

Introduction to Articles Prepared by CES Calgary 2018 Keynote Panel Members on *Reconciliation and Culturally Responsive Evaluation— Rhetoric or Reality?*

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When selecting a theme for the 2018 Canadian Evaluation Society Annual Conference, the co-chairs wanted to build on the CES Board's 2016 motion in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, committing to including reconciliation in its values, principles, and practices, with a specific commitment to strengthen the promotion of, and support for, culturally responsive evaluation. We wanted a theme that would challenge evaluators to explore what it means to truly work as collaborative partners and allies, not only with Indigenous governments and communities but also with other populations and communities that have traditionally been disempowered.

As conference organizers, we wanted to set the stage with an opening keynote session that would breathe life into the conference theme, would go beyond comfortable platitudes about reconciliation and co-creation, and would pose tough questions about what reconciliation looks like in action.

We recognized that while making a commitment to reconciliation is an important first step, evaluation in Canada still fails to systematically respect Indigenous values and worldviews; it privileges and takes for granted the legitimacy of Western knowledge systems and theories while discounting Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The focus of reconciliation in Canada is on relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but we recognized that these same dynamics of privilege influence our profession's approach to evaluations that deal with other cultures or population groups as well.

For this opening keynote panel, we sought to bring together Canadian and international perspectives on Indigenous evaluation, with speakers who would challenge evaluators to acknowledge traditional power relationships, to consider whether the concept of culturally responsive evaluation is sufficient to advance reconciliation, and to explore what is required for evaluation to effectively advocate for social justice and to support Indigenous sovereignty. Our presenters were asked to address whether the concept of culturally responsive evaluation goes far enough toward advancing reconciliation, to describe successful examples of co-creation, and to leave participants with questions to ponder during the conference. But most importantly, the panel was asked to challenge conference participants to reflect on their own privilege and their

own evaluation practice and consider what changes might be required in the spirit of reconciliation.

Discussions of privilege can be uncomfortable, and even threatening, for some people. As conference organizers, we asked participants to use this opportunity to reflect on their discomfort, consider its source, and be open to the challenges put forward by our keynote presenters.

The opening keynote panel for the CES 2018 Conference was designed to set the stage for three days of exploration and reflection. Larry Bremner, Nicole Bowman-Farrell, Kate McKegg, and Nan Wehipeihana did a brilliant job, challenging conference participants to explore new perspectives, and inspiring all those present. These articles will allow a broader audience to benefit from their insights.