USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE ABORIGINAL EVALUATIONS

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Abstract: With a focus on the use of technology when evaluating programs for Aboriginal people, this article explores the possibility of using visual and oral computer technology to enhance the incorporation of Aboriginal worldviews in program evaluation. The author situates Aboriginal worldviews, including methods of communication and transmission of knowledge, within a unique evaluation framework that also considers Western methods of data collection. Examples of the author’s framework are offered in the context of evaluations of Aboriginal programs. Based on her experiences, the author concludes that it is possible to join the traditional knowledge of Aboriginal people with digital technology in program evaluation.


CANADA’S ABORIGINAL LANDSCAPE

There are few truly traditional Aboriginal communities in Canada, as the majority of them have been affected to a greater or lesser extent by the colonial history and exposure to educational institutions and media that are based more on Western worldviews rather

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than Aboriginal ones. Hence, evaluation strategies that attempt to fit in with the ways of thinking of Aboriginal people in Canada need to reflect the many styles of thinking that exist in reality.

Geraldine Standup, the Elder in Residence at Aboriginal Health Toronto (Personal communication, August 2002), describes two program styles that may be used as anchors for a continuum of programs that need to be evaluated:

- programs that are grounded solely in traditional Aboriginal knowledge and practices
- programs that are completely grounded in western knowledge and practices.

Very few Aboriginal communities, or programs designed for Aboriginal people, fit either of these pure types. Most are somewhere in between, and, although the pendulum is swinging in the direction of more “traditional” grounding, there is generally a heavy Western influence.

Using technology to enhance evaluation methods within Aboriginal contexts assumes some understanding of some characteristics of Aboriginal worldviews (illustrated in more detail later), such as unique ways of knowing/thinking, including dominant learning and communication styles. Needless to say, there is not enough space here, nor is this the appropriate vehicle to convey a thorough understanding. The application of Aboriginal worldviews in evaluation makes assumptions about appropriate evaluation practices and methods that will be reviewed below by using the example of a potlatch as a program outcome rather than a program activity and examining support for visual and oral approaches that are grounded in natural laws and science. This discussion of the uses of technology provides four examples in detail:

1. conveying technical evaluation methods to a young population using an animated DVD with voiceover,
2. incorporating traditional knowledge and techniques into evaluation and program models that also incorporate western evaluation notions,
3. using a 3-D voice-over animated DVD as a tool for eliciting personal stories from program participants and staff, and
4. conducting interviews using computerized visual answer options that allow quantitative summaries.
Unique Ways of Knowing/Thinking

Aboriginal people have unique ways of knowing and viewing the world, as noted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP):

Another fundamental issue is the need for Canadians to recognize that Aboriginal cultures were vibrant and distinctive not only in the beginning but remain so today. Though bruised and distorted as a result of the colonial experience, inevitably changed by time and new circumstances, even in danger of extinction in some important dimensions such as language, nevertheless a fundamentally different world view continues to exist and struggles for expression whenever Aboriginal Peoples come together. (RCAP, 1999, p. 612)\(^1\)

Traditional ways of thinking of Aboriginal peoples are qualitatively different from dominant western ways of thinking, and this distinction is often invisible to those immersed in the dominant culture. For example, spending a lifetime immersed in linear thinking patterns and sharing cultural values of competition and independence may make it difficult to perceive or value holistic thinking and reasoning, or indications of a high valuation of interdependence. Involvement in a profession that highly values the scientific method, experimental designs, quantitative data, and outcomes likely does not sensitize one to an understanding of the natural laws that do not arise from the modern world of science. Holistic thinking may see the establishment of a program as an accumulation of qualitative relationships.

Holistic ways of knowing, for example, may make it difficult for one to discuss the trees without expressing what they mean in the context of the forest which nurtures many other life forms that could not thrive without the trees, forest, and climate, including the people who also depend on these life forms. However, such teachings and traditional stories interpreted out of context lose much of their effect. A teaching about respect for others, for example, might mean respect for those who earn my respect in a society that values individual achievement, but it also means respect for all, including, for example, highly dependent infants, misguided people who treat others badly, and wise Elders who have lived a long and rich life. In a society that values interdependence, respect is an essential part of cooperation.

