Decolonizing Evaluation of Indigenous Land-Based Programs: A Settler Perspective on What We Can Learn from the LANDBACK Movement

Debbie DeLancey
Aurora Research Institute, Northwest Territories, Canada

Background: There is increasing recognition of the importance of land-based programming in promoting Indigenous cultural resurgence and community-building.

Purpose: This article explores the challenges associated with evaluation of on-the-land programs and considers ontological and epistemological challenges associated with applying a postpositivist Western evaluation approach.

Setting: The paper focuses on Indigenous-led programs in northern Canada that are located on the land.

Intervention: Not applicable.

Research Design: Literature review.

Data Collection and Analysis: Not applicable.

Findings: Western concepts of program theory and outcome measurement are not relevant to Indigenous land-based programming and should not be imposed as an accountability requirement. Indigenous-led evaluation should be mandated for Indigenous land-based programs, consistent with emerging recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights to sovereignty over programs and services.

Keywords: Indigenous evaluation; culturally responsive evaluation; land-based programs; decolonizing evaluation

Introduction

This article considers the importance of land-based programming in Indigenous cultural resurgence and community-building and proposes a new frame of reference for non-Indigenous funders and evaluators to consider when thinking about how to evaluate these programs. The analysis draws on the literature, and also on my personal and professional experience as a non-Indigenous settler who has lived and worked for more than 40 years in northern Canada. During that time, I have had opportunities to engage with Indigenous land-based programs as a researcher, participant, funder, and evaluator. I have been privileged to spend time on the land with Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends, family, and colleagues, and I continue to be humbled by the incredible generosity that the people and the land have shown me.

Indigenous Land-Based Programs

Throughout North America, there is increasing demand for land-based programming as a critical success factor for Indigenous communities. Land-based programming involves "programming taking place in culturally significant locations facilitated by and for Indigenous communities and groups that can take a variety of forms" (Dotto, 2020, p. 10). These programs play a key role in Indigenous communities, providing a range of benefits including intergenerational connection, transmission of traditional knowledge, and healing opportunities. On-the-land (OTL) programs are designed and delivered with a multitude of objectives, but Indigenous governments and communities emphasize that, regardless of the stated program purpose (which may include education, language, youth well-being, healing from trauma and addictions, or transmission of cultural skills), Indigenous-led OTL programs are "an important part of revitalizing cultures, languages and traditions" (NWTRPA, n.d., para. 1).

Land-based programs play an especially critical role in healing and well-being. Redvers (2020) notes that the concept of land as a central dimension of wellness is embedded in Indigenous knowledge. A 2017 qualitative study of mental health service utilization and suicide rates in several James and Hudson Bay communities concluded that

> … the most notable finding … was the ways in which connection to the land was interwoven throughout all responses. Participants' comments regarding physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional health often referred to attitudes and practices that affirmed a fundamental connection to their land. (Walsh et al., 2018, p. 208

The importance and effectiveness of OTL programming for improving individual and community Indigenous well-being has been reflected in numerous studies, reviews, and inquiries convened by public governments. The report of a public inquiry convened in 2012 by the Northwest Territories Minister of Health and Social Services to explore effective responses to addictions identified more funding for OTL programs as the overarching top priority, stating, "So strong is this belief, with so many examples of its success, that the Forum is making on-the-land programming its number one recommendation" (Government of Northwest Territories, 2013, p. 5). More recently, a 2022 review of Child and Family Services by the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Development reported that when northern residents were asked for feedback on what programs or services are viewed as positive when people are reaching out for help, OTL programs were the most highly rated resource (Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, 2022). Wildcat, McDonald, Irlbacher-Fox, and Coulthard (2014) see the value in land-based education programs as acting "in direct contestation to settler colonialism and its drive to eliminate Indigenous life and Indigenous claims to the land." (p. iii). Canadian media (e.g., Galloway, 2018, and Johnson, 2019) frequently highlight and celebrate the success of land-based programs as evidence of Indigenous cultural resurgence and resilience.

OTL program funders, practitioners, and evaluators from across northern Canada met in 2018 to tackle the issue of evaluation approaches. Participants noted that stated objectives for OTL programs are diverse, ranging from celebrating culture and strengthening tradition, to intergenerational connection, to rebuilding language and/or land-based skills, but also noted that defining these activities as "programs" implies that being on the land is "something out of the normal, when, in fact, living well on the land is a way of life" (Wenman & Jensen, 2019, p. 2).

