *oral history*, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship) including the collection and use of information, that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected” (Federal policy for the protection of human subjects, 82 FR 7261, 2017, p. 7261; emphasis added). Indigenous people were not “seen” or considered human under the Doctrine of Discovery and Christianity in the 1400s; this lack of “seeing” is exactly what continues to happen over five centuries later.

Recognition of the legal implications of Indigenous sovereignty must inform our work with Indigenous communities. It is not simply culturally responsive, it is a legal and moral imperative that we move beyond the “beads and feathers” linguistic and cultural aspects of evaluation to work with tribal governments and communities as sovereign partners. For example, when tribal and nontribal partners work together, they should, whenever possible, obtain permission from a tribal IRB (Bowman & Dodge-Francis 2018; Bowman, Dodge-Francis, & Tyndall, 2015; Harding et al., 2012; National Congress of American Indians, 2017). The tribal IRB may be administered by the formal tribal government, approved through a traditional governance model of elders and chiefs, situated at a tribal college/university or tribal clinic, or a combination of these. Fulfilling the technical and scientific requirements for human subjects’ protection thus takes on unique meaning, beyond culture, indicating respect for and recognition of the distinct legal/political sovereign status of tribal governments when creating and conducting evaluations. Instances where Tribes asserted their sovereignty in partnership with others have resulted in many positive policy and program

evaluation results, including underrepresented and vulnerable populations (Hood, 1999, 2001; Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005, 2015).

CRE continues to transform the contemporary evaluation field and profession by contributing to and diversifying the mostly monolithic literature; challenging privilege to expand cultural and technical scientific competencies, capacities, and skills that the evaluation profession desperately needs; and creating innovative, empowered, and self-governing spaces where culture, context, and community weave together to ground evaluation profession and practice. CRE should not be narrowly defined as a response to the cultural, theoretical, philosophical, methodological, professional, and organizational incongruence that underserved and underrepresented evaluators and communities continually experience within colonized and privileged contexts and paradigms. More purposeful and empowering, CRE is a welcoming space where evaluators and evaluations honor the strengths, respect the diversity, and authentically include, engage, and empower evaluators and the communities they are working with (not “on”) in the evaluative process, so they can be their own social justice and transformative leaders for creating and sustaining local change.

IE is related to and a partner of CRE; one difference is that Tribal Nations and American Indian populations (in the United States and other places around the world) are the only racial/ethnic group with dual citizenship and government sovereignty that is equal to the United States or other international governments from a political and legal standpoint. That will be discussed later in this article. Origins of IE are found in contemporary evaluation publications as early as the 1960s, with roots in public health and public policy administration (Hutchinson, 1960; McQueen, Lewis, & Schneider, 1960). IE has grown through the decades, especially in countries outside of the United States (Bowman, 2006, 2017; Chouinard & Cousins, 2007; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2012; Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, & Porima, 2007; LaFrance & Nichols, 2010; Mertens et al., 2013; Smith, 2006, 2012; Wehipeihana, Bailey, Davidson, & McKegg, 2014). Within the United States, Indigenous evaluators were less prominent, but their influence has been felt and is growing over time (American Indian Higher Education Consortium, 2012; Bowman et al., 2015; Kawakami et al., 2007; LaFrance & Nichols, 2010; Robertson, Jorgensen, & Garrow, 2004; Yellow Bird, Bowman, Steichen, & Brandon, 2007).

