

## ***Indigenous Program Evaluation: annotated bibliography***

### **Considerations for culturally competent program evaluation:**

Benson, A., Sloan, R., & LaBoucane. (2000). *Aboriginal healing program evaluation: Success through negotiation*. Retrieved from <http://www.justiciarestaurativa.org/mount/www.restorativejustice.org/articlesdb/articles/2286>

This brief article discusses the possibility of basing program evaluation on the concept of holism, which the authors define as a traditional Indigenous value. The article also suggests that evaluation methods must match the values of people involved in and utilizing the program. It is proposed that because programs should be specific to the population served, comparing different programs as an evaluative tool may not provide a strong evaluative format, rather evaluating the specific program may be a better indicator of successes and shortcomings. The article states that outcomes are easier to measure than processes, and therefore, agreeing upon certain outcomes as goals is important from the inception of a project. The authors also suggest performing a solutions based evaluation, rather than one that looks at problems or failures, as this approach is less adversarial and more in tune with an Indigenous world view.

Caldwell, et al. (2005). Culturally competent research with American Indians and Alaska Natives: Findings and recommendations of the first symposium of the Work Group on American Indian Research and Program Evaluation. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 12(1), 1-22.

This article discusses findings at the first American Indian Research and Program Evaluation Methodology symposium, and lists 20 principles for doing research and program evaluation within this context. The article firmly states that culture is an enormously important consideration in conducting program evaluation, and that traditional values must be incorporated into the process. Providing information about the history of research (and evaluation) in Indigenous communities, the authors argue that evaluative processes must not be harmful to communities, and must be strengths-based in their approaches. Recommendations include considerations often identified in Indigenous methodological and ethical writings (including ownership of data, community consultation, confidentiality, community approval of data interpretation, etc.), and also specifically address the importance of capacity building during research and evaluation.

Chouinard, J. A., & Cousins, J. B. (2007). Culturally competent evaluation for Aboriginal communities: A review of the empirical literature. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 4(8), 40-57.

This article, based on the analysis of a number of articles providing examples of Indigenous program evaluations, makes a number of recommendations regarding culturally competent program evaluation in Indigenous communities. Recommendations

include utilizing a strengths-based focus, developing culturally relevant outcome measurement, use of qualitative methodologies to engage participants in the evaluation process, and interconnectivity with the broader community (including an acknowledgement of power differentials between evaluators and community members). The article notes that this form of evaluation must “strike a balance between evaluation as a transformational and emancipatory project and evaluation as a form of systemic inquiry related to questions of judgment, and program merit and worth” (p. 51). The importance of using the findings from evaluations as a learning tool and to change practice is also emphasized.

Davis, C. (n.d.). *Program Evaluation: North Dakota EPSCoR*. Retrieved from [http://www.aihec.org/programs/documents/NSF-TCUP/9\\_Davis\\_ProgramEvaluationNov2010.pdf](http://www.aihec.org/programs/documents/NSF-TCUP/9_Davis_ProgramEvaluationNov2010.pdf)

This PowerPoint explains the basic concept of program evaluation, and then provides a historical context of research and assessment in Indigenous communities, as well as current examples of program evaluation. An Indigenous framework for program evaluation based on the medicine wheel is discussed, including concepts of: indigenous knowledge; keen observation; multiple perspectives; communal and individual experience; place; gifts; community; sovereignty; creating the story; building the scaffolding; planning, implementing and celebrating; and engaging community and building capacity. The slides speak to the importance of evaluations telling a story through evaluation, and about how evaluation design should be based on how communities assess successes. The concept of responsive evaluation is explored, emphasizing that standard evaluation methods should be used, modified, or disregarded based on their relevance to the community, because “by defining evaluation, its meaning and usefulness, we take ownership” (p. 10).

The slideshow describes the importance of having an evaluation plan, which should include project goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines. The role of an evaluator in an Indigenous context is to meet the needs of the organization or community. Telling a story through evaluation is detailed in a number of slides, and the use of both qualitative and quantitative data in storytelling is explored. Basic information about formative, progress, and summative evaluations are provided in this helpful guide.

Gray, D., Saggars, S., Drandich, M., Walam, D., & Plowright, P. (1995). Evaluating government health and substance abuse programs for Indigenous peoples: A comparative review. *Australian Journal of Public Health, 19*(6), 567-572.

This article, initially intended to provide a model that would work in Indigenous communities when conducting health and substance abuse program reviews, instead discusses basic principles to doing program evaluation for Indigenous programs, due to the reality that there can not be one homogeneous evaluation model that is applicable to all Indigenous people. The article speaks to how politically charged program evaluation is, and how government standards may compartmentalize an evaluation that Indigenous people would choose to view more holistically. Evaluation methods and measures are

briefly discussed, suggesting that popular (western) methods are rarely a good fit in Indigenous communities. In terms of evaluation measures, the authors suggest that both program administrators, and program recipients be provided with a feedback mechanism to be used in evaluations. The inclusion of Indigenous people throughout the whole evaluation process, including data analysis, is repeatedly emphasized, and the importance of using a representative sample of community members is expressed.