The Western logic model, which emphasizes outcomes and is used to explain what a program may accomplish, may mean less to a people
accustomed to viewing programs and services in terms of relationships. For example, in a British Columbia First Nation’s evaluation of a health program, a western model might rigidly define a potlatch as a program activity. Yet, for at least one community this was a long-term outcome. It had been 20 years since a community potlatch had been held. The potlatch ceremony of west coast First Nations was a public means of validating genealogies, family responsibilities, inheritance rights, and land tenure (i.e., relationships). In fact, it was the events that led up to the potlatch that were the activities and, for the community, the actual potlatch was the ultimate outcome. When a potlatch is defined as an outcome, one begins to understand the deeper significance of a potlatch.

Elder Geraldine Standup of the Hodenosaunee (Personal communication, 2002) states, “If you are going to design an evaluation it must be verbal and it must be visual ... because our lives are.” Traditional Aboriginal ways of learning are rooted in oral and visual transmission of knowledge. Elders have been heard to say that “we” do not rely on the written word as a communication or teaching device. Standup explained that regardless of our cultural orientation there is a natural order to communication and that as human beings we live physical lives. This has to be taken into consideration for everything we do, including evaluations.

The belief by the general Canadian public that western science is the dominant system for understanding the world, in effect, marginalizes First Nation, Métis and Inuit beliefs that have dominated their traditional knowledge and laws for many centuries. Deloria points out that a new vocabulary is needed to bridge the gap in understanding both Western science and Aboriginal traditional knowledge and to demonstrate Aboriginal understandings to western scientists (Deloria, 1999, pp. 63–71).

As a way to demonstrate Aboriginal understandings to Western scientists, Elder Peter Waskahat (as quoted in Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000) speaks of the intrinsic knowledge of creation and the universe and how First Nations people traditionally lived by these laws. He points to the fact that these traditional teachings are grounded in truth and science—the natural science of the world we live in. He points to the need to respect and understand these inherent laws in any relationship with First Nations people—whether it be research, evaluation, or otherwise.
We had our own teachings, our own education system—teaching children that way of life was taught by the grandparents and extended families; they were taught how to view and respect the land and everything in Creation. Through that the young people were taught how to live, what the Creator’s laws were, what were the natural laws, what were these First Nations’ laws … the teachings revolved around a way of life that was based on their values. (Waskahat in Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000)

MATCHING TECHNOLOGY TO ABORIGINAL EVALUATION

Starting with the assumption that it is more difficult to change a way of thinking than it is to change a method of communication, the introduction of technology into the evaluation research process can provide a medium for conveying oral and visual messages (comfortable ways of communicating) that integrate Aboriginal worldviews through icons and symbolism. Using “comfortable” communication methods assures a more accurate translation of evaluation knowledge from a Western-based practice to the “unique ways of knowing” of Aboriginals in Canada.

Using technology for the purpose of enhancing evaluation understanding by those participating in the evaluation requires prior community consultations and agreements on the purpose and form of the research, including how data are extracted, stored, interpreted, and shared (e.g., final report, running special requests). Although qualitative methods are most compatible with Aboriginal ways of communicating, the needs of the funders for more quantitative evidence means that some combination of qualitative and quantitative information is expected. Technology has aided in obtaining both types of evaluation data. The following examples come from our own practical experiences and needs.

Consultation About or Presentation of an Evaluation Model to Communities

Using visuals in presentations is not unique nor does it need to be explained here. There are many examples of using Venn diagrams or concepts of layering that are more easily communicated with visual diagrams. The concern when considering visual aids is their simplicity, ease of explanation, and ability to convey meaning to their target
audience. A recent challenge that we faced called for explaining an experimental research design to 14-year-olds so that they would be willing and knowledgeable enough to take the chance of random assignment to either a program or a control group.