In their foundational study, LaFrance and Nichols (2010) state that Indigenous knowledge creation is critical to IE and identify four core tenets of IE: (1) being people of a place, (2) recognizing our gifts, (3) honoring family and community, and (4) respecting sovereignty. These core tenets honor and align with the key issues and concerns identified as critical, historic problems for Indigenous people in the Eastern and Southern door sections of this article. Building upon the foundation of CRE and the original IE definition, I further proposed a working definition of a CRIE model:³

An Indigenous Self-Determination Evaluation Model respects, recognizes, and values the inherent worth of Indian culture; is responsive to the communities’ needs as voiced by all members of the tribal community; builds evaluation designs and processes around Indian assets and resources; and literally and figuratively employs Indians in every part of the process (program, policy, implementation, evaluation) to heal, strengthen, and preserve Indigenous societies for the next 7 generations. (Bowman, 2005, p. 8)

CRIE is about working “with” the community and not on them, an approach which has stood the test of time and is a traditional construct foundational to the CRIE model (Bowman, 2005, 2017). The process and preparation for working with Indigenous communities is as important as the theories and methods that underpin the work of the evaluator. Since 2005, this initial CRIE conceptual model has been implemented, tested, and modified through national and international IE studies (Bowman, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2015, 2017; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman & Reinhardt, 2014, 2015; Garasky et al., 2016; O’Connor et al., 2015). Created from the Stockbridge-Munsee/Lunaape

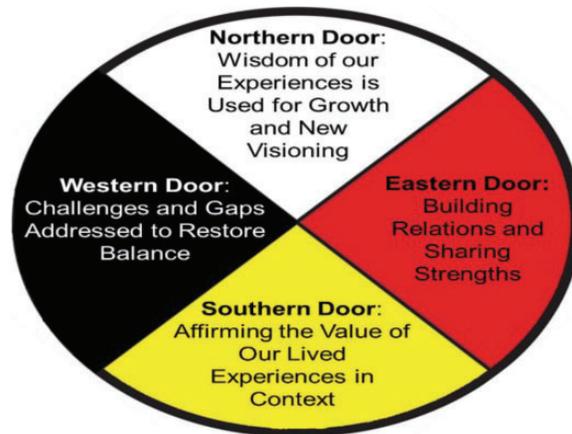


Figure 2. Culturally responsive indigenous evaluation model (Stockbridge-Munsee/Lunaape Framing) by Bowman (2006, 2016) and Bowman and Dodge-Francis (2018).

traditional teachings, this CRIE evaluation model was developed using the Stockbridge-Munsee/Lunaape's medicine wheel (SML CRIE). Evaluation is situated around a four-part framework that is about process, content, context, and community. The model is not flat but multidimensional, incorporating physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects of evaluation. The SML CRIE model allows for adaptations for community context/building, cultural responsiveness/traditional teachings for solving issues, documenting strengths as well as needs or challenges, and flexibility to meet local and funder requirements for evidence-based evaluations. The SML CRIE evaluation model was conceptualized by Bowman (2005) and for over 13 years continues to be modified and updated based on applications, new culture and language teachings, and as Indigenous elders, academics, and community members guide the SML CRIE creator's model (Bowman, 2006, 2016, 2018). Figure 2 illustrates the latest model.

Other important Indigenous and Western theories and methods that can be used in the IE context include:

- *Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)*: "CBPR is an orientation to research that focuses on relationships between academic and community partners, with principles of co-learning, mutual benefit, and long-term commitment and incorporates community theories, participation, and practices into the research efforts" (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006, p. 312).
- *Tribally Driven Participatory Research (TDPR)*: TDPR (Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health, 2015; Mackety, 2012; Mariella, Brown, Carter, & Verri, 2009; Martinez & Timeche, 2016; National Congress of the American Indians Policy Research Center & MSU Center for Native Health Partnerships, 2012) is a natural pathway from CBPR to a more culturally responsive and legally/politically accurate way to conduct research or evaluation. Not only is it community based but the unique aspects of tribal governance by sovereign Indigenous nations addresses the jurisdictional, treaty, and constitutional rights of tribes to govern themselves and any research or evaluation that pertains to them. In short, TDPR moves community-based research or evaluation from a passive to active stance in that research is "Tribally driven" versus Tribally based (Letendre & Caine, 2004).
- *Tribal Critical Theory (TCT)*: TCT builds on Critical Race Theory (CRT) frameworks of examining how political, legal, and other power relationships influence, reinforce, and sustain systemic and institutional racism and inequities (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012;

