



## **Indigenous Evaluation Summit 2024 Report**

**May 31, 2024**

**Hosted by: Indigenous Evaluation Network**



Our Beloved Late Elder of the Plains Cree Red-tail Hawk clan, Pauline Shirt was born and raised in Saddle Lake Reserve, Alberta, member of the Three Fires Society and the Buffalo Dance Society, and founder of the First Nations School and the Red Willow.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the numerous Elders, youth, delegates, speakers and sponsors who have generously contributed their time and ideas to the Indigenous Evaluation Summit. Your energy and dedication are an inspiration to us all. Without your support the Summit would not have been the success that it has been.

Special thanks to the following:

**Leadership:** Our Beloved late Grandma Elder Pauline Shirt, Nehiyaw Iskewew

**Singers:** Albert Therrien, Braedon Fowler

**Elders:** Joanna Simon, Cheryl Trudeau, Deanna Sheridan, Les Harper, Luanna Harper-Shirt, Kanzee Getimido

**Knowledge Holders:** Dan Secord, Joseph Harper

**Videography Team:** Ulla Laidlaw, Jason Providence

**Note Takers:** Nancy Sagmesiter, Katie McLaren, Jasmine Nouredin, Ashley Denby

**Program and Planning:** Andrea L K Johnson, Patricia Baxter, Tara Erb, Jessica Hill, Gladys Rowe, Jerilyn Ducharme, Jasmine Nouredin, Marina Santilli, Nicole Bowman, Karen Paul, Karen Gillam, Ashley Nichols

**Keynote Speakers and Presenters:** Dan George, Adam Murry, Treena Wasonti:io, Robert Henry, Tara Erb, Sherri Bisset, Sabina Mirza, Mikaela Gabriel, Leila Qashu, Fleur Macqueen Smith, Myra Parker, Myra Parker, Tanna M Pirie-Wilson, Sabina Bauer, Karen M. Gilliam, Scott Milford-Stanton, Natalie Baydack, Alyssa Wapanatahk, Tina Dewache, Liz Forsberg

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Chi Miigwetch!

## Overview:

The Inaugural Indigenous Evaluation Summit was held online between February 22 – 23, 2024. The Summit was opened by the late, Grandma Elder Pauline Shirt, Nehiyaw Iskwew, Elder of the Plains Cree Red-tail Hawk clan. It hosted a significant cultural component to honour Elders and Drum Groups from the four directions for the opening and closing ceremonies and blessings. Elders and Knowledge Holders sat with the group to unpack Indigenous cultural knowledge about evaluation.

## Agenda:

The Summit encompassed eight (8) presentation panelists, including Dan George (keynote), Indigenous Services Canada, PRA Inc., The MindFuel Foundation, Workforce Warriors Inc., Notah Begay III Foundation, Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHRs), University of Washington and Johnston Research Inc. The Summit also hosted four (4) Elders and Special Guests Rooms led by Government of Canada (Public Safety, Agriculture and Agri-Food, Indigenous Services Canada), Story Medicine by Alyssa Wapanatahk, Grandma Elder Pauline Shirt, and the Nehiyaw Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Restorative Justice Program.

Two lunch-time networking hours were also included between the sessions. These “lunch breaks” were not just open breaks but opportunities for networking and facilitated conversation. The networking hours covered what sovereignty and self-determination means for Indigenous Peoples, the importance and value in including youth in evaluation roles, positioning Elders as leaders in evaluation practices and the importance of ceremony in Indigenous evaluation.

The agenda for the Summit was as follows (view on the next page).

