



SEVEN DIRECTIONS
A CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS PUBLIC HEALTH

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Indigenous Evaluation Training Series

Introduction to the Four Foundations of Indigenous Evaluation - Q&A

Friday, June 26, 2020 11 am PDT / 2 pm EDT

Dr. LaFrance answered five questions during the Q&A. Summaries of the questions and her responses are available here.

Question 1. Would you standardize a metaphor? It seems like it would be specific to each tribe?

I would not go the direction trying to normalize a metaphor. A community-based metaphor is key. And that'll come out more in the last session because you engage people in developing the metaphor. It comes from them, not from the evaluator; it's something they can take ownership of. So it has to come from where they come from. And there may be a lot of similarities. Um, the gardening, the seed, something growing; it's giving a place-base and a story to it. I would not move to the idea of trying to normalize. There's also getting permission to use a metaphor. If you do share a metaphor, indicate how important it is to the community and the community's ownership.

Question 2: For a STEM training program with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is it okay to use the National Science Foundation training for evaluation? Should we use the Indigenous Evaluation Framework in this situation?

National Science Foundation is well ahead of other foundations in accepting Indigenous Evaluation Framework as a guidepost for doing the evaluation. Remember that the Indigenous Evaluation Framework is not a "How to"; it's a process. So you're still involved in elements that are going to look familiar to Western evaluators, but those are kind of mediated by a reflection on the indigenizing of them.

Question 3: What is your experience when you're doing collaboration and developing that community-based metaphor that they're going to take ownership of? What is your experience when the spiritual component within communities impacts evaluation? (In reference to the reading, "Spirituality Matters: The Role of Religion in Development Project Evaluation in the Tibetan Communities in China.")

Don't be afraid of bringing in that time to pray or that time to think through whether or not you're going to smudge. At the beginning of all of our workshops, we smudged to purify the room. We'll talk about indigenous knowledge and that spirituality is part of our knowledge, but it is not a



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formal evaluation step. As I said, the Indigenous Evaluation Framework is not a “how to”; it's how to engage and incorporate and Indigenize processes.

Question 4: Often tribes are told that they need to use evidence-based programs whenever they're trying to apply for grants or resources. However, many of the programs that are out there are often programs that are not developed within an Indigenous or Tribal context. There are programs that are developed in urban communities or non-Indian communities, and many tribes are having to change the programs and adapt them so that they work within the tribal communities. When they're being evaluated, those cultural components that may have been added by the tribes are often overlooked. The then adapted programs are thought of not having the same fidelity because the program has changed. So, how can we show funders that the changes were necessary and that the program is working within the context of the community?

I have a real problem with fidelity. We are very place-based and we're context oriented, so fidelity to model by necessity requires adaptation. I also believe that when we approach research and evaluation, our goal is not to do models that allow for what we call generalization: To say that it worked for us, therefore it will work for you, because we are place-based and context oriented. We do evaluation to see if it worked for us and to show this is the way it worked, then we share it with you as a gift in terms of best practices, but not necessarily your practice.

We just have to push and push against that. If you can tell the story that it worked, and it worked with the changes you made, and these are the reasons you made those changes, then you're building that evidence. Unfortunately, the evidence-based models require numbers that we cannot come up with. We cannot do the kind of statistical analysis needed. The story has to go with it. I think it might be worthwhile thinking if there's a way we can do more publications of these stories. Maybe there's a way we can combine a lot of little stories with some analysis to push back on fidelity.