Yosso, 2005). It deepens CRT theory by applying it to the distinct legal, political, historical, and cultural components that are uniquely tied to Indigenous people and tribal governments. Brayboy (2005) offers nine tenets that summarize TCT: colonization is endemic to society; U.S. policies toward Indigenous people are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and desire for material gain; Indigenous identity is both political and racial; Indigenous people have rights to tribal sovereignty, autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification; culture, knowledge, and power have different meanings under Indigenous lenses; government and education policies for Indigenous people are linked to the problematic goal of assimilation; cultural traditions and philosophies are central to the lived realities, differences, and adaptability of Indigenous people; theories and stories are not separate but are legitimate sources of data and ways of being; and theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways so that scholars must work toward social change.

- *Decolonization and Indigenous Theory and Methods*: Smith (2012) summarizes these as “concerned not so much with the actual technique of selecting a method but much more with the context in which research problems are conceptualized and designed, and with the implications of research for its participants and their communities” (p. ix). Decolonized and Indigenous methods call for replacing colonial methods and philosophies with original Indigenous teachings, culture, and language that have meaning, empowering effects, and positive impacts, thus “re-writing and re-righting” our history (Smith, 2012, p. 7). Yellow Bird (2007) and colleagues (Yellow Bird et al., 2007; Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005) also recognize the culture and the context including the social, political, and economic power that colonizers want to maintain or expand and how that historically and contemporarily impacts Indigenous people’s lives. To combat the devastating impacts of colonization, one must decolonize the mind first by questioning the legitimacy of the colonizer and not accepting a role as a colonized person. This is achieved not only through critical thinking but also being grounded in Indigenous culture, community, and language (one’s own first, and then others).
- *The Tri-Lateral Model (TLM)*: Conceptually developed first by Reinhardt and Maday (2006), the TLM was used in an educational and policy context to frame, test, and modify the design, inclusion, and implementation of legal/political and cultural/community context components of studies. The TLM has also been used in research and evaluation studies (Bowman 2016, 2017; Garasky et al., 2016). Research, evaluation, and policy studies that include Indigenous populations span sectors and disciplines, requiring a systems road map for collaborative initiatives (Bowman, 2007; Bowman & Reinhardt, 2014, 2015, & 2016; Bowman et al., 2015; Garasky et al., 2016; O’Connor et al., 2015). When multiple governments (tribal, federal, and state) work together to develop and implement American Indian evaluation, research, and policy studies, using a tri-lateral governance framework provides a systems structure for these governments and their associated agencies or departments to work collaboratively to carry out studies with Indigenous people.
- *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*: UNDRIP (2008) is a framing of Indigenous rights that, like other UN program focus areas (i.e., UN Women, EvalGender, etc.), could be developed into an evaluation model with handbooks, indicators, and methods for evaluating equality. The UNDRIP affirms that, “Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, and to be respected as such” (p. 1) and includes 46 specific international articles that affirm the unique, historic, and legal human, governance, and collective rights of Indigenous peoples. Echo-Hawk (2013) provided a follow-up to UNDRIP and a call for its implementation, particularly in the United States and other countries with large Indigenous populations that did not affirm this declaration in 2007. *The American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* was developed by the

Organization of American States (2016) as a regional and comprehensive human rights instrument in support of the UNDRIP. Many Indigenous activists, scholars, and governments are using these international declarations as springboards to advocate for and create change and as the foundation to building case studies and empirical evidence around emerging and best practices in policy, research, and evaluation.