<b>February 22, 2024</b>	
11:00 – 12:00 pm	Summit Opening Ceremony
Lunch Break	
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Keynote
1:45 – 2:20 pm	Presentation and Q&A sessions A & B A: Reflections on Indigenous Evaluation in Non-Indigenous Environments A: Unifying and Celebrating Indigenous Evaluation: Appreciating the FSC Projects through an Indigenous Journey Lens
2:20 – 2:35 pm	20-minute break
2:35 – 3:20 pm	Presentation and Q&A sessions C & D C: Bringing Indigenous Knowledge into Evaluation – Keeping Track, A Toolkit for Indigenous Youth Program Evaluation D: Telling a Story of Collective Impact through Individual and Collaborative Evaluations in the Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR)
3:20 – 3:40 pm	20-minute break
3:40 – 4:20 pm	Presentation and Q&A sessions E & F: E: Applying Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks – Indigenous Evaluation Approach for Tribal Opioid Overdose Prevention Program F: A Solution for Solo Evaluators Working at Indigenous Organizations
4:40 – 5:40 pm	Sit and talk with Elders. Choose one of the 4-directions
4:40 – 5:30 pm	Special Panel: Indigenous youth learn about Federal evaluation careers.
<b>February 23, 2024</b>	
11:00 – 12:00 pm	Indigenous Evaluation Network
Lunch Break	
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Strategic Discussions (1-hour session on governance, implementation, membership or operations as assigned)
2:00 – 2:20 pm	20-minute break
2:20 – 3:20 pm	Strategic Discussions (1-hour session on governance, implementation, membership or operations as assigned)
3:20 – 3:40 pm	20-minute break
3:40 – 4:30 pm	Summit Closing Ceremony

## Who was at the Summit:

The Summit united over 225 delegates including evaluators and program staff, and 50 Indigenous youth/students from across Turtle Island to share their experiences with evaluation practices.

## Key Notes Summary:

### Unifying and Celebrating Indigenous Evaluation:

Evaluation as a sacred undertaking and reciprocity must be viewed as a priority, along with maintaining respect and building relationships. The practices that we are bringing into the evaluation space for Indigenous communities should be good for everyone and all human beings.

Further, Indigenous Evaluation also means:

- Meeting community from where they're at;
- Centering the community, through understanding and implementing based on what the community wants it to be;
- Showcasing how Indigenous approaches work, and honouring multiple ways of knowing and ancestral knowledge;
- Understanding and making space for different perspectives depending on community
- Involving Elders and Knowledge Keepers;
- Undertaking self-reflection and learning.

### Bringing Indigenous Knowledge into Evaluation:

Indigenous youth and Elders should be viewed as primary leaders in Indigenous evaluation practices. It is particularly important to bring in and amplify youth voices (those < 35) to help ground us in where we need to go in the future. There is a need to see the youth as experts and allow them to be decision makers, shaping activities and program around them, and not just including them in activities that already exist. We must make space for youth in Indigenous evaluation and create curated opportunities for youth to build evaluation skills, such as informal internships, allowing youth to observe and sit in on the evaluation with practitioners.

### How Elders and youth should be included:

- Consider what is the best approach for Youth to be comfortable opening up
  - Engaging youth and graduate students, ask for volunteers
- Consider how to best engage Elders and create comfortable space safe with technology for them
  - Provide wrap around supports and compensation for Elder and youth participation
  - Include local protocol for gifting, what resources are available, tech support
  - Ensure the leg work done in advance, include Elders in the whole event not just coming in only for the opening

### **Bringing Indigenous Knowledge into Evaluation:**

Indigenous evaluation frameworks are often inaccessible to many individuals and communities, lacking an understanding of the community context, needs and interests. Evaluations should align to Indigenous communities' needs/interests focusing on:

- Quality not quantity, holistic approach that reflects complexity of Indigenous knowledge.
- Valuing qualitative data and oral storytelling, as these are often more culturally appropriate methods.
- Securing long-term resources for evaluation that will last beyond the project lifecycle, and leave the communities with capacity-building skills.

### **Applying Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks**

As Indigenous communities' endeavor to establish their evaluation practices, it is imperative to dismantle the pervasive Western-dominated approaches to evaluation and rather, incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing in the design of evaluation models and frameworks.

This begins with centering (and respecting) the community voice as most important in the evaluation. While acknowledging the many ways to evaluate, weaving in cultural wisdom, knowledge and ensuring systematic gathering of knowledge good.