This experimental evaluation approach was consistent with Conner’s work with Mexican migrant workers (2004, pp. 51–65) in that we improved validity by “working collaboratively” with program staff and participants as well as speaking the “literal” and “figurative” languages of participants. Conner’s literal validity is simply speaking the proper dialect of the population involved in the research, and his figurative language refers to the content and style of communication. The experimental research design discussed below provides an example of how addressing these concepts in an evaluation can be enhanced using visual and voice-over technology.

Given the prior approval of the pilot project communities to the basics of the “experimental” evaluation design, it was left to the evaluators to design a recruitment presentation for the prospective participants and their parents. This was accomplished with an animated video that explained the program and the research in language and concepts appropriate to the young Aboriginal audience. For an experimental design evaluation project involving northern and rural students as young as 14 years of age at the time of recruitment, a visual approach was required for several reasons. First, there were concerns that even a verbal, in-person, technical explanation might not have been truly understood by 14-year-olds, and ethically their consent to participating in an experimental design research project was imperative. Second, the recruitment was conducted by the local pilot project teachers, and they did not have expertise in the literal language of experimental design research.

The need for random assignment was difficult for some of the students, parents, and even teachers to understand until they saw the video. For example, random assignment appeared to be a very large black hole until the students saw the video showing a registration form going into a computer and spitting out coloured pebbles that were grouped by program or comparison labels (see Figure 1). Figure 2 shows an animated visual graph that was used to communicate the expected impact of the program from the starting year to the ending year. The animation allowed for the incremental changes to be illustrated more developmentally than would have been possible in a presentation of a single “after” chart, as shown here.
Figure 1
Visual representation of random assignment

Figure 2
Visual representation of expected program impact
Later in the video the voice-over says, “We need every student who is a part of the pilot research project to participate in all five of the research data collection phases. Without the student data we cannot show if [name of project] is effective or not.” After a graphic reminder of a previous explanation of the data collection phases, a large question mark was used to illustrate that the final outcomes cannot be known without all the research students (see Figure 3).

For the Tending the Fire Program offered through Prairie Spirit Connections in Regina, Saskatchewan, an ordinary evaluation logic model was simply inappropriate. The program, designed for multiple-barrier Aboriginal men who have substance abuse patterns and involvement with the criminal justice system, is grounded in tradition because all of the staff are following traditional cultural ways. The program staff each participate in the program’s traditional ceremonies as participants on the same level as the men. The comprehensive program addresses multiple needs in providing financial assistance, housing, and assistance with equipment to gain employment, in addition to spiritual guidance and emotional healing. The 10-month program expects the men to be “job-ready”; however, this is not always realistic, so aftercare is provided through counselling and support services.

The challenge was to provide an evaluation framework that could be embraced by the traditional staff and satisfy the needs of funders to be assured that all the elements needed for evaluation were available. For the staff, the framework needed to be visual, and for the funders, the framework needed a logic model that included needs, resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Representing the complex traditional program visually was the greater challenge, and so a computer graphic was created in anticipation of an animated version.

Figure 3
Visual illustration that program attribution cannot be known without comparison
for presentation to prospective participants and their families as well as to the community.

A visual representation of the program (see Figure 4) was developed in 3-D to convey the notions of iterative recovery cycles (represented by the concentric circles) and that participation focused on a balance of the spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of the self (the overlapping circles in the centre). At the same time, the visual could be translated as aspects of a logic model.

Figure 4
Three-dimensional visual representation of the program model
Using the concepts of the logic model, a program participant would follow a sequence of actions in each cycle: (a) Recognizing/acknowledging NEEDS, (b) realizing a willingness to move forward and PLANNING, (c) Putting plans into ACTION, and (d) experiencing OUTCOMES and transitioning to the next cycle. This is referred to as a cycle of change whereby both the participant and the program are ever evolving. The participants’ recognition and acknowledgment of NEEDS at the beginning of the program might include the need for a healthier lifestyle, spiritual grounding, and/or stable housing. At each iteration there would be a new assessment of needs as presumably some healing has occurred and some needs are being met, at least partially. Each year of the program evolves from the previous year’s lessons learned and this can be read into the graphic as well. For example, the program’s recognition/acknowledgment of NEEDS might include information about comparable programs for Aboriginal males, professional development for staff, and core funding.