Indigenous communities and governments seeking to promote and deliver land-based programming face substantial challenges. Availability of adequate funding is paramount among these. Delivering land-based programs in a contemporary context requires investment in infrastructure, transportation, program staff and support staff, and insurance, among other costs

(Wildcat et al., 2014; Jensen et al., 2021). The tendency of mainstream funding agencies (primarily public governments and philanthropic non-government organizations) to allocate funding based on a concept of formal programming that addresses a single identified need or desired outcome through siloed funding streams means that land-based programs are often funded through a variety of sources, creating an administrative burden for accounting and reporting (Dotto, 2020). Redvers (2020) notes that Indigenous land-based practitioners make a distinction between "activities" and "programs"; activities reflect a way of life grounded in ceremony and connection to the land, whereas programs are designed to focus on a specific aspect of social being through a discrete set of activities. This creates a conundrum for Indigenous program delivery agents—the inherent value of land-based programming is that "key facets are interconnected and no one feature stands on its own" (Dotto, 2020, p. 10), but funding agencies generally require a focus on one program facet or activity, with accountability for outcomes assumed to be linked to that activity. At their 2018 workshop, OTL practitioners in northern Canada chose to steer away from discussion of OTL programs as being focused on a single issue or problem to be addressed, but instead recommended a strengths-based approach, noting that living well on the land is a way of life for Indigenous peoples (Wenman & Jensen, 2019). The challenge for evaluators in these fundamentally different understandings is that focusing on a narrowly defined evaluand may satisfy the requirements of external funders, while resulting in an evaluation that is not relevant to the needs and priorities of the sponsoring community.

Current State of Evaluation of OTL Programs

Increasing demand for land-based programming has generated interest in determining appropriate evaluation approaches for such programs. Evaluations of land-based programs serve one of two main objectives: demonstrating validity by reporting on activities and outcomes to funding agencies, and/or providing feedback and insights to inform future program delivery (Wenman & Jensen, 2019). These approaches have been characterized by Iona Radu as the difference between a situation in which non-Indigenous outsiders judge "the merit, worth and significance of a program" (DeLancey et al, 2018, p.40)to see if it measures up to standards sets by external funders; and the use of evaluation as a tool for "coming to know"(p. 41)—that is, making new

knowledge to guide programming in a good way (DeLancey et al., 2018, pp. 39–44).

A 2020 literature review on evaluation of land-based programming (Dotto, 2020) identified several challenges that Indigenous governments and organizations face with respect to evaluation of land-based programs, including the following:

- Limited resources for both program delivery and evaluation;
- Evaluation using quantitative data … is often logistically difficult, ethically questionable, and culturally inappropriate for on-the-land programs;
- The imposition of non-Indigenous modes of evaluation, thought, and values is a major obstacle;
- Power disparities between evaluators and the group being evaluated are wide and can replicate a long history of colonial exploitation of Indigenous communities by researchers, particularly when the evaluator is not Indigenous;
- Programs have difficulty maintaining contact with, and finding support for, participants once the on-the-land portion of the program is over.

Another challenge is the disconnect between funder expectations and reality. Funders often view land-based programs as an opportunity to achieve broad social outcomes (e.g., healing from addictions, reduction in youth crime, language enhancement) and want to see evidence that the intervention is contributing to those outcomes. Too often, programs are focusing on issues with root causes that go back generations if not centuries—including colonization, dispossession from land, residential schools, the '60s scoop (a term used in Canada to describe the widespread removal of Indigenous children from their homes in order to place them with non-Indigenous foster families), and the ongoing impacts of systemic racism in settler colonial institutions (Bowman et al., 2015; Williams, 2018). The cumulative impact of these genocidal policies manifests as intergenerational trauma, a term that describes how trauma experienced by one generation is passed on to subsequent generations, sometimes resulting in destructive behaviors becoming normalized (Berube, 2015). Reversing the impacts of intergenerational trauma requires sustained effort over generations, and it is simply not realistic to expect short-term programs to achieve quantifiable results in the short term.

