

# Frameworks for Indigenous Evaluation: A Literature Review & Annotated Bibliography

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**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
CHRONIC DISEASE DIRECTORS**

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The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the 5-year [Cancer Prevention Across the Lifespan \(CPAL\)](#) project to foster innovative approaches to cancer prevention. Year three of the project began a population-focused approach to cancer prevention. This includes examining risk factors, social determinants of health, potential mediators and moderators of cancer prevention, and a closer look at select cancer prevention research (and methods) focused on American Indian and Alaska Native people.

It is acknowledged that American Indian and Alaska Native people and communities' cancer experiences occur in a unique and diverse cultural context, as sovereign nations representing more than 570 federally recognized tribes. It is also critical to acknowledge that mainstream models and approaches to research and engagement can be a poor fit for tribes and Alaska Native communities and people. Existing Indigenous principles and approaches to research are unique and differ from traditional Western approaches. To better inform the CPAL project team and CDC staff, a literature review and annotated bibliography on Indigenous evaluation methods and select citations on community-based participatory research was developed in partnership with consultants from [Health Benefits ABCs](#) and the [International Association for Indigenous Aging](#).

The following is a selection of relevant resources and literature identified in a search of both formal published journals and the grey literature.

**Ayoub, C.C., Geary, E., Londhe, R., Hiratsuka, V. & Roberts, E. (2018). Building Evaluation Partnerships with Tribal Communities for Home Visiting. *Infant Ment. Health J.*, 39: 295-302. DOI: [10.1002/imhj.21704](#)**

The authors conducted a descriptive study to examine the roles and relationships of evaluators with the tribal communities in which they work. The study's literature review found that American Indian and Alaska Native evaluation frameworks are often conducted in the absence of successful relationships between the community, the researchers, and the evaluator. The review found that the imposition of Western research frameworks on Indigenous evaluation models hinders the outcome of evaluations. As with the previous articles, the authors stressed the importance of recognizing tribal sovereignty and employing evaluation frameworks that seek to increase and enhance tribal self-governance. Additionally, the descriptive study speaks to the promise of the community-based community research approach (CBPR), wherein Indigenous community members play an active role in the design, implementation, and dissemination of research and programs. To assess the ways that CBPR can influence evaluation work in Indigenous communities, the authors conducted surveys with Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grantees and participants echoed the value of involving community members, especially tribal leaders and elders, in the process of developing evaluations and sharing the findings. The sample size (n=10) for the study was small and not representative of all grantees. However, the authors found the results suggest a general appreciation for CBPR approaches to evaluation.

**Braun, K. L., Browne, C. V., Ka'opua, L. S., Kim, B. J., & Mokuau, N. (2014). Research on Indigenous Elders: From Positivistic to Decolonizing Methodologies. *The Gerontologist*, 54(1), 117–126. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnt067>**

In this special edition of *The Gerontologist*, the authors caution researchers from comparing data from Indigenous elders to non-Indigenous elders without first adapting evaluation tools to better fit Indigenous views of the constructs being measured. The articles in this literature review all address the need for adapting evaluation tools that align with Indigenous values and tribal sovereignty. However, this article especially notes the impact of historical trauma across the life course on Indigenous elders. Even with the best of intentions, Western researchers and evaluators may cause additional harm to Indigenous elders, especially when conducting an evaluation on elders instead of with them. As with other articles, the authors recognize the potential for community-based participatory research to meaningfully engage Indigenous elders and contribute to more robust outcomes that benefit the tribal community. The authors also highlight that Indigenous research should ideally be led, designed, controlled, and reported by Indigenous peoples.