The traditional healing approach of the program assumes that each participant, including staff, are on a healing journey described previously as repeating the cycle of change at progressive stages of healing. The program recognizes this by regularly changing emphases as the cohort of men progresses through the 10 months. The Tending the Fire healing journey stages include (a) crisis intervention, (b) awareness of broader issues, (c) ownership of personal responsibility, (d) releasing/letting go of anger/resentment, (e) building on strengths, and (f) standing tall. The healing journey is represented as a series of concentric circles with many iterations of the cycle of change categories.

As with most Aboriginal people facing multiple barriers, there are profound needs for healing in many ways. All are needed simultaneously, but the primary emphasis at the beginning is with spiritual and physical recovery. Without either, there is little possibility of progress. Emotional and mental (cognitive) healing will follow shortly, and all will proceed simultaneously and synergistically. The visual model illustrates that in the first iteration, the mind and emotion are severely hurt through Crisis—the two concepts represented side-by-side in the middle. The top concept is the spirit and the bottom the body. The program builds on the strengths of the spirit and body by addressing these immediately, in order to address needs brought to light by the crisis and address as well the even more unstable effects of damaged cognitive and emotional pathways.
One of Johnston Research Inc.’s corporate projects uses a stand-alone video to explain program self-evaluation in terms of the Aboriginal ideals of ongoing self-improvement. It takes the concept of individual self-improvement paths and shows the parallel for program self-evaluations and changes and also the sponsoring organizations’ change processes. The interrelationships among the program participants, the program’s interventions, and the organizations’ support are illustrated with 3-D animation.

A traditional teaching common to many First Nations focuses on the protection of the planet and the importance of the role individuals play in living in unison with Turtle Island (North America). Within this broader teaching, individuals learn to self-evaluate their actions in terms of living with Mother Earth in a good way. A main message is that individuals are in continual movement and growth. When everyone believes in constant movement and growth, “I am sorry” is redundant. In Ojibway, for instance, there are no words describing apologetic sorrow. The teachings expect individuals to change their behaviour by avoiding repeated actions and regret. In this way each individual accepts sole responsibility for all actions and has the power to make change happen. The teaching is often described as a person journeying along a road or path; there are many bends, blocks, and detours along that road which a person must learn to overcome by sticking to the path that leads them in a good direction through life.

This teaching is easy for individuals to relate to and can be used to develop an understanding of a program’s need to self-evaluate. Because programs are made up of a collection of individuals, in essence the group is trying to move forward in a good direction for the benefit of the participants. A visual tool to help convey this teaching about how to self-evaluate shows the program’s as well as the individual’s concerns for balancing the important dimensions that each needs to keep in balance in order to walk along a straight or clear path of good intentions. The self-assessment includes the spiritual purpose of one seeking a good path in life in order to contribute to the positive energy of both the physical and spiritual worlds.

This concept would be used to show the parallels between the individual’s search for a good path and the program’s reasons for seeking a good program path. The spirit of the program is located within the participants as they existed before and will continue to exist without
the program. It is, therefore, for the good of the participants that the program seeks to grow and continually change. Showing these parallels graphically in a video using 3-D animation will make it possible to promote program self-evaluation in First Nations communities within Canada.

Facilitating Qualitative Data Collection

It is the position of many Aboriginal researchers that data collection procedures must be conducted by Aboriginal people who understand both the culture(s) of the people who will be involved in the research and the impacts upon these cultures brought about by exposure to and involvement in Western cultures. In addition, when possible, it is considered desirable to allow Aboriginal interviewees to tell their own stories. We recently completed two types of projects that used technology as a tool for eliciting stories from the research participants—a 3-D animation that used the analogy of the tree of life, and collecting Photovoice stories for the purpose of creating a DVD. In both cases, a workshop or circle gathering format uses visuals to provide a framework in which the participants can verbalize their stories as a digital recording device captures the verbalizations.

