

**Children's Bureau Child Welfare Evaluation Virtual Summit Series 2013-2014:  
Creating a New Narrative: Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal  
Communities  
Transcript**

[01:00:06] [Presentation slide – Children's Bureau, the Child Welfare Evaluation Virtual Summit Series was made possible by Children's Bureau. Logo, graphic of two figures arm upraised.

[01:00:17] [Title Slide: Creating a New Narrative: Collaborative & Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities.

[Music – Indian tribal – slow, haunting]

[01:00:35] [Slide – picture of man writing on paper with pen, series of pictures of female tribal members looking distressed] Female narrator: When people hear the word 'evaluation,' it invokes an act of fear, a fear that someone who doesn't know them and doesn't know their work is going to judge their performance and not give them an opportunity to defend their work against that judgment.

[01:00:48] [Slide – series of images of someone being evaluated at table, rating on evaluation sheet, classroom seating] I know the image I often have when I hear 'evaluation' is of a person coming in with a clipboard, standing over me, taking notes, not letting me see those notes and then giving those notes to my supervisor. The idea that evaluation is this unknown, this mystery leads to more fear about what the practice of evaluation actually involves which can lead to very few people being interested in training as evaluators to understand how evaluation can add value to community planning efforts.

[01:01:21] In tribal context [Slide – picture of Indian woman with words Tribal Sovereignty Disempower] this fear is made even more intense because of the ways research and evaluation has been used through history to disadvantage and disempower tribal sovereignty over information.

[01:01:34] This history [Slide – series of picture of sad teenaged girl, smiling Indian family] cannot be erased and will not be forgotten, but we can write a new narrative for ourselves about how we understand and use evaluation to strengthen our children, our families and our communities in the future.

[01:01:48] This includes redefining our concept of rigor and investing in growing our own [Slide – young woman with computer with words Growing Our Own] – developing evaluation practice from within our own communities. A workgroup was formed [Slide – picture of bright sun in forest shining through grove of trees with words 'Moving

Forward] to consider how we should review the past to allow us to move forward given the difficult history of evaluation and research in our communities.

[01:02:08] It included representatives from different agencies and perspectives, including tribal child welfare programs, evaluators with extensive experience in tribal context, university researchers working with American Indian and Alaska Native populations, technical assistance providers and federal program partners from the Children's Bureau and other agencies within the Administration for Children and families [Slide - names of those from each agency].

[01:02:33] This group engaged in a respectful and thoughtful dialogue of the history of research and evaluation in tribal contexts and the need for fundamental change in the way evaluation is practiced. As a result, the group chose to focus on promoting capacity in tribal evaluation and encouraging evaluation practice that is both culturally and scientifically rigorous.

[01:02:55] Workgroup discussions [Slide – graphic - circle chart with heading 'Co-Creating Collaboration and Effective Evaluation to Improve Tribal Child Welfare Programs'] and brainstorming generated a roadmap for co-creating collaborative and effective evaluation to improve tribal child welfare programs. This roadmap provides a guide for promoting capacity in the tribal evaluation community and charts a course for building a new narrative in tribal evaluation.

[01:03:13] In order to understand how to move forward with evaluation practice, we must acknowledge how history has shaped current evaluation practice. There are two themes that emerge, indigenous world views have been undervalued and intergenerational trauma has had a devastating impact on our communities.

[01:03:33] [Slide – non-Indian evaluator writing on clipboard) Western based evaluation activities have generally been imposed on us from the dominant culture and use standard Western approaches. These practices ignored our sovereign rights of tribal nations and failed to draw on [Slide – picture of Indian man with words '... long traditions of successful evaluation strategies using indigenous ways of knowing'] successful evaluation strategies using indigenous ways of knowing.

[01:03:53] [Slide – picture of Indian male teenaged youth] In addition, many of our communities have been subjected to traumatic events that disrupted families such as the impact of boarding schools and out of home placement and adoption of Native children from their tribal communities [Slide – picture of young Indian girl at school].