**Cavino, H.M. (2013). "Across the Colonial Divide: Conversations About Evaluation in Indigenous Contexts." *American Journal of Evaluation*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 339–355, DOI:10.1177/1098214013489338**

Dr. Hayley Marama Cavino is a program evaluator and teaching fellow in the Faculty of Maori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Waikato and an adjunct professor in Native American and Indigenous Studies at Syracuse University. This essay builds upon her experiences as a program evaluator with marginalized populations in both the United States and New Zealand. It addresses the dearth of information available regarding evaluation in culturally diverse contexts. The overarching question of the article is the role of the evaluator and Indigenous peoples in evaluation within colonial and decolonization contexts, and the answers are rooted in the cultural principles of the Maori peoples. The essay calls for an Indigenous evaluation paradigm shift from the current 'mainstream' model where the focus is on difference, competency, and access to a broader focus on struggles for sovereignty and self-determination and the capacity for Indigenous peoples to meet their own evaluation needs. The article also explores the impact of the evaluator's cultural background as an "insider" or "outsider" to an Indigenous community. It suggests that the evaluator's orientation regarding Indigenous values directly influences the evaluation outcomes. Further, suppose an "outsider" is conducting a program evaluation across cultural borders. In that case, it must be done in partnership with "insider" evaluators who are oriented to the Indigenous values.

**Chillisa, B. (2019) Indigenous Research Methodologies. University of Botswana, Botswana. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/indigenous-research-methodologies/book241776>**

*This is a book, and the following is the book's abstract. The book is available online for purchase and is \$23.*

Author Bagele Chilisa has revised and updated her groundbreaking textbook to give a new generation of scholars a crucial foundation in Indigenous methods, methodologies, and epistemologies. This second edition addresses the increasing emphasis in the classroom and in the field to sensitize researchers and students to diverse perspectives--especially those of women, minority groups, formerly colonized societies, Indigenous people, historically oppressed communities, and people with disabilities. The updated edition of *Indigenous Research Methodologies* situates research in a larger, historical, cultural, and global context to make visible the specific methodologies commensurate with the transformative paradigm of social science research.

Chapters cover the history of research methods, ethical conduct, colonial and postcolonial epistemologies, relational epistemologies, emergent and Indigenous methodologies, Afrocentric research, feminist research, narrative frameworks, interviewing, and participatory methods. New to the second edition are three new chapters covering evaluation, mixed methods, and mixed methods evaluation. These chapters focus on decolonizing, indigenizing, and integrating these methods and applications to enhance the participation of Indigenous peoples as knowers and foster collaborative relationships.

Additional information on Indigenous quantitative research reflects new developments in the field. New activities and web resources offer more depth and new ways for students to extend their knowledge. This textbook includes features such as key points, learning objectives, student exercises, chapter summaries, and suggested readings, making it an ideal text for graduate-level courses.

**Chino, M., & DeBruyn, L. (2011). Building True Capacity: Indigenous Models for Indigenous Communities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(4), 596–599. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2004.053801>**

Dr. Chino is a professor emeritus from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Dr. Debruyn works with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Diabetes' Native Diabetes Wellness Program. This article from the *American Journal of Public Health* echoes the sentiments found in Dr. Hayley Marama Cavino's "Across the Colonial Divide: Conversations About Evaluation in Indigenous Contexts" and speaks to the need to shift away from mainstream evaluation approaches towards evaluation models that go beyond objective measures and honor the importance of direct experience, interconnectedness, relationships, and values. Further, the article calls for Indigenous ownership of the evaluation model and for the space to employ

methodologies that fit Indigenous framings of place, community, values, and culture. The authors acknowledged that changing perspectives on health have afforded a growing interest in strategies for building community capacity. Even with the best intentions, programs and evaluations related to capacity building are often rooted in Western frameworks rather than Indigenous epistemologies and "ways of knowing."