On a personal level, the path toward IE can begin by recognizing all voices and seeing the Indigenous people right in our midst. The Indigenous story should be told in the United States as it has been in other countries (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997; Kiernan, 2002; Meierhenrich, 2014; Moses, 2000; Niezen, 2013; Reyher & Singh, 2010). In *Democratic evaluation and democracy: Exploring the reality* (Podems, 2017), the editor and contributors explore participants' experiences with evaluation and how evaluation can contribute to or serve as a social justice lever for democracy—or not. Situated mostly outside of the United States, Podems and the contributors provide critical information about culture, context, and the lived experiences of communities and people who may or may not be the fortunate recipients of democracy in action in their lives. Evaluation, when framed with a social justice lens, offers this as a better way to create a just and equitable society.

How can we in the evaluation community incorporate this narrative into our practice? As evaluators within the AEA, we can push to elevate Indigenous voices and work to clarify, discuss openly, measure, and change impacts for improving our work with Indigenous communities and tribal governments. Examples of ways we can support this good work include past AEA initiatives such as the *Graduate Education Diversity Internship Program* (<http://www.eval.org/gedi>); the *Cultural Reading of the AEA Program Evaluation Standards Task Force* (<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=74>); the *AEA Evaluation Policy Task Force* (<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=129>); the *Minority Serving Institute Fellowship* (<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=230>); *EvalPartners Global Initiative* (<http://evalpartners.org/>); and the *Cultural Competence (CC) in Evaluation Statement* (<http://www.eval.org/ccstatement>). Other recent AEA diversity activities include the 2016–2017 race and class dialog discussions (<http://www.eval.org/page/racedialogues>), national discussions to raise awareness and promote positive actions to address the racial, ethnic, and class disparities seen within the United States. A new Presidential Task Force on Member Engagement, Diversity, and Leadership Development (2017–present) is charged with reconstructing AEA institutional memory; reviewing and evaluating the current status of diversity initiatives, commitments, and plans (including the public statement on CC); and assessing newly proposed organizational, program, and individual indicators designed to keep engagement, diversity, and leadership development on the agenda of the AEA board. Finally, *New Directions in Evaluation* and the *American Journal of Evaluation* are publishing articles regarding race and diversity.

Collectively, Indigenous people and organizations participated in most of these AEA activities at an individual level and occasionally at a program or an organizational level. Unfortunately, participation has been very low—the lowest among all racial/ethnic groups. There have been no formal and sustained partnerships and few sponsored initiatives between AEA and tribal governments, tribal nonprofits, or tribal colleges and universities on a systemic scale for much of the last three decades.⁴ The good news is that since 2016, we have seen new initiatives promoting higher levels of individual or organizational Indigenous participation with AEA. While AEA is working to reach out to Indigenous partners, it is clear that more sustained efforts, a formal strategic direction, and equitable resources should be dedicated to this most underrepresented population. Together, we can narrow gaps by collaborating on research and evaluation studies so more Indigenous populations are included. We can meet needs in a more culturally responsive way by developing the technical evaluation skills and competencies for IE through participation in trainings, courses, and mentoring on evaluation projects. And we can build and strengthen the capacities, infrastructure, and resource

supports through grant writing, targeted budget appropriations, and inclusion of Indigenous voices or tribal governments on boards or in key committee participation. Many of these strategies, if implemented long term, would provide for a more targeted organizational and strategic systems approach to engaging and including Indigenous populations, organizations, and tribal governments.

How as a profession and association do we stop systemically reinforcing and recreating the racism that exists within evaluation and government policies and programs? We can start by including Indigenous academics, consulting with tribal governments, and designing studies with Indigenous theories, methods, and models. As part of the professional standard and procurement policies for governments, for profit agencies, and nonprofit organizations, we can create requirements for including Indigenous academics and organizations in prominent positions and in significant contracts for evaluation, policy, or research studies and related training and technical assistance contracts. We can develop contract language that includes community, culture, and Tribally based human subjects and intellectual property protections. Together, we can learn not only how to coexist but how to co-construct, cocreate, and copresent our findings in ways that are effective for funder and tribal participants and translational to the closest levels of use at the community level.