Indigenous Evaluation and Culturally Responsive Evaluation Approaches

There is an extensive body of literature describing the experience of Indigenous peoples and communities with research and evaluation, and the degree to which many Indigenous people distrust research processes driven from a Western scientific perspective (Kovach, 2009; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2013; Johnston-Goodstar, 2012). Wong et al. (2020) note that "Indigenous communities distrust researchers from all disciplines because of past exploitations, which include treatment of Indigenous peoples as research subjects without consent, misuse of health data, theft of cultural resources, and manipulation of wildlife" (Wong et al., 2020). Within recent decades, Indigenous people from Canada's North were made the non-consensual subjects of medical scientific experiments in so-called Indian hospitals such as the Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta (Felske-Durksen, 2021). Kovach (2012) has written that there is a crisis in contemporary government policies relating to Indigenous peoples because "…the research that influences policy and shapes practises that impact Indigenous communities emerges from Western, not Indigenous, knowledges …" (p. 13). A recent publication by the Urban Indian Health Institute identified state and federal grant and funding evaluation reporting requirements as a major threat to programs dealing with Indigenous survivors of violence, citing "survey methods that cannot incorporate needed cultural relevancy, [and] rigid performance measures that place too much emphasis on outputs such as the number of clients served or the number of activities completed, often masking the efforts and stories behind these numbers …" (Polansky & Echo-Hawk, 2021, p. 7).

To address this legacy, evaluators have been encouraged to adopt culturally responsive approaches—ensuring that non-Indigenous evaluators approach work in Indigenous communities with respect, striving for cultural safety, using data collection methods that are appropriate in an Indigenous context, and ensuring community involvement in validation and dissemination of evaluation findings (Reciprocal Consulting, n.d.; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2013). (Cultural safety refers to "an outcome where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, and free of racism and discrimination" [Government of Northwest Territories, 2018, p. 4]. The term was originally coined in New Zealand specifically with reference to health care services, but has come to be used in other contexts to describe the desired outcome of culturally responsive approaches.)

In recent years, evaluators have been recognizing the need to go further—to decolonize research and evaluation, with a specific focus on culturally responsive evaluation and Indigenous evaluation, as a field of inquiry (Shepherd & Graham, 2020). Indigenous evaluators like Nicole Bowman (Waapalaneexkweew), Fiona Cram, and Nan Wehipeihana have played a leadership role in articulating the concept of Indigenous evaluation that is done by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people, as Indigenous people (Wehipeihana, 2018). This work has been advanced through the efforts of EvalIndigenous, a global network of Indigenous evaluators launched in 2015 to promote the contributions of Indigenous evaluators and intentionally privilege Indigenous knowledge and cultural and traditional protocols in the global evaluation community (Bremner & Bowman-Farrell, 2020). A group of Canadian Indigenous health and social services evaluators describe decolonized evaluation as evaluation that "centralizes Indigenous knowledge and values, ensures that processes and outcomes are aligned with Indigenous community goals and worldviews, includes active participation and leadership of Indigenous communities and focuses on relevance as defined by Indigenous communities" (Firestone et al., 2020, p. 417)

The move towards Indigenous evaluation has been catalyzed in Canada by the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, which spurred the Canadian Evaluation Society to adopt an official position (2016) on reconciliation and promotion of culturally responsive evaluation; and by the Government of Canada's passage, in 2021, of legislation embracing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a broad statement on the rights of Indigenous peoples which asserts and details their sovereignty and right to self-determination with specific statements about governance, traditional knowledge, institutional structures, legal structures, environmental protection, and social programs.[1] Articles 21 and 23 of UNDRIP, which cite the right of Indigenous people to improvement of economic and social conditions, and to

---

[1] The full declaration can be found here: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeo ples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

determine priorities and be actively involved in developing and administering health and social programs, are particularly relevant to this discussion. McCurry (2020) has explored the implications for evaluation of the Government of Canada's commitment to establishing nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous governments and concludes that doing so will require decolonizing evaluation models and frameworks in a way that "goes well beyond thinking about the 'cultural responsiveness of methodology'" (McCurry, 2020, p. 409).

Substantial effort has been invested by the evaluation community in Canada and elsewhere in finding ways to bridge Western and Indigenous evaluation methods when conducting evaluation of programs and services in Indigenous communities, and to carve out a role for non-Indigenous evaluators to work effectively as allies with Indigenous governments and communities (Shepherd & Graham, 2020; Wehipeihana et al., 2010; Bowman et al., 2015). Bowman (2020) proposes a Nation-to-Nation systems evaluation framework that is particularly relevant in complex, multijurisdictional environments where tribal or First Nations governments intersect with public governing agencies. This is important work, and there will continue to be a need for non-Indigenous evaluators who can support respectful, culturally safe, and effective evaluation approaches when mainstream funding agencies require a postpositivist evaluation approach that privileges dominant society values and outcomes for programming in Indigenous communities—at least until such time as there are enough Indigenous evaluators available to meet the demand. But as Shepherd and Graham (2020) have noted, evaluation conducted in these contexts has limited value for informing policy. Indigenous governments in Canada have negotiated, or are in the process of negotiating, enhanced jurisdiction. In this context, as McCurry notes, it is no longer sufficient to aspire to simply ensuring that evaluation is culturally responsive. As the full scope of Indigenous sovereignty is exercised, it will require evaluation grounded in Indigenous values, epistemology, and methods and led by Indigenous evaluation experts. And this shift will be especially critical for evaluation of Indigenous land-based programs.