**Frierson, H. T., Hood, S., & Hopson, R. K. (2005). The Role of Culture and Cultural Context: A Mandate for Inclusion, The Discovery of Truth and Understanding in Evaluative Theory and Practice. IAP.**

*This is a book, and the following is the book's abstract. The book is available online for purchase and is \$46.00.*

This volume seeks to address select questions drawn from the complex issues related to culturally responsive evaluation. We ask, should evaluation be culturally responsive? Is the field heading in the right direction in its attempt to become more culturally responsive? We ask, what is culturally responsive evaluation today and what might it become tomorrow? This edited volume does not promise to deliver answers to all, most, or even many of the complex solutions facing the evaluation community regarding the role of culture and cultural context in evaluative theory and practice. This is not a scientific undertaking. We are not ready for concerns with prediction, explanation, or control. We are ready for serious explorations, however. Even if the evaluation community cannot articulate the necessary and sufficient conditions for a culturally relevant evaluation, it does know several of the desiderata. Our concern and the direction of this volume have been reflections of evaluation theory, history, and practice within a culture with illustrative examples.

**Gray-Grover, J. (2008). Challenges in Applying Indigenous Evaluation Practices in Mainstream Grant Programs to Indigenous Communities. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation. 2008. 23(2), pp. 33-50. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ935346>**

*This article is not available online, and the following is the article abstract:*

How can Indigenous evaluators implement culturally competent models in First Nations communities while ensuring that government grant evaluation requirements are met? By describing the challenges in one tribal community in the United States, this article will discuss how American Indian/Alaska Native substance abuse prevention programs evaluate the implementation and outcomes of Strategic Prevention Framework grants from the federal government's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Requirements for implementing evidence-based programs normed on other populations and evaluating data based on quantitative methods add to the challenge. Throughout the process, much is being learned that it is hoped will strengthen Indigenous grantees and increase the cultural competence of government evaluation requirements.

## **LaFrance, J & Nichols, R. (2009). Indigenous Evaluation Framework: Telling Our Story in Our Place and Time.**

*This is a book and is not available online. The following is the book's abstract:*

Indigenous evaluation is not just a matter of accommodating or adapting majority perspectives to American Indian contexts. Instead, it requires total reconceptualization and rethinking. It involves a shift in worldview. Over the past few years, Indigenous researchers and evaluators are redefining the very practices of evaluation to be responsive to the values of Indigenous communities and their ways of knowing. Given the pressure of high-stakes testing and the dictates of Western evaluation guidelines for educational evaluations in the era of No Child Left Behind, it is essential that Native American educators learn about the growing movement to redefine evaluation practice to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and assessing merit and worth.

## **Laveaux, D., & Christopher, S. (2009). Contextualizing CBPR: Key Principles of CBPR Meet the Indigenous Research Context. *Pimatisiwin*, 7(1), 1. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818123/>**

Drs. Laveaux and Christopher from Montana State University conducted a literature search to address two important questions about the use of community-based participatory research in the Indigenous research context. First, how do "gold standard" CBPR principles hold up when applied to Native American communities and what additional contextual information is necessary to understand and work with these principles in this setting? The authors found that if evaluators adhere to community-based participatory research models but do not have a strong understanding of Indigenous cultures and values, the evaluation outcomes will be less robust. Based on this understanding, the authors then asked, "what additional principles or recommendations are helpful for researchers interested in conducting research using a CBPR approach with tribal communities?" The authors then created a list of recommendations for conducting community-based participatory research in an Indigenous context based on the findings of their literature search.

Many of the recommendations align with the findings from the articles in this literature review and focus on tribal sovereignty, understanding tribal diversity, planning for extended timelines, identifying tribal gatekeepers and stakeholders, preparing for tribal leadership turnover, interpreting data in a cultural context, and utilizing Indigenous ways of knowing. The recommendations offered in this article provide tangible examples of practice-based approaches to Indigenous evaluation (e.g., the importance of extended timelines and the value of Indigenous ways of knowing) while rooting readers in the vital importance of recognizing tribal sovereignty.