The answers to our evaluation profession's challenges, gaps, and dilemmas do not exist *solely* in the academy, a prominent keynote, or a national or international publication. Culturally responsive and scientifically rigorous contributions from Indigenous academics are also in peer-reviewed publications not often valued or promoted at mainstream conferences. Examples include the National Indian Education Association's website, the National Congress of American Indian's Policy Research Center Website, the Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health, and the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network website. Hundreds of Indigenous evaluators can be accessed within AEA through the Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation Topical Interest Group and globally via EvalIndigenous. The countries participating in EvalIndigenous (a working group of EvalPartners) can also connect interested evaluators with hundreds of evaluators in their home countries. National and international organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Rights, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the Collaborative Center for American Indian Health can help evaluators better understand evaluation considerations within specific Indigenous venues, as can research universities and tribal colleges and universities such as Dine' College, United Tribes Technical College, Haskell Indian Nations University, and the College of Menominee Nation. Native American-owned corporations and nonprofits such as Tribal Tech, Masterkey Consulting, Bowman Performance Consulting, Native American Rights Fund, National Indian Education Association, Tribal Education Departments National Assembly, and Native Americans in Philanthropy also provide opportunities to build relations and engage Indigenous evaluators for those who make this a priority.

Creating authentic relationships with other Indigenous agencies and people is important. Building purposeful academic, educational, and workforce pathways for the inclusion of tribal governments, Native nonprofits, tribal colleges and universities, native for profits and entrepreneurs through targeted and responsive outreach to include and link to Indigenous groups and initiatives will help strengthen the profession and associations of evaluation. Some examples of strategic inclusion in evaluation include EvalIndigenous (<http://www.evalpartners.org/evalindigenous/about>) via EvalPartners, AEA's Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation (<http://comm.eval.org/aeaipeitig/home>), Alaska Evaluation Network (<https://thealaskaevaluationnetwork.wildapricot.org/>), the Hawaii/Pacific (<https://h-pea.org/>) Evaluation group, ANZEA in New Zealand (<http://www.anzea.org.nz/>), and the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation (<http://crea.education.illinois.edu/>). Nonprofits such as the Anne E. Casey Foundation, WK Kellogg Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation all have building the pipeline and diversity in evaluation initiatives that are currently strategically

American organizations or the Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation Topical Interest Group (TIG) at AEA for access to free newsletters, regular updates through social media, and other resources. Moving beyond books, workshops, and lectures, actual engagement with Indigenous scholars, traditional scholars, and community members will help shape the practice individual evaluators read or learn about in training sessions or classrooms.

The methods we use when working with Indigenous communities should be guided by the fact that Indigenous people belong to sovereign nations with inherent legal and political rights afforded to no other racial or ethnic group. Thus, consideration and respect for Indigenous communities is a priority. Appropriate methods include using tribal IRBs, or inquiring if there are tribal colleges or universities that can monitor for human and cultural protections. Culturally responsive evaluators can cocreate shared data agreements and colead studies with Indigenous scholars and provide accountability checks by pointing out when Western or mainstream agencies are not incorporating Indigenous methods and policies. These Indigenous theories, methods, and frameworks (legal and evaluative) will naturally support the cultural, linguistic, and community context that also should be incorporated into an evaluation study.

Evaluation design should be purposeful in financial and policy strategies as well as generous with resources and supports. This means designing bids with diversity and Indigenous experts in mind and including Indigenous evaluators and Tribal Nations or tribal national nonprofits as authentic partners and co-primary investigators (PIs) in wider scale diversity initiatives and as participants at the table for creating systems changes with state, national, and international government agencies. For instance, evaluators should be aware of receiving extra points on a bid when Indigenous evaluators and authentic tribal partners are included. Ideally, engaging Indigenous SMEs and organizations would be required when working with Indigenous people and whenever possible, Indigenous contributors would lead such studies. Appropriate compensation for subject matter area experts is also important; evaluation should value all SMEs, not just those from the majority and privileged populations.