[01:04:06] These historical experiences have led many of our communities to revisit and reaffirm key values in order to move beyond this difficult history [Slide – graphic - same circle chart with words 'Values Indigenous ways of knowing, respect for tribal

sovereignty, strengths focus cultural and scientific rigor, community engagement, ethical practices, knowledge sharing].

[01:04:16] Now we as a working group have embraced this value as we consider this roadmap process. [Slide – series of pictures: young Indian woman and older Indian woman, picture of Pacific Northwest Indian tribal lodge/totem poles, professional Indian woman] These values include indigenous ways of knowing, respect for tribal sovereignty, a strengths-based focus, cultural integrity with scientific rigor, community engagement, ethical practices and knowledge sharing.

[01:04:33] [Slides – series of pictures, young Indian woman, Indian woman at traditional ceremony, carved eagle] Just as these values anchor tribal communities, they should anchor our evaluations. Evaluations should be tailored to cultural context and responsive to cultural ways of life. Reflecting respect for all aspects of our cultural heritage and the unspoken promise towards our children underlies the values that are embedded in this roadmap [slide – picture of elder Indian man with two small children reading a book].

[01:04:53] [Slide: Young professional Indian woman] Respect for these values will be essential to the process of becoming culturally adept in maintaining cultural integrity in conducting evaluations. [Slide: graphic same circle chart as shown previously] There are several stakeholders or partners who play important roles in evaluation of tribal child welfare programs.

[01:05:09] Program directors, tribal evaluators, evaluation partners and program staff are often primary stakeholders in evaluation. They are at the heart of evaluation practice. Others collaborate with the primary stakeholders and provide support, guidance and context for the evaluation process.

[01:05:27] Stakeholder collaboration is essential to improving the priority areas identified in the roadmap which are divided into two categories, relationship building and knowledge and skill building. The workgroup identified five key priorities for relationship building including successful evaluation practice requires community participation in determining priorities and creating meaningful evaluation questions. [Slide: series of pictures for relationship building, young Indian mother with baby, picture of two Indians weaving].

[01:05:50] Evaluations should be anchored in cultural and ethical practices. Conversations with our community stakeholders ensure that evaluation plans honor cultural ways and respect our local values. Clear guidelines and examples of evaluation components are an important way for program directors and staff to see the benefits of program evaluation. [Slide: series of pictures, young Indian family with children, professional Indian evaluators]

[01:06:12] They should help generate a shared agenda and purpose for the evaluation. [Slide: picture of young Indian girl] Transparency in evaluation and translation for community is essential to building trust. Many of us have experienced evaluations that have been insensitive to local needs and in some cases have done direct harm to our communities.

[01:06:31] [Slide: series of pictures, Indian older woman, professional Indian man, group of Indians participating in community event] The workgroup also identified six key priorities for knowledge and skill building, including developing cultural protocols for community engaged comprehensive evaluation ensures a foundation of evaluation that is both culturally and scientifically rigorous.

[01:06:44] [Slide: Indian man, group of Indians in ceremony, two professional Indian women at table] Fortunately, recent efforts have produced models for community engaged evaluation and research. Mentoring and technical assistance for evaluation design and implementation is critical for ensuring successful evaluations that involve our program staff and communities.

[01:07:01] Local staff may not be trained as evaluators or may find the requirements confusing and not applicable. If local staff and community members have opportunities to learn about the key components of evaluation and to share their experience on local culture, they can help guide culturally rigorous evaluation protocols.

[01:07:19] [Slide: Series of pictures – Indian woman with two children, professional Indian woman] Guidelines for selecting, adapting, developing, administering and interpreting evaluation instruments help insure meaningful evaluation results. There's a great deal of uncertainty about how to identify appropriate measures or instruments for use with Native children and families. Many standard measures created and normed for the dominant U.S. population are likely to work well for American Indian and Alaska Natives, but others are likely to provide misleading or incomplete information.

[01:07:46] [Slide: series of pictures, group of Indians storytelling, young Indian boy in cowboy hat] In many tribal communities, information is communicated through storytelling which provides an opportunity for staff and community members to interpret evaluation data. Evaluations are opportunities for us to give voice to our concerns and to create a comprehensive story of what is happening in tribal child welfare programs.