The Interconnectedness of All Things

Canadian government agencies and the philanthropic sector have responded to the demand for more investment in land-based programming in Indigenous communities positively, resulting in substantial investment. While expectations with respect to evaluation and accountability differ among agencies, funding to deliver programs often includes some requirement for reporting back to funders. This can be particularly problematic for OTL programming, given that the degree to which such programs are grounded in Indigenous communities' culture, values, and worldviews means that mainstream evaluation methods are not well suited to the task. Long-established notions of accountability, especially for the use of public funds, make it difficult for funders to relinquish all reporting requirements, but there is a fundamental disconnect between the ontological and epistemological perspectives informing funder expectations and Indigenous program design.

Indigenous communities' prioritization of land-based programming reflects a worldview that does not perceive humans as living separate from the natural environment. Indigenous worldviews

> ... do not distinguish between human beings and the rest of the natural environment, while western science has historically perceived the natural environment to be separate and distinct from humans. All Dene languages have a term that refers to the entire ecosystem ... including the land and natural features, water and water systems, vegetation, wildlife populations and their behaviour, the climate, the wind, and the human inhabitants. (Miltenberger, 2014, p. 9)

This concept is so fundamental to Indigenous ontology that the NDN Collective, a U.S.-based Indigenous think tank and philanthropic organization, has adopted as one of its key values "the interconnectedness of all things" (n.d.). Redvers' (2020) definition of a land-based program explicitly states, "Programs are informed by an Indigenous pedagogy wherein the land is the main source of knowledge and teaching" (p. 91).

Equally important is the concept of place, and recognition that all aspects of life in Indigenous communities are deeply connected to the natural environment. Keith Basso (1996) has written that Western Apache culture intricately adapted to the physical geography in which it exists, and that Western Apache concepts of land and self work together to influence social behavior and create a strong moral relationship with the land. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that social science has an entrenched tendency to disregard place, grounded in the roots of the Western intellectual tradition and strengthened by postmodern social theories. They note that societies rooted in settler colonialism are not only much less connected to place than

Indigenous nations because of the relatively recent history of their arrival, but also that they are less likely to consider place since doing so would require consideration of the ongoing displacement and dispossession of people from land which has allowed many settler societies to thrive. They conclude that non-Indigenous and settler scholars fail to attend to the importance of place and land, and propose the concept of "critical place inquiry," which "puts Indigenous theories, methodologies, and methods at the centre, not on the periphery" (p. 4). Central to this approach is going beyond considerations of human systems, giving consideration to the land and its non-human inhabitants, and incorporating Indigenous epistemologies of land into social science research. While a critical place theory approach can involve a range of research methods, those methods must consider place explicitly, extending beyond consideration of social systems and human interactions to "deeply consider land and its non-human inhabitants and characteristics" (p. 3). An evaluation approach grounded in critical place theory would thus consider land (as understood in Indigenous ontologies, including non-human elements) not only as an integral component of program design, but also as foundational to a program's theory of change.

Evaluation frameworks often begin with articulation of a program's theory of change, or internal logic. Theories of change, most often grounded in a Western postpositivist paradigm, seek to establish causal links between activities, outputs, and outcomes (Owen & Rogers, 1999). Evaluators are taught to describe anticipated causal attribution between observed behavioral changes and a specific intervention; this is often depicted as a chain of results which demonstrate how interventions are expected to lead to outcomes. Long-term outcomes generally reflect the anticipated benefits for participants, or communities, during or after the program's intervention is delivered. More often than not, the desired outcomes are grounded in a dominant-society, Western ontology and reflect values that may not necessarily be universal, and may not reflect priorities of Indigenous communities (Polansky & Echo-Hawk, 2021). A 2007 report found that there is a gap between Indigenous perspectives and government reporting frameworks when attempting to measure educational outcomes, and that current approaches to measuring learning success do not take into consideration key aspects of Indigenous epistemology, including the holistic nature of Indigenous learning and the value of experiential learning (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). As noted above, there is also a temporal disconnect when outcomes must be described in the context of generational change as opposed to shorter timelines.