Authoring with Indigenous communities and academics is another way to engage and give back to Indigenous populations. Creating useful work products beyond conventionally published articles that can stay in the community and provide value (e.g., briefing papers, data warehouses, and protocol development) is another strategy for successful sharing and co-ownership of projects and data. Equal access, participation in high-profile initiatives, inclusion on policy and leadership activities, and as partnership for training events are all concrete ways AEA and the field of evaluation can include Tribal Nations and Indigenous scholars and practitioners.

As members of the greater evaluation community, evaluators should review, engage in critical dialog, and revise public statements by AEA or other organizations; become involved in diversity initiatives through the association or the other nonprofit partners discussed above; and critically review the membership on evidence-based policy, journal review, and elected leadership boards at AEA, on key national or international work groups, or at their home organization. Are these statements, organizations, and groups living up to their charge or purpose? Are they truly representative of diversity and inclusive of Indigenous people and tribal governments? Collective voices and critical but constructive dialog will move the evaluation community forward.

The evaluation profession needs to be purposeful and strategic in its efforts to acquire the professional skills and association capacities for IE with tribal community members and sovereign tribal governments. More presentations, publications, presidential strands, and keynotes at AEA's annual or summer professional development offerings can highlight collaborative, effective, and responsive case studies. The profession must also be proactive, recognizing that it is not Indigenous people's responsibility to educate practitioners. Evaluators must actively seek out knowledge and request wisdom as well as develop real scientific literacy and technical competencies, knowledge, and skills needed to carry out this work well.

Seeking out knowledge is not sufficient if that knowledge is not shared with the wider profession. In order for IE processes to be better understood and incorporated into practice, this responsive IE work must become part of the normal, everyday, standard discourse in individual professional practices, within the cultures of the organizations where evaluators work, within academia and in professional associations. It is important as an evaluation profession and association that we collaboratively and with permission from our Indigenous partners, actively and purposefully document data, best practices, and methods for building responsive and responsible policies, programs, and systems to support transformative and sustained changes. Indigenous resources, publications, and prominent presentations (plenaries, presidential sessions, and live streaming events) must be included in the mainstream evaluation agenda to keep Indigenous concerns at the forefront of social and academic discourse. Archiving and making these publications and other resources free and publicly available is essential to this effort.

Finally, from a global perspective, evaluation must continue to support and build upon the work being done by EvalPartners and EvalIndigenous using the 2020 agenda and incorporating the principles espoused by the UN *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People* (United Nations, 2008). Echo-Hawk (2013) and Kukutai and Taylor (2016) provide concrete suggestions for building UNDRIP's evidence base and making Indigenous data collection, research, and evaluation a sovereign and self-determined effort, truly building a pathway to achieving Indigenous self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

When evaluation with Indigenous communities is done collaboratively, responsively, and respectfully, evaluators can change not only our own practice and profession but also the lives of Indigenous people and communities. Drawing parallels between the Indigenous and Western worlds is imperative to engaging non-Indigenous evaluators in a deeper and more transformative way and is already being done through CBPR, participatory and empowerment evaluation, systems evaluation, and developmental and utilization-focused evaluations, to name several. Someday, perhaps using Western and IE methods together will become a more common and blended practice, not a separate and additional step of the evaluative process.

As a humble caretaker of Indigenous knowledge about evaluation, I give this article as an offering, that as evaluators, we may become more self-aware, able to change professional practice, and ultimately begin to heal and reverse the effects of colonialism on Indigenous people and Tribal Nations. We must continue to ask, "*Are we putting the highest burden of responsibility on those least in power, with the fewest resources, lowest capacities, and with the highest needs to create systemic and sustainable change?*" (italics added for emphasis). It is the evaluation profession's *collective* responsibility—not just the Indigenous or evaluator of color's responsibility—to live the mission and vision of our professional associations by holding each other accountable, so we can improve ourselves and our broader community(ies) of practice.