[01:08:09] [Slide: Series of pictures – Indian woman looking at computer screen, professional Indian woman at library holding books] Too often data are collected, but not fully understood or used. Training in the identification, use, interpretation and storage of data helps insure that it can be utilized more fully in guiding tribal child welfare practice. It is common in most tribal communities for multiple data collection efforts to be underway with limited coordination between the efforts.

[01:08:32] Consolidation and coordination of data across community programs will help to provide complete information and reduce duplication of efforts. [Slide: circle chart as displayed previously] One priority cuts across relationship building and knowledge and skill building. [Slide: series of pictures - young Indian woman in traditional tribal dress, professional Indian woman at keyboard, two professional Indian woman at computer] Growing our own has become a priority in many tribal communities with an emphasis on supporting the training and career development of tribal members who are participating in the evaluation process.

[01:08:55] The next generation of evaluation practice will involve developing infrastructure for evaluation oversight and practice in child welfare and providing opportunities for mentorship and training to emerging tribal evaluators.

[01:09:08] [Slide: Graphic - circle chart as displayed previously] The goal in addressing these priority areas is to foster a new roadmap for evaluation. That is, to build a new narrative for evaluation practice in tribal child welfare. [Slide: Young Indian father with son] This new narrative for evaluation practice has six key goals, collaborative, culturally responsive evaluation that fits the needs of the community. Evaluations should be locally and culturally relevant.

[01:09:31] [Slide – series of pictures, Indian mother with children, group of Indian men and women, young Indian professional woman] Evaluations should promote system improvement by providing information about how to better serve our children and families. Evaluations should also be guided by local questions, data and insight. This process is challenging; however, the roadmap supports the ability of the local staff to formulate what questions to ask and what kinds of information they need to consider for program improvement to drive evaluation plans.

[01:09:56] [Slide – series of pictures, Indian tribal meeting, young professional Indian woman, Indian man writing] Meaningful analysis that is firmly rooted in local questions allow evaluators to identify anticipated outcomes, select or create sensitive measures to those outcomes and design an evaluation plan that allows clear comparison of the effects of cultural adaptation on those outcomes.

[01:10:13] Bi-directional and reciprocal learning is inherent in this process of creating a new narrative. [Slide, series of pictures, Indian man, professional Indian woman on phone] For example, program directors should have opportunities to learn about the evaluation process and to participate in and inform local evaluations. American Indian and Alaska Native communities should have the best blend of experiences and evaluation skills that support the process that is sensitive to cultural context and committed to scientific principles.

[01:10:40] [Slide – picture of Indian weaving, picture of current professional Indian woman] It may be helpful to compare the old method of evaluation practice to the new

narrative and what we hope to accomplish. In the old narrative or the old method, program directors had little input and scientific experts directed evaluations in tribal communities.

[01:10:54] [Slide – picture of two professional Indian women] In the new narrative, programs will rely on their own training and scientific methods and their own cultural expertise to partner with evaluators who are more sensitive to tribal context. Together they create team led evaluations built on mutual power and respect.

[01:11:09] As another example, [Slide – series - graphic of reports/glasses, picture of young Indian father and two children] in the old narrative reports were created in scientific language that was inaccessible and lacked relevance to tribal communities. In the new narrative, evaluation narratives are created to tell the stories of program outcomes to our tribal governments in language that is clear and easy to understand.

[01:11:31] And finally, [Slide – picture of large table with outside evaluators] in the old narrative, conclusions were generated by outside evaluators who interpreted data out of context, did not recognize our history of trauma or oppression and had little or no input from our local cultural experts.

[01:11:44] In the new narrative, [Slide – Indian man and woman] conclusions are firmly grounded in our cultural context with program staff, cultural experts and others in our communities engaged in interpreting finding and invested in child well-being. [Slide – graphic - circle chart as displayed previously] The roadmap provides a means for moving beyond a difficult history of fear and distrust in the evaluation process and highlights how building relationships, knowledge and skills can create a new narrative for evaluation in our communities.

[Closing Slide – Special thanks to contributors]

**END FILE**