**Lawrence, T., James, R. (2019) Native American Wellness Collection: Measuring Impact Through an Indigenous Lens, 2014–2019. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2019;16:180655. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd16.180655>**

As part of the "Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country" collection, this article explains the Urban Indian Health Institute's efforts, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to develop a 3-tiered evaluation model for Indigenous communities. This article describes developing and implementing the model of an Indigenous framework of mutual trust and respect. The Good Health and Wellness in Indian County model incorporates an Indigenous Evaluation Framework by valuing the centrality of the community and family, that Indigenous peoples are peoples of place, recognizing individual gifts, and upholding personal and tribal sovereignty. Incorporating these frameworks into the evaluation model is significant because they require that federal partners and public health professionals recognize the importance of culture on American Indian and Alaska Native health.

**Morton Ninomiya, M.E., Atkinson, D., Brascoupé, S. et al. (2017). Effective Knowledge Translation Approaches and Practices in Indigenous Health Research: A Systematic Review protocol. *Systemic Review* 6, 34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-017-0430-x>**

In this systemic review plan, the authors aim to provide evidence and the basis for recommendations on practices of knowledge translation terminologies and research that improve Indigenous health and well-being. The systemic review will be guided by an understanding that effective knowledge translation is critical to implementing program and policy changes and that often Indigenous peoples are not involved in the evaluation process. The authors note that mainstream evaluation models do not address the impact of longstanding inequities, privileges, and power dynamics on knowledge translation. As a result, programmatic and policy recommendations may not fully capture the perspectives of Indigenous peoples. They may hinder health and wellness in tribal communities. The evaluators will index databases and note the absence of studies published on how to practice, document, and evaluate Indigenous Evaluation translation. This article details the purpose and process of an eventual systemic review.

**The National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health. (2013). Indigenous Approaches to Program Evaluation. <https://www.nccih.ca/docs/context/FS-IndigenousApproachesProgramEvaluation-EN.pdf>**

The National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health released a report on Indigenous Approaches to Program Evaluation that reviews different program evaluation activities and Indigenous approaches and ethical guidelines for engaging in program evaluation. For the purposes of this paper, program evaluation "mean asking good, critical questions about programs to improve programs and help them be

accountable for the wise use of resources." The Center recommends that all stakeholders involved in a program, including Indigenous participants, be included in the program evaluation planning process. The Center primarily works with Aboriginal populations though the recommendations offered align with the guidance issues in United States-based articles throughout this literature review. For example, the Center notes the vital importance of respect for traditional knowledge and cultures, conducting evaluations that benefit the community, reciprocity, and responsibility. The report also states that community-based participatory evaluation practices may equip researchers with data that contribute to the most significant utility and potential for effective program enhancements.

**National Science Foundation's Directorate for Education and Human Resources. (2002). The Cultural Context of Educational Evaluation: A Native American Perspective.**

*Conference Summary. While the conference focuses on educational evaluation, the methodological principles may broadly apply to health.*

*This is the conference [summary](#):*

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) sponsored a two-day workshop to discuss culturally responsive educational evaluation issues pertaining to Native Americans on April 25-26, 2002, at the Holiday Inn in Arlington, Virginia. Invited participants included 20 evaluation and education experts with various tribal affiliations and experience in federal agencies, national organizations, universities, and schools across the United States.

**Nelson-Barber, S., LaFrance, J., Trumbull, E., & Aburto, S. (2005). The Role of Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation: A Mandate for Inclusion, the Discovery of Truth, and Understanding. Chapter 8: The PENAL Project: Program Evaluation and Native American Liability.**

*This is a book chapter that was recommended in a resources list. The book is available online for \$40.00. The following is the available description of the chapter:*

In this provocative chapter, the author argues that cultural competency and responsiveness are essential in evaluation. The author evaluates a community wellness program connected to a Navajo school.