Social justice change begins with us. Without an explicit commitment and dedication to change, the evaluation profession will continue to contribute to and proliferate structural injustices and inequalities—no longer through ignorance, but by choice. I humbly but directly ask my colleagues within the profession to purposefully, thoughtfully, and actively dedicate our resources to reverse the historic and current impact of structural racism on Indigenous populations, by building the skills, knowledge, abilities, and capacities to evaluate in Indigenous contexts and with Indigenous participants and tribal governments. Together, we can improve evaluation practice and our profession, one project or conference or initiative at a time. Collectively, we can advocate within our workplaces, networks, professional organizations, and systemically across the broader field of evaluation for the rights of Indigenous people and Tribal Nations. Anushiik njoos (with appreciation and thanks, colleagues).

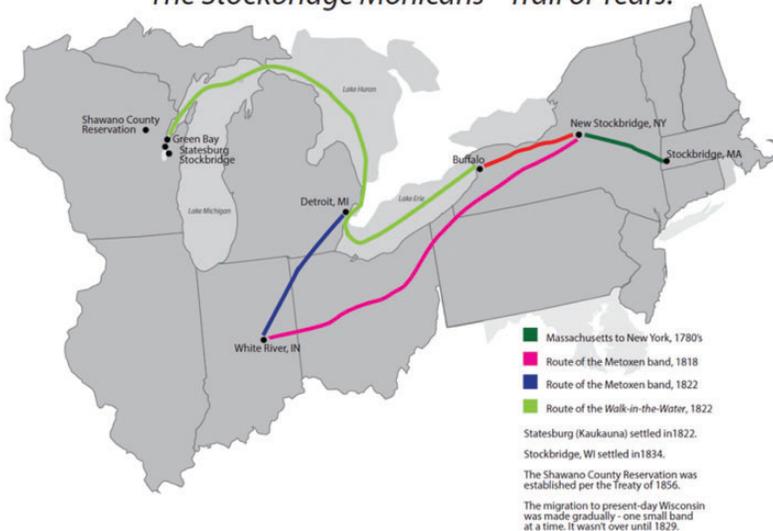
Appendix A

Conquest Maps

These figures illustrate precontact and postcolonial contact (first figure from www.mohican.com; second figure from Stockbridge-Munsee Community, n.d.). This is the forced removal of my family and tribal ancestors from our tribal homelands in the north and east to our current Reservation in Wisconsin.



The Stockbridge Mohicans' "Trail of Tears."



Appendix B

Summary of Tribal/U.S. Relations

A brief summary of tribal/U.S. relations includes the following key events and eras (Pevar, 2012):