Theories of change and logic models may treat interventions and outcomes as existing apart from place, or may reference a geographical location for program or service delivery without exploring the importance of that location to the program's founding principles or values. A critical place inquiry perspective, on the other hand, would privilege Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies of land, recognizing that Indigenous land-based programming is informed by Indigenous worldviews and relationship to land. In this context, the land is no longer simply the location for hosting an activity that leads to an outcome. Instead, being on the land, and part of the land, is itself a valued ultimate outcome. Embracing the land as the source of knowledge and healing, the holder of a people's history, and the foundation of culture, language, and way of life inexorably leads to the conclusion that there is inherent value in connecting with land in a good way. Mandee McDonald, a Maskîkow moosehide tanner and academic, explains it this way:

> Linking on the land programs to positive social change is intuitive from an experiential standpoint as someone who has organized, delivered, and participated in many land-based programs, but empirically proving that link using standard Western methodologies is difficult. (McDonald, 2022 p. 3)

Dr. John B. Zoe, speaking at the 2018 NWT Evaluation Symposium, noted that the goal of land-based programming is to "put your feet back in to the original landscape ... All the information, all the knowledge that we need is still on the land." A logic model recently developed for a youth on-the-land program in the Northwest Territories community of Radilih Koe echoes this theme, and includes as a foundational principle in its theory of change this advice from a community Elder: "The land has all the answers" (Tobac, 2019). Indigenous land-based programming is more than just delivering specific activities in an outdoor setting; it is a transformative investment in restoring humanity's relationship to land, which "... according to Indigenous thought, will lead to better health and social outcomes for all living beings" (McDonald, 2022 p. 3).

The LANDBACK Movement As a Conceptual Model for Thinking about Evaluation of Land-Based Programs

"LANDBACK" has been used increasingly in recent years as a simple but powerful phrase to refer to the numerous efforts that are underway to "get Indigenous lands back into Indigenous hands and achieve justice for Indigenous people" (NDN Collective, 2020). Proponents of LANDBACK use the term to encompass more than the repatriation of stolen lands, describing it as incorporating all dimensions of the right to be self-determining. Riley Yesno, a research fellow at the Yellowhead Institute, describes it as including, "… any action that centres placing jurisdiction, authority, resources back into the hands of Indigenous people … especially those things that were harmed or taken through colonialism" (The Agenda, 2022,1:28.

In early 2022, the University of Alberta's political science department hosted a public event that engaged several Indigenous activists and scholars in a discussion of the concept of LANDBACK (Kahane, 2022). The session opened with the panel moderator asking why the concept of LANDBACK resonated. Daniel T'seleie, a K'asho Got'ine retired lawyer and Indigenous rights activist from the Northwest Territories, responded by briefly outlining the colonial history of his people's dispossession of land, and noted

> One of the tools that colonial institutions use to maintain this power imbalance is controlling the narrative … words like "rights" or "reconciliation" are not precise enough to be useful … and their meaning can really be skewed to support the colonial narrative … "LANDBACK" is precise. It communicates that our land was taken and that we want it back…. It frames the issue more accurately than other terminology. (8:51)

Another panel member, Eriel Deranger, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, echoed T'seleie's concerns about settler colonial control of the narrative, noting that the concept of sovereignty is still understood within a Western construct of dominion, i.e. Indigenous sovereignty as it exists in Canada occurs within a framework of approval and definition sanctioned by the Government of Canada: "It's like the colonial government said, yeah okay, we agree. You have demonstrated to us that you are capable …" (1:09:29). In her view, the concept of LANDBACK implies a state of Indigenous sovereignty where there are no pre-set terms and conditions imposed by colonial powers on Indigenous control over lands and resources.

These observations, although at first glance seemingly unrelated to evaluation, provide a useful frame of reference for thinking about Indigenous land-based programs within the context of the evaluation profession's commitment to reconciliation, and government commitments to implementation of UNDRIP. As previously noted, there is an emerging body of evaluation literature that addresses the need to ensure that evaluation in Indigenous contexts is culturally responsive, and is characterized by "collaboration, co-design and capacity building toward the central objective of ensuring that Indigenous evaluations are, ultimately, designed and led by Indigenous people." (McCurry, 2020, p. 410; Reciprocal Consulting, n.d.; Bowman et al., 2015). But who defines when evaluation is truly culturally responsive? Is the evaluation profession continuing to control the narrative with the use of phrases that, to paraphrase T'seleie, are ambiguous, can have multiple interpretations, and can be used in a way to support the dominant society's narrative about what constitutes good evaluation? And in the same vein, do the widely promoted objectives of achieving evaluation that is co-created, that utilizes two-eyed seeing, and that helps to build capacity among Indigenous evaluators, represent something akin to Deranger's concept of "sanctioned sovereignty"—in other words, will the evaluation profession only embrace Indigenous evaluation methods and approaches as long as they are deemed to meet standards set by non-Indigenous evaluators?

