

Foster the Indigenous Evaluation Network

Wednesday, May 3, 2023

Given the position, and continued implementation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action, a larger voice must be formulated to support communities in mastering, and undertaking evaluation in their communities. Upon reviewing the Calls to Action, Johnston Research Inc., determined there is a gap in the recommendations; not one Call to Action that addresses the need to bring reconciliation into evaluation practices in Canada, across Turtle Island and abroad.

In North America, across Turtle Island, there are several Indigenous-focused opportunities within the Canadian Evaluation Society, a topical interest group within the American Evaluation Association and localized social media groups/tags with global reach. However, there is no singular network that guides Indigenous evaluation. The Indigenous Evaluation Network is the first of its kind to hold sovereignty, standing alone, as a truly Indigenous-led network.

Purpose: Enabling new, emerging and experienced Indigenous evaluators and program service providers to connect, network, build capacity and engage in mentorship. To expand the field of Indigenous evaluation by providing a central resource and hosting networking opportunities for the benefit of Indigenous communities.

Rationale: Three Indigenous Evaluators Gatherings held between March 2021 and January 2022 conceptualized the Network. These meetings were also the first standalone gatherings of Indigenous evaluators and program providers across Turtle Island. At the first meeting, the 80+ attendees identified a need for a coordinating body. The subsequent two sessions formulated the Conceptualization of Activities to prioritize the work that an Indigenous Evaluation Network would undertake. A series of Think Tanks were also held between 2021 and 2023 with Indigenous evaluators, non-Indigenous evaluators, and Indigenous community members and Elders. These Think Tank meetings supported the planning for the first Indigenous Evaluators Gathering (March 2021) and development of The Awakening the Journey Vision Model, an Indigenous evaluation resource and tool.

Four key objectives guide this work. The Network will:

1. Unite evaluators and program providers together to share their experiences with evaluation practices.
2. Operationalize a sustainability strategy and overall Strategic Plan.
3. Carry on the work generated by the Indigenous Evaluation Summit, February 20-24, 2024.
4. Undertake ceremonies and celebrations for our communities and seek further guidance on evaluating the contributions we can make to programs and community decision-making.

The proposed approach for this project work will focus on the following project goals:

1. Convene and support an Indigenous Evaluation Network Planning Committee
2. Produce an educational marketing package to reach a large base of potential sponsors and network members
3. Conduct a pilot project that implements at least one activity from the Conceptualized Activities
4. Recruit and orient Indigenous Evaluation Network employees and Stewardship Council
5. Securing a location and home base for the Network
6. Undertake the order of business of the Network and its activities (e.g., development of structure and its processes)
7. Invite all of those currently work in the Indigenous space, and who are interested in learning more about it to join the Network
8. Foster alliances/friendships with the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) and other networks