### **Considerations:**

- Focus on including community in the evaluation process.
- Ensure the evaluation method and results are vetted by the community and confirm its validity.
- Establish how the evaluation supports the broader community priorities.
- Determine how to balance the community needs and funder needs, even if it requires more effort.
- When possible, conduct unstructured and explorative work where applicants can develop objectives and outcomes throughout the project.
- Consider how, what, and how much ceremony would be integrated into evaluations, if any at all. Along with how to measure the metric of ceremony.
  - Create a space where community knows they are the leaders and for ceremony where it would be appropriate to use, and think about the learnings.

### **Indigenous Evaluators Network (IEN)**

There is a clear need for the Network to share information and provide support. There is a great need to build up Indigenous Peoples working in evaluation, empowering them to become experts in their own organization. The second day of the Summit provided opportunity for participants to partake in several strategic discussion sessions on the topic of implementation, governance, membership and operations as it pertains to the Indigenous Evaluators Network.

**Implementation:** determine the network priorities in small steps, considering how to maintain stewardship of Indigenous knowledge.

**Governance:** there is a need for an Indigenous-led board of directors to keep the organization on track, set direction and determine the overall strategy.

**Membership:** should use a distinction-based approach.

**Operations:** should facilitate communities of practice, introduce young people to evaluation, and provide mentorship opportunities. It should bridge people together, policy and procedures, committee activities and providing resources.

## Next Steps:

A new fire has been lit. The Summit fostered a rise of creative and enthusiastic energies with the intention of strengthening Indigenous evaluation. The summit marked a significant milestone in advancing Indigenous evaluation practices, signalling a renewed commitment to enhancing research methodologies and evaluation frameworks. As outlined in this report, the Summit gathered further guidance on the contributions that evaluation can make to programs and community decision-making by sharing knowledge and planning for the future beginning with the Indigenous Evaluators Network.

The Indigenous Evaluators Network (IEN) will be Indigenous-led and use a distinctions-based+ approach that engages First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples across Turtle Island. It will continue to emphasize the excellent youth engagement work, increase engagement and representation of men, urban Indigenous, LGBTQIA and Two-Spirited individuals.

However, questions and work remain. The next steps of the Indigenous Evaluators Network include the creation of a strategic action plan that outlines the governance vision, the parameters of a board of directors and Elders, methods of updating attendees and members on progress, and continuing to find ways to open up opportunities for Indigenous researchers and evaluators.

## Appendix:

### Notes of Endorsement:

*"Just a quick note to say the evaluation summit was great! Everything was well-organized, and the information was really helpful." - Summit Attendee*

*"Congratulations on a beautiful, energizing, and productive gathering last week! It was an honour and privilege to be involved. Pat, you are such a gracious and skilled facilitator, I hope that I didn't take too much space in my enthusiasm to contribute!*

*I'm really pleased also that my colleague also found it so valuable, both personally and professionally - she is eager to be a member of the network right away, as an Indigenous person who works on programs with communities, and supports other First Nation, Inuit and Metis program staff. As a member of the management team, it really means a lot to be able to support her connection to this network, for her growth and well-being as a staff member, and for organizational learning." - Summit Attendee*

*"We took some time to debrief on our takeaways and experiences from the Summit and we wanted to send you this note to let you know that the Summit was truly inspirational! From the incredible keynote speaker (Dan George) through to the breakout rooms and the networking events, this Summit was by far the best conference we have attended. We were deeply honored that you asked Workforce Warriors to be a part of the presentations and moderation activities. Knowing the incredible talent in the rooms and the strong voices and experience of those in attendance, we are humbled by the experience and so proud to have been part of this historic event. We look forward to continuing our journey with the IEN and are excited to see the next steps of this Network come together." - Summit Speaker*

*"Thank you to the organizers of the IEN Summit 2024 for putting together such a great event. I am a student at the University of Alberta. I had the pleasure of attending the summit as a member of the Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) team. I found the summit to be incredibly valuable, and I learned a lot from the experiences and insights shared by the other participants." - Summit Attendee*