- *Pre-1494: the “Precontact” Era* in what is now called the United States.
- *1492–1787: Tribal independence.* Hundreds (oral history says thousands) of sovereign Tribal Nations existed in what is now called North America.
- *1787: the U.S. Constitution* established America’s national government and fundamental laws, guaranteeing certain basic rights for its citizens.
- *1787–1828: agreements between “equals.”* Negotiated treaties between individual sovereign Tribal Nations and the United States established borders and prescribed behavior between the parties, predicated upon the inherent right of Tribes to govern their people as sovereign nations.
- *1832–1871: American Indian nations considered domestic, dependent Tribes.* Negotiated treaties between Tribes and the United States had to be approved by Congress (National Archives, 2016).
- *1871: the U.S. House of Representatives stopped recognizing individual Tribes within the United States as independent nations* with whom the United States could establish treaties.
- *1887–1934: The Allotment and Assimilation Era* continued forced removal of sovereign Tribes from lands coveted by White settlers. Forced assimilation and education of Indigenous people was instituted; this included separating families and imposing severe punishments for speaking Native language or practicing culture in an effort to civilize Indigenous people or “kill the Indian and save the man” (“Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans,” n.d.).
- *1934–1953, Indian Reorganization Era (IRE).* Federal policy toward Indigenous people adopted a more humane approach following the Merriam Report of 1928 (Meriam, 1928). Federal policy allowing restoration of tribal independence was supported under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.
- *1953–1968, the Termination Era.* The Hoover Commission (Lederle, 1949) called for complete integration of Indigenous people into White society, fostering several important pieces of legislation.
 - U.S. House Resolution 108 terminated the federal government’s trust relationship with Indian Tribes. All federal benefits, resources, and programming/support services were terminated, tribes were no longer considered “wards of the state,” and U.S./tribal trust relationships were ended (H. R. Con. Res.108, 1953). During this time frame, 109 tribes were terminated; additionally, many tribes vanished or disbanded, and many reservations were abolished.
 - Public Law 280 gave six states (Alaska, California, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin) criminal jurisdiction over Indian reservations (Indian Relocation Act of 1956; Public Law 83–280; Pevar, 2012, p. 12). PL280 virtually eliminated federal justice law and resources, confusing matters between state, tribal, and federal governments, creating a jurisdictional “black hole” around crime and victims of crime in Indian Country. (Tribal Law and Policy Institute, n.d.).
 - The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 (Pub. L. 959) prompted many Indigenous tribal members (including my father, grandfather, and uncles) to leave reservations to work on job programs in urban areas because there was no economic development on reservations given the abrupt termination policies of this era.
- *1968–Present, Indigenous self-determination, survival, and resistance:* As part of the civil rights movement, tribal governments and Indigenous people worked hard to restore their

communities, their families, and their lives. Tribes asserted their sovereignty, resulting in many positive policy and program changes in education, economic development, health, justice, and human services (Bowman, 2015; Champagne, 1997; Cornell & Kalt, 2010; National Congress of American Indians, n.d.).

Appendix C

Tribal Institutional Review Board (IRB) Resources

Colorado State University: <https://vpr.colostate.edu/ricro/irb/research-with-native-american-populations/>

Collaborative Research Center for American Indian Health (CRCAIH) Tribal IRB toolkit: <https://www.crcaih.org/irb-toolkit.html>

CRCAIH Tribal IRB Checklists: <https://crcaih.org/resources-research-regulation/checklists-to-facilitate-tribal-irb-review-and-monitoring-of-research.html>

Indian Health Service Tribal IRBs and Independent Tribal IRBs: <http://itcaonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2013http:///06/American-Indian-IRBs.pdf>

Rocky Mountain Tribal Leader's Council: <https://www.rmtlc.org/general-irb-resources/>

Southwest Tribal NARCH: http://mynarch.net/SW_Tribal_IRB.aspx

UC Denver's Tribal Early Childhood IRB Presentation:

http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/CAIANH/trc/Documents/Webinar%205%20TRC%20IRB%20Part%202_Review%20decision%20tree_FINAL.pdf

U.S. Indigenous Sovereignty Network. Hosted by the University of Arizona: <http://usindigenous.data.arizona.edu/about-us-0>

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Notes

1. I humbly ask with traditional prayers and Wchapihkal (medicines) that my words and the content of this article are taken in a good way and are carried in all directions of Kukuna Ahkuy (our Mother Earth). Aho (Aho means respectful acknowledgment to ancestors and supporters, a common sacred and cultural "shout-out"). Anushiik (Anushiik translates to thank you or with appreciation).
2. Appendix B of this article provides a more comprehensive summary of historic United States–tribal relations.
3. This working definition was developed as a result of participation in the 2005 Culturally Responsive Evaluation Institute at Howard University, an initiative of the American Evaluation Association 2004–2007 diversity engagement and pipeline project, funded in part by the National Science Foundation.
4. Based upon review of AEA board minutes, key documents, budgets, Graduate Education Diversity Internship program participation, tribal/public government consultation sessions (i.e., Evidence-Based Practice work group and Evaluation Policy Task Force minutes or representation), and represented by the key elected or appointed AEA leadership positions or committees.

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