Photovoice or Photonovella methods were pioneered by Caroline Wang who used the technique with different cultures. Wang and Burris (1997, pp. 369–387) wrote, “Photovoice is a method that enables people to define for themselves and others, including policy-makers, what is worth remembering and what needs to be changed.” Photos can be taken on a particular theme, and the photographers (e.g., program participants) then explain why they chose a particular scene to illustrate the theme (preferably on a digital voice recorder). The photographers can be community member participants or they can be researchers who have spent time in the community. When the photographers come together as a group and/or individually share their rationale for taking each photo, the discussions are digitally voice-recorded for subsequent use in summary form as a DVD production. It is worth noting that the pictures and digital recordings can also serve as a program archive. A more detailed explanation of this technique may be found in the next article in this thematic segment, “Drawing on Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Reflections from a Community Evaluator,” by Sheryl Scott.

Another example of the use of technology is for storytelling—a 3-D animation with voiceover illustrates a story from the Creator’s life that is grounded in traditional beliefs and honesty. After viewing
the DVD, participants are encouraged to individually develop their own stories using the hands-on graphic tools supplied. They may use any graphic method they like including the one from the example. Afterwards, each participant uses his or her graphic as a reference to tell their story to the group or, if desired, privately to the facilitator or program counsellor.

It is important that the facilitator set the tone of frankness that is desired or acceptable. I briefly describe the Creator’s story here, and include some stills from the 3-D animation. The visual metaphor used in this story is that of a tree whose trunk represents the core path for a fortunate program participant. The branches are described as diversions from the core path and as valuable learning experiences. The goal is for one to always find one’s way back to the trunk after being diverted onto some of the branches. The first 3-D still uses a Venn-type diagram to show the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical spheres of the program participant depicted on the tree of life (see Figure 5). This stage, as depicted by the diagram, is well before program contact. The four spheres are all pure at birth and

Figure 5
Visual representation of four spheres of program participants being pure at birth and connected for life
connected for life through the tree trunk’s roots to Mother Earth. It is at the stages closest to Mother Earth in childhood that one learns how to handle future challenges.

The DVD creator described the death of her infant daughter when the mother was a 19-year-old high school dropout content to spend her life lovingly raising her children. She tells her story in the first person:

I was nineteen years old and the first thing I experienced was emotional stress. She lived for one day. I felt very fortunate that I had a chance to meet her. She was a pure and innocent healthy spirit. Her name was Minido Quaance—little spirit woman.

The next still (Figure 6) shows the emotional sphere turning a darker colour and appearing unstable. This emotional pain starts a 10-year-long journey on a branch of the tree of life for her.

The DVD creator then described a spiritual foretelling dream and her subsequent understanding that she needed to complete her educa-

Figure 6
Visual representation of the emotional sphere becoming unstable
tion. This was one branch whose learning strengthened the spiritual sphere. She goes on to recount that she reoriented her life toward the completion of high school and later university. The educational process was accompanied by many denied feelings and understandings and was a long sub-branch. Near the end of the branch, she developed recurring physical symptoms that she initially treated with medical drugs, but she soon realized that she needed a more preventative approach. Her consultation with an Elder at an Elders’ Program led to the understanding that she had been holding on to the pain of her daughter’s death for 10 long years while she simultaneously earned a living and pursued her degree.

Figure 7 shows the physical, mental, and emotional spheres as darker and unstable. The spiritual sphere stayed strong from the support of the spiritual dream. The emotional hurt spread to the mind, causing denial, and to the body, causing physical sickness.

