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FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA

March 20, 2018

Na-gah mo Waabishkizi Ojijaak Bimise Keetwaatino (Singing White Crane Flying North)

In many Indigenous Nations across the world, research is a contentious word because it has often been associated with a process of examination and analysis which lead to colonial judgments on Indigenous ways of life. As an extension of research, evaluation can also be painted with the same brush. Researchers and evaluators, the majority of whom are trained within western founded post-secondary institutions, learn how to do this work from those who have gone before. This means that most often positivist, objective-based experts, who ask people and communities to share their knowledge and experiences, are grounded in a worldview and belief about knowledge that are not congruent with Indigenous worldviews.

It is out of this context that the concept of an Indigenous Evaluation Bundle was championed by the Indigenous Learning Circle (ILC) in Winnipeg's North End. The ILC's interest in evaluation stems from its concern with common evaluation practices applied to programming in community-based organizations that focuses on narrowly defined outcomes. These evaluations often fail to capture the broader benefits that come from holistic community-based programming. Instead, the ILC envisioned evaluating outcomes aligned with the seven sacred teachings: Respect, Truth, Honesty, Wisdom, Courage, Love, and Humility.

The aim of the Indigenous Evaluation Bundle is to reassert Indigenous ways of measuring learning, growth, transformation, progress and success that directly align with

Indigenous practices. This is one example of a resurgence of Indigenous ways, building upon other work being done in communities and institutions. These ways of working have provided opportunities for people to build on their strengths, access supports and resources, connect with community, build a sense of belonging and identity, and practice generosity and reciprocity.

The Bundle was developed through workshops and community circles and shares guiding principles, core Indigenous values, and methods to design and undertake an Indigenous grounded evaluation. The Bundle is not a comprehensive document on how to complete an evaluation. The intention rather, is that it will build upon what is understood about evaluation and provide a guide that can be used in planning, designing, implementing and reporting based upon Indigenous values and principles. The Bundle provides a common understanding of the purpose of evaluation; how it can be beneficial for community; and Indigenous principles, values, considerations, and methods that could be used in the design and implementation of evaluation. It can be used by community organizations and staff to understand evaluation and increase community members' capacity to actively participate in

there is an alternative.

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evaluation efforts in their programs and organizations. It is meant as a conceptual roadmap that can be adapted and used in different settings and with diverse groups.

The Indigenous Learning Circle has brought together this Bundle with the vision of providing a living document that will continue to grow and a means by which to share teachings and learning as they occur. We hope that examples can be shared that will add to the value of this Bundle and that it will be used as a guide to Indigenous evaluation. We believe that with capacity building and mentorship, this Bundle will be a valuable asset to organizations who would like to mark not only their journey, their learning, and their successes of the Indigenous-centered work that they complete, but also the powerful stories of transformation that happen for Indigenous individuals, families, and communities as a result of walking alongside each other.

The ILC recognized that the development of the Bundle would be best understood with an example of the Bundle in practice. CEDA Pathways, a North End organization, came forward to partner in the application of the Bundle and to share the learnings that would come forth. The Bundle was then used to evaluate CEDA's programming by engaging the families of CEDA students. A detailed description of the process and methods can be found in the full report here.

Indigenous evaluation based on the Bundle provides a critical opportunity for community members, organizations, funders, and post-secondary institutions to address the ongoing challenges of colonialism. Who is leading and doing the work and how the work gets defined and prioritized are