**Nichols, R., & LaFrance, J. (2006). Indigenous Evaluation: Respecting and Empowering Indigenous Knowledge: Journal of American Indian Higher Education. *Tribal College*, 18(2), 32-35,6.** Retrieved from

<https://portalcentral.aihec.org/Indigeval/Lists/AdditionalResources/DispForm.aspx?ID=10&ContentTypeId=0x01005BD4B1307593A147A915CC67A75FEC78>

This journal article summarizes resources from a collaborative workshop between the National Science Foundation's Division of Research, Evaluation, and Communications and the American Evaluation Association. The workshop's goal was to promote more minority participation in relevant conferences and activities. While the workshop's goal does not align with the overarching intention of this literature review, the Indigenous evaluation resources listed in this article may be helpful to future practitioners and funders.

**Roberts, E. B., Butler III, J., & Green, K. M. (2016). Identifying and Understanding Indigenous Ways of Evaluating Physical Activity Programs. *American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center*, 23(5), 34–58.**

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27668593/>

The authors of this study highlight the importance of measuring the impact of physical activity programs on Native American health and well-being while demonstrating the vital importance of decolonizing evaluation models. This article is part of the first author's dissertation work. It is built upon the assumption that many evaluators desired to use Indigenous evaluation over Western frameworks. Still, that funding for evaluation may influence the approach taken and understandings of Indigenous and Western frameworks for evaluation. The authors conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with individuals ( $n=17$ ) working at AI/AN organizations implementing externally funded physical activity programs. The study found that Indigenous approaches to evaluation were perceived as narrative and holistic, that Indigenous knowledge can be used in program development and evaluation but may not be acknowledged in the formal evaluation, and that there is not a universally desired method for evaluating American Indian and Alaska Native physical activity programs. These results further highlighted the importance of valuing Indigenous ways of knowing in evaluation models and providing evaluators the flexibility necessary to engage in localized approaches to assessment.

**Saini, M. (2017). Participatory Methods for Inuit Public Health Promotion and Programme Evaluation in Nunatsiavut, Canada. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 76:1, DOI: 10.1080/22423982.2017.1343637**

*This is a dissertation defense summary. The following is the dissertation abstract.*

Engaging stakeholders is crucial for health promotion and program evaluations; understanding how to best engage stakeholders is less clear, especially within Indigenous communities. The objectives of this thesis research were to use participatory methods to: (1) co-develop and evaluate a whiteboard video for use as a public health promotion tool in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, and (2) develop and validate a framework for participatory evaluation of Inuit public health initiatives in Nunatsiavut, Labrador. Data collection tools included interactive workshops, community events, interviews, focus-group discussions, and surveys. Results indicated that the whiteboard video was an engaging and suitable medium for sharing public health messaging due to its contextually relevant elements. Participants identified four foundational evaluation framework components necessary to conduct appropriate evaluations, including: (1) community engagement, (2) collaborative evaluation development, (3) tailored evaluation data collection, and (4) evaluation scope. This research illustrates that stakeholder participation is critical to developing and evaluating contextually relevant public health initiatives in Nunatsiavut, Labrador. It should be considered in other Indigenous communities.

**Smith, L. (2002). Decolonizing Methodologies – Research and Indigenous People. Zed Books.**

*This is a book and is not available online. The following is the book's abstract:*

This seminal text challenges Western research practices and advocates for developing and using Indigenous research methodologies that are more inclusive of Indigenous "cultural protocols, values, and behaviors" (p.15). Linda Smith, a Maori academician, notes that "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise." It occurs within "a set of political and social conditions" (p. 5). Chapter 8 of Smith's text, "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects," provides generalized descriptions of research projects, i.e., research activities, which can resonate within an evaluation context in other Native communities.

**Straits, K. J. E., deMaría, J., & Tafoya, N. (2019). Place of Strength: Indigenous Artists and Indigenous Knowledge in Prevention Science. American Journal of Community Psychology, 64(1-2), 96–106. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajcp.12376>**

This article is part of a special edition of the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. It provides an example of an Indigenous evaluation model that employs Indigenous artists to demonstrate programmatic impact. The other articles in this literature review highlight the importance of engaging Indigenous partners authentically in the evaluation process. However, this article explains an Indigenously driven and implemented evaluation model. The evaluators used the arts to demonstrate the impact of behavioral health and suicide prevention efforts. As part of the evaluation process, participants contributed to the development of artistic works to illustrate the effects of preventative health programming. The evaluation was indeed conducted *with* Indigenous community members.