At this point, the Elder advised a familiar traditional healing method—a cedar bath. While the facilitator had taken many cedar baths in her lifetime, she describes a more dramatic experience:

Figure 7
Visual representation of all spheres becoming unstable
I went straight home and had the most powerful cedar bath of my life. I could feel the emotions, fear, mental messages, and physical ailment leaving my body—it flowed out of me into that bath, and when I was done I felt a world lighter and happier. Every step I took was free of those stresses, I was free of the physical symptoms, and as a being I was ready to bring happiness into a baby’s life through motherhood. But that is another story. This story represents the impact and importance that an Elders’ lodge program has for its participants. It is one chapter or branch in my life. It took me 10 years to seek out that Elders’ program and grow from those life lessons to put better balance back in my life.

Figure 8 represents all four parts of the self. The restoration of the bright colours indicate the healed parts and that the program participant was able to find her way back to the trunk of the tree and reach a point of balance within.

Figure 8
Visual representation of program participant returning to a point of balance
Facilitating Quantitative Data Collection

With Aboriginal research participants, there may exist conflicting pressures resulting from the need for both culturally appropriate data collection methods and previously developed and tested questionnaire measures of known indicators that may not be culturally sensitive. The following provides an example of how such conflicts can be mitigated. In a research project with youth who were familiar with computers, technology was utilized to provide a computer-led variation from the typical interviewer-led questions or paper-and-pencil exercises. A mix of all three methods was used and orchestrated by the local Aboriginal interviewers after training. Measures included newly developed, pilot-tested, culturally sensitive questions and established psychometric scales for comparative purposes.

After establishing rapport with the youth participant, the interviewer might start a typical enquiry sequence by asking questions and recording the answers on the provided paper questionnaire. This might be followed with another familiar format in which the student uses a paper-and-pencil format without involving the interviewer. Assuming that the questions in the first part are chosen wisely to put the participant at ease, it is then possible to move to the computer-led exercises, which are typically the measures that lend themselves to a more visual format. For example, a multiple-choice answer can be presented in a visual format such as symbolic people who can be selected by a click of the cursor/mouse.

In a question about personal characteristics, whose meanings might not be clear to all the participants, clickable words can provide the definitions when rolled over by the cursor (see Figure 9). In addition, all the available characteristics can be shown on one screen, and font colours can be used to distinguish among those chosen, those that the participant is unsure of, and those not selected. A simple click allows the participant to change an answer and see it immediately recorded on the screen.

In a longer interview where participant fatigue might be a factor, the continual rotation of question and answer formats and the frequent use of unusual and visual formats can forestall some of that fatigue. One very visual paper-and-pencil format question was used at the end of such an interview, and was cited most frequently by the respondents as a favorite question (see Figure 10).
Figure 9
Mouse-over augmentation of personal characteristics

- Respect for yourself
- Spiritual
- Kindness
- Optimistic
- Creative
- Acceptive of feedback
- Playfulness
- Getting along with people
- Sense of pride
- Leadership
- Connected to Traditional Culture
- Respectful of others
- Forgiving
- Courage
- Humility
- Love learning
- Wisdom
- Honesty
- Loving
- Recognize your skills
- Greatful
- Team player
- Enthusiastic
- Open-minded
- Self-control
- Careful

My Strengths are Selected
My Strongest Strengths are Selected

Figure 10
Paper and pencil question and answer format intended to forestall fatigue

1.4
Do you expect that...
You are likely to be or do any of the following over the next five years

- Living in a Métis of First Nations Community
- Parent of One or more children
- Living Away From a Métis or First Nations Community
- Owner of a brand new Car or truck

Check as many as you want or none at all

Done
Other considerations for data gathering include adapting existing scales, using icon matching, and using “clickers” for sophisticated focus groups. Getting the literal language right with students is critical to ensuring validity. A question for Aboriginal youth stating “Many of the things we learn in class are useless” could be rephrased to clarify the “effect” as “Sometimes I don’t see how I can use what we learn in class in my everyday life.” The former appears to feed the concepts of a population that is burdened by labels and prone to depression and suicide. For a population that historically rejects discipline in schools because of the Indian residential school experience, the phrase “Students are disciplined fairly at my school” might be changed to “Staff treat students fairly when students break the rules.”