Kishk Anaquot Health Research. (2001). *Community guide to evaluating Aboriginal Healing Foundation activity*. Retrieved from:  
[www.ahf.ca/downloads/community-guide.pdf](http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/community-guide.pdf)

This guide, specifically for programs receiving Aboriginal Health Foundation funding, provides a flexible guide for organizations to complete program evaluation for themselves. In addition to considerations about program goals, and if goals are being met, the guide also recommends thinking about measuring how much change has happened in an organization, how one knows that change has taken place, and who else sees this change. One way to break down evaluations, according to this guide, is to look at what was done, how it was done, the short-term impacts of these actions, and the long-term impacts of these actions. The role of community informants, as important contributors to the evaluation process, is also addressed. Program specifics, including who, what, where, when, and why must be clearly emphasized in the evaluation to provide clarity about program success. A very helpful list of considerations for surveys or feedback mechanisms are offered at the end of the report, and are useful in delivering any training or services, as a way to measure program success.

Kishk Anaquot Health Research. (2008). *Evaluating ActNow BC programs: A guide for Indigenous communities in British Columbia*. Retrieved from  
[aboriginalactnow.ca/s\\_27.asp](http://aboriginalactnow.ca/s_27.asp)

This guide provides a flexible format for communities receiving ActBC funding for Indigenous programs to evaluate the success of these programs in a way that is relevant to the community. The article recommends looking at a program in terms of inputs (resources), components (vision on the project), program activities, outputs, short and intermediate outcomes, long term outcomes, and ultimate outcomes, in order to clarify the important considerations in the evaluation. The guide also recommends asking the following questions about the program being evaluated: why are we doing this?; what do we want?; who do we expect to influence?; how are we going to do it?; how will we know that things have changed?; what will we see?; how will we measure that change?; how much have things changed?; who else sees the change?. The guide also suggests having one strong question for your evaluation, with a number of sub-questions that help to clarify the main research question.

### **Example of Indigenous program evaluations:**

Beyond: Kathleen Stacy and Associates. (2004). *Panyappi Indigenous youth mentoring program: External evaluation report*. Retrieved from:  
[http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:K664-ovNhxcJ:www.dfc.sa.gov.au/Pub/Portals/7/panyappi-indigenous-youth-mentoring-program-external-evaluation-report.pdf+Panyappi+Indigenous+youth+mentoring+program:+External+evaluation+report&hl=en&gl=ca&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESh5tSxRZ93nT0FuoOHSgMgpd1UqvFDykY\\_CYuthRwO2SQBOGyVHQoOm83sbf8EtQ2cLF57a0gok8Oe3Ghvwrn88b-fVvnzvaPV1h3TSXh76CdhfS8c3ttLbign2fRMfPduGmLPu&sig=AHIEtbSIY-B1gUQRIW5hduGU5z8vAZ1gGQ](http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:K664-ovNhxcJ:www.dfc.sa.gov.au/Pub/Portals/7/panyappi-indigenous-youth-mentoring-program-external-evaluation-report.pdf+Panyappi+Indigenous+youth+mentoring+program:+External+evaluation+report&hl=en&gl=ca&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESh5tSxRZ93nT0FuoOHSgMgpd1UqvFDykY_CYuthRwO2SQBOGyVHQoOm83sbf8EtQ2cLF57a0gok8Oe3Ghvwrn88b-fVvnzvaPV1h3TSXh76CdhfS8c3ttLbign2fRMfPduGmLPu&sig=AHIEtbSIY-B1gUQRIW5hduGU5z8vAZ1gGQ)

This evaluation contains considerable information on the evaluative goals and process for the Panyappi youth mentoring program. The evaluation is both process (the story of implementing the program) and impact (analysis of objective achievement) oriented, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the evaluation plan, there was considerable attention paid to ensuring that the consultant was aware of historical experiences of Indigenous people in the community (specifically related to research), and also of the community standards that were to be upheld in the evaluation. An Indigenous cultural advisor was present through the entire evaluation, and helped to teach the consultant about how to introduce the evaluation and who to contact regarding the evaluation. The idea was introduced to youth and their mentors, went through an ethical application, and when the approval was gained a social event was held for the youth and mentors to meet with and speak to the evaluator.

The evaluation method was primarily narrative, and interviews were conducted one-on-one (and also in focus groups in the case of program collaborators only). Everyone interviewed was welcome to read their transcripts and change and omit what they chose. Then a story was compiled using information from various participants, and a Panyappi evaluation advisory group was created to approve the report. Questions asked addressed experiences of the program, outcomes, collaborations, management, awareness, and thoughts about the future of the program. The four stories created include painting a picture with numbers, young people and family themes, program management themes, and being a mentor. The report tells a really positive story about a successful program, in a way that honours the stories of the youth, and also demonstrates strengths instead of deficits. Recommendations are produced out of the findings, which are also in line with the goals of the community.

**Of note:** The Waawiyeyaa Evaluation Model (see six minute video about the model here: <http://johnstonresearch.ca/index.php/approach/the-waawiyeyaa-circular-evaluation-tool>) is an evaluation model available for Indigenous program evaluation. It is based on a tree of life and a medicine wheel concept.