**Urban Indian Health Institute. (2020). Best Practices for American Indian and Alaska Native Data Collection. Retrieved from <https://www.uihi.org/download/best-practices-for-american-indian-and-alaska-native-data-collection/?wpdmdl=16644&refresh=60f95bf51b75f1626954741>**

The Urban Indian Health Institute, a Tribal Epidemiology Center, created a set of best practices for methods report to collect, analyze, and present data on American Indian and Alaska Native populations. The report was issued in response to an understanding that standard data collection practices omit or misclassify American Indian and Alaska Native populations in all settings. The recommendations are grounded in Indigenous values and principles and aim to decolonize data. The report provides tangible and practical guidance for collecting data and conducting Indigenous evaluations, including a call for mixed-method research approaches that prioritize storytelling, focus groups, and key informant interviews. The Institute encourages funders to recognize that even if findings are not statistically significant, the data is still valuable, especially in smaller communities. Additionally, the Institute calls on evaluators to report strength-based and positive outcomes that focus on effective results that illustrate the strength and resiliency of Indigenous people.

**Waapalaneexkweew, N. B. M., & Dodge, F. C. (2018). Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation and Tribal Governments: Understanding the Relationship. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2018(159), 17–31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20329>**

This article highlights the potential for culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation (CRIE), an emerging model that honors cultural and political constructs, to address core issues that have the highest impact on Tribal communities, such as sovereignty, self-determination, and decolonization within the context of an evaluation study. The authors highlight that for many Tribal communities and governments, evaluation has not been an equal, collaborative, or value-added process and that CRIE is an emerging model that may foster more robust evaluation outcomes in the future. The article includes a case study that utilizes the CRIE model to evaluate the capacity of Tribal government and Indigenous communities to administer their own nutrition assistance programs and found the approach to be successful due to pre-existing relationships, networks, content expertise, and a solid understanding of the cultural dynamics involved in conducting Indigenous evaluation. Similar to previous articles in this review, the authors note the importance of authentic partnerships and cultivating relationships with key community stakeholders when conducting evaluations.

**Whitesell, N. R., Bolan, M., Chomos, J. C., Heath, D., Miles, J., Salvador, M., Whitmore, C., & Barlow, A. (2018). Measurement Issues in Home-Visiting Research within Tribal Communities: Challenges and Strategies. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 39(3), 326–334. DOI: [10.1002/imhj.21713](https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.21713)**

This article is part of a special edition of the *Infant Mental Health Journal*. Researchers from prominent universities and consulting firms collaborated to address the most common barriers to evaluation and possible solutions to conducting Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting evaluations. There are many measurements related to home-visiting evaluation. Still, the researchers noted that these measurements are often inappropriate for Indigenous communities and can be stigmatizing. Home visiting measurements are particularly challenging due to the sensitive nature of the evaluation (e.g., issues related to substance abuse, domestic violence, use of birth control, etc.). Distrust of western approaches may exacerbate these sensitivities. The researchers noted that sometimes the measurement content does not need to be adjusted so much as the *approach* to measurement.

The overarching message of this article is the vital importance of relationship building and authentic engagement to conduct evaluations with robust, accurate, and helpful outcomes. One way to help facilitate this relationship building is to ensure that measurement teams include community representation to ensure that constructs and items resonate with local culture and values. Community-based participatory research principles are highlighted as best practices in this space. The authors recommend convening an evaluation advisory committee of tribal members to inform the approach, guide the process, and distribute information. This article demonstrates the importance of funders providing technical support to grantees to ensure that evaluations can be conducted in partnership with Indigenous community members and best share the stories and strengths of Indigenous peoples.