When non-Indigenous evaluators write about the importance of incorporating Indigenous worldviews and values into evaluation, it often feels like they are applying a Western postpositivist lens, encouraging Indigenous communities to use culturally appropriate tools and methods to prove to mainstream funding agencies that interventions like land-based programs are effective because they achieve outcomes valued by the dominant society. As noted above, funding agencies (and non-Indigenous evaluators) consider on-the-land programs to be an intervention which will lead to a desired outcome. But when viewed from an Indigenous ontological perspective, and using a critical place theory lens, being on the land can be understood not as an intervention, but rather as a valued outcome.

Conclusion

As Indigenous governments continue to reclaim sovereignty and exercise enhanced jurisdiction, there will be a gradual shift in how evaluation is done, and by whom, moving away from situations where non-Indigenous evaluators take the lead with culturally responsive or co-created approaches to increasing utilization of Indigenous-led evaluation. Just as the LANDBACK movement calls for the relinquishing of colonial control and recognition of true sovereignty by returning land and restoring Indigenous decision-making on Indigenous lands, the decolonization of evaluation requires funding agencies and the evaluation profession to stop requiring land-based programs to demonstrate validity within a Western social science construct. The ontological framing of social science research and training make it challenging for settler governments and funders to accept that simply getting Indigenous people out on the land is good enough—to understand that even if the program agendas weren't followed, even if the activities were rained out, even if things didn't go as planned, the very act of connecting to land constitutes success from an Indigenous perspective.

What would decolonizing evaluation of Indigenous land-based programming entail? LANDBACK's unequivocal message about returning land, jurisdiction, and true sovereignty to Indigenous peoples is a useful analogy for considering the utilization of Indigenous evaluation. The Canadian government and some provinces and territories have formally adopted UNDRIP and made commitments to take action to implement UNDRIP principles in a Canadian context. When Canada fully meets its commitment to implement UNDRIP and finalize self-government agreements, then sovereign Indigenous nations will have the fiscal capacity to invest in land-based programming and establish their own accountability and performance measurement requirements. Until then, it seems likely that Indigenous communities will continue to rely heavily on settler governments and philanthropic organizations to support land-based programming, and that funding agencies will continue to require accountability through evaluation. If settler governments truly accept that Indigenous peoples have the right to improve their own economic, health, and social conditions through developing priorities and strategies and designing programs, then it follows that they should also accept that Indigenous governments and communities are the best positioned to evaluate the extent to which those programs are successful. (While some might argue that there is an obligation for recipient Indigenous organizations and governments to be accountable for funds received, UNDRIP Article 39 includes the right for Indigenous peoples to have access to financial assistance for the enjoyment of the rights contained in the Declaration.) Public governments and other funding agencies may balk at the idea of relinquishing control over evaluation of programs they have funded, but starting with OTL programs that are demonstrably grounded in Indigenous worldviews and values should be an obvious first step. Funders must hand over control of funding for land-based programming that supports Indigenous cultural resurgence and builds community resilience, without imposing requirements for demonstration of validity.

The evaluation profession needs to be equally unequivocal, supporting the right of Indigenous communities and governments to define outcomes that are framed in Indigenous ontology and epistemology, and whose achievement is demonstrated with Indigenous methods; and advocating for Indigenous governments and communities to have the resources they require to do this important work. Non-Indigenous evaluators who are invited by Indigenous governments to work in their communities need to go beyond simply promoting culturally responsive evaluation approaches and methods. They have an obligation to challenge evaluation commissioners to relinquish requirements for Indigenous-led evaluation to comply with Western standards of validity and rigor; they need to be willing to participate not as the experts, but as humble learners in the process; and they need to know when it is time to step aside so that Indigenous evaluators can take over.

References

Basso, K. H. (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache*. University of New Mexico Press.