In a study involving farmworkers, Conner (2004, pp. 51–65) enhanced validity using an icon-matching technique during a session where Mexican farmworkers completed surveys privately. A Spanish-speaking facilitator, using a flipchart, led the survey completion by reading the survey question and pointing to an icon on the flipchart. Farmworkers unable to read and/or write could participate fully by understanding the questions and using the icons to provide answers. This method provided an interactive and human quality to survey completion. For in-person interviews that involve an Aboriginal population, we routinely develop card packages that use icons to illustrate the typical Likert scale. A few samples of the cards, using simple icons that come with Microsoft Word, are shown in Figure 11.

Lastly, “clickers,” developed by eInstruction Corporation, are currently used with large post-secondary classes. The Classroom Performance System is a software and hardware package that facilitates a fun and fast-paced environment in which the teacher can instantly grade homework, reviews, and tests. Remote response pads have individual ID numbers that allow students to beam their answers to a receiver unit. The software can then generate detailed reports about how each student performs in class. A sophisticated focus group could combine Conner’s icon-matching technique with simplifying survey completion for low-literacy populations using the clickers for survey responses. The clickers could use a lettering system with the facilitator providing the questions and answer options.

CLOSING REMARKS

The marriage between western and Aboriginal thought is at the negotiation stage—there is a lot for each to learn and it is not clear how
Figure 11
Sample scale cards with icons.

CARD 6
QUANTITY SCALE

Many
Some
A few
None

CARD 9
Better of Worse SCALE

Better
Worse
Stayed the Same

CARD 11
Impact SCALE

Significant impact
Some impact
Only a little impact
No impact at all
far the Western side is willing to bend. Evaluations need to reflect the transitional nature of people and programs—what is right for today may not be well suited for tomorrow. The core of an evaluation need not worry itself so much with the methods, which are ever evolving, as much as with the evaluation frame of reference. Digital technology provides a venue to transfer evaluation knowledge of design, collection, and reports to those being evaluated. Technological approaches enhance the use of traditional knowledge to convey the importance of evaluation. The goal of integrating traditional Aboriginal knowledge, western approaches, and technological oral and visual aids is to evoke full participation in evaluation from program staff and participants. The anticipated outcomes are improved program quality through growth of individuals (both program staff and participants), families, communities, and subsequently the nations.

NOTES

1. For a fuller discussion of Aboriginal worldviews and their relevance to contemporary life, see Chapter 15 of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1999, pp. 615–673).

2. The potlatch, from the West Coast Chinook word *patshatl*, validated status and rank and established claims to names, powers, and privileges. Wealth in the form of utilitarian goods such as blankets, carved cedar boxes, food, and fish or canoes were accumulated to be bestowed on others or even destroyed with great ceremony. Potlatches were held to celebrate initiation and to mourn the dead, among other reasons (Freeman, 2009).

3. A cedar bath uses one of four Anishnawbe medicines for healing purposes. Medicines are used to cleanse the whole person—mind, body, spirit, and emotion. Cleansing refers to letting go of past hurts, healing physical conditions, repairing and replacing negative or harmful thoughts, and connecting the spirit to the spirit world to allow for spiritual guidance and strength throughout the cleansing process. One boils the cedar and strains it to pour into a bath. One stays in the bath until they feel they can release and cleanse in full. One is prepared to release prior to starting the bath.

4. Indian residential school (IRS) survivors are recognized by the Canadian government as individuals that were torn from their families and communities and told that their lifestyle was wrong and they needed the schools’ help to learn how to live a better life. The children each
lived at these boarding schools for several years. Opening in 1831, the last of over 130 schools closed its doors officially in 1996. After 165 years of operation, the government officially stated it had made a big mistake. Dr. Chief Robert Joseph states on the IRS Survivors Society website <http://www.irsss.ca/>, “We can no longer be apart—we must bring about balance and harmony. Let us belong to this time and place together.”

REFERENCES


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