Berube, K. (2015, February 16). The intergenerational trauma of First Nations still runs deep. *The Globe and Mail*. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health-advisor/the-intergenerational-trauma-of-first-nations-still-runs-deep/article23013789/

Bowman, N. (Waapalaneexkweew, Mohican/Lunape). (2020). Nation-to-Nation in evaluation: Utilizing an Indigenous evaluation model to frame systems and

government evaluations. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 166, 101–118.

Bowman N., Francis, C. D., & Tyndall, M. (2015). Culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation: A practical approach for evaluating Indigenous projects in tribal reservation contexts. In S. Hood, R. Hopson, & H. Frierson (Eds.), *Continuing the journey to reposition culture and cultural context in evaluation theory and practice* (pp. 335–359). Information Age Publishing.

Bremner, L., & Bowman-Farrell, N. EvalIndigenous origin story: Effective practices within local contexts to inform the field and practice of evaluation. (2020). *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *34*(3), 425–441. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.68914

Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Redefining How Success is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning*. https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/5._2007_redefining_how_success_is_measured_en.pdf

Canadian Evaluation Society. (2016, May 17). *The CES takes position regarding reconciliation in Canada*. https://evaluationcanada.ca/news/6348

DeLancey, D., Radu, I., Enosse, L., & Ritchie, S. (2018). Measuring connection: Evaluating land-based programs. *Northern Public Affairs*, *6*(1).

Dotto, S. (2020). *Evaluation for Land-Based Programming: A Literature Review*. NWT Recreation & Parks Association and Hotìı ts'eeda. https://nwtspor.ca/sites/default/files/2020-08-12-ht_otl_litreview_formatted.pdf

Felske-Durksen, C. (2021, October 20). *Decolonizing the swab*. Healthy Debate. https://healthydebate.ca/2021/10/topic/decolonizing-the-swab/#:~:text=health%20and%20wellness.-,A%20swab%20represents%20colonialism%20itself.,new%20perspectives%2C%20knowledge%20and%20practice

Firestone, M., Maddox, R., O'Campo, P., Smylie, J., Bourgeois, C., Manson, H., McKnight, C., Hebert, J. Boyer, R., Warry, W., & van Wagner, V. (2020). Indigenous health service evaluation: Principles and guidelines from a provincial "three ribbon" expert panel. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *34*(3), 413–424. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.68831

Galloway, G. (2018, March 16). *First Nations schools are taking students back to the land*. The Globe and Mail. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-first-nations-schools-are-taking-students-back-to-the-land/

Government of Northwest Territories. (2013). *Healing Voices: Report of the Minister's Forum on Addictions and Community Wellness*. https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/ministers-forum-addictions-report.pdf

Government of Northwest Territories. (2018). *Caring for our People: Cultural Safety Action Plan 2018–2020*. https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/resources/cultural-safety-action-plan.pdf

Jensen, K., Andrew, L., & Simmons, D. (2021, October 8). *The 'two-eyed seeing' of cross-cultural research camps*. Canadian Climate Institute, Indigenous Perspectives series. https://climateinstitute.ca/publications/cross-cultural-research-camps/

Johnson, R. (2019, April 6). *On-the-land STEM program for high school credit to expand to northern Indigenous communities*. CBC. https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/actua-instem-program-north-1.5085196

Johnston-Goodstar, K. (2012). Decolonizing evaluation: The necessity of evaluation advisory groups in Indigenous evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *1*(36), 109–117.

Kahane, D. (2022, March 7). *Land back: A roundtable featuring Eriel Deranger, Shiri Pasternak & Daniel T'seleie (March 7, 2022)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXdXRWossk4

Kovach, M. (2012). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

McCurry, P. (2020). Section 35 legal framework: Implications for evaluation. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *34*(3), 400–412. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.69006

McDonald, M. (2022). *The Value and Benefits of Land-Based Programming*. Northwest Territories Recreation and Parks Association.

Miltenberger, J. M. (2014). *Northern voices, northern waters: Traditional knowledge and water policy development in the Northwest Territories* [Discussion paper]. Rosenberg International Forum on Water Policy, Buenos Aires, Argentina November 15-17, 2010. https://www.routledge.com/Water-for-the-Americas-Challenges-and-Opportunities/Garrido-Shechter/p/book/9780367669430

National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (2013). *Indigenous Approaches to*

Program   Evaluation.
https://www.nccih.ca/495/Indigenous_Appro
aches_to_Program_Evaluation.nccih?id=125

NDN Collective. (n.d.) [Website homepage].
Retrieved   January   4,   2023,   from
https://ndncollective.org/

NDN Collective. (2020, October 9). *NDN Collective
LANDBACK   campaign   launching   on
Indigenous   Peoples'   Day   2020.*
https://ndncollective.org/ndn-collective-
landback-campaign-launching-on-indigenous-
peoples-day-2020/

Northwest   Territories   Legislative   Assembly
Standing Committee on Social Development.
(2022). *Report on the Child and Family
Services Act – Lifting NWT Children, Youth
and Families: An All of Territory Approach to
Keeping   Families   Together.*
https://www.ntassembly.ca/sites/assembly/fil
es/cr_26-
192_scosd_report_on_child_and_family_ser
vices_act.pdf

Northwest   Territories   Recreation   and   Parks
Association (NWTRPA). (n.d.) *On the Land
Programming   Support.*
https://www.nwtrpa.org/on-the-land

Owen, J., & Rogers, P. J. (1999). *Program
Evaluation: Forms and Approaches.* Sage
Publications.

Polansky, L., & Echo-Hawk, A. (2021). *Building the
Sacred: An   Indigenous   Evaluation
Framework for Programs Serving Native
Survivors of Violence.* Urban Indian Health
Institute.

Reciprocal Consulting. (n.d.). *Sage Advice: Real-
World Approaches to Program Evaluation in
Northern,   Remote   and   Aboriginal
Communities.*   CAPTURE   Project.
https://reciprocalconsulting.ca/files/capture-
sage-advice.pdf

Redvers, J. (2020). "The land is a healer":
Perspectives on land-based healing from
Indigenous practitioners in northern Canada.
International Journal of Indigenous Health,
15(1),   90–107.
htttps://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v15i1.34046

Shepherd, R. P., & Graham, K. A. H. (2020).
Identifying key epistemological challenges
evaluating in Indigenous contexts: Achieving
bimaadiziwin   through   youth   futures.
Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation,
34(3),   442–463.
https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.68866

The Agenda with Steve Paikin. (2022, March 28).
Land back: Indigenous perspectives [Video].
YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGscdzV
6SfY

Tobac, L. K'asho Got'ine. Lives in Fort Good Hope,
Northwest Territories. Oral teaching, personal
communication. August 2019.

Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2015). Relational validity
and the "where" of inquiry: Place and land in
qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(7),
633–638.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414563809

United Nations Department of Economic and
Social   Affairs.   (2007).   *United   Nations
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous
Peoples.*
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indig
enouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-
indigenous-peoples.html

Walsh, R., Danto, D., & Sommerfield, J. (2018).
Land-based intervention: A qualitative study of
the knowledge and practices associated with
one approach to mental health in a Cree
community. *International Journal of Mental
Health   and   Addiction*,   *18*,   207–221.
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9996-3

Wehipeihana, N. (2018, May 26). *Reconciliation
and culturally responsive evaluation: Rhetoric
or reality?* [Keynote address]. Canadian
Evaluation   Society   Annual   Conference,
Calgary,   Alberta   Canada.
https://c2018.evaluationcanada.ca/wp-
content/uploads/sites/11/2018/08/Reconcilia
tionCulturallyResponsiveEvaluation_slides.pd
f

Wehipeihana, N., Davidson, E. J., McKegg, K., &
Shanker, V. (2010). What does it take to do
evaluation in communities and cultural
contexts other than our own? *Journal of
MultiDiscplinary Evaluation*, *6*(13), 182–192.
http://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_
1/article/view/265/256

Wenman, C., & Jensen, K. (2019). *On the Land
Evaluation Workshop Report.* Hotı̀ ts'eeda,
Tides Canada, NWT Recreation & Parks
Association, Sahtu Renewable Resources Board
and Government of Northwest Territories.

Wildcat, M., McDonald, M., Irlbacher-Fox, S., &
Coulthard, G. (2014). Learning from the land:
Indigenous   land-based   pedagogy   and
decolonization. *Decolonization: Indigeneity,
Education and Society*, 3(3), I–XV.

Williams, M. (2018). Ngaa-bi-nya Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander program evaluation
framework. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*,
18(1),   6–20.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177
/1035719X18760141

Wong, C., Ballegooyen, K., Ignace, L., Johnson, M., & Swanson, H. (2020). Towards reconciliation: 10 calls to action to natural scientists working in Canada. *FACETS*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2020-0005.

Zoe, J. B. Tłįchǫ Nation. Lives in Behchoko, Northwest Territories. Oral Teaching, NWT Evaluation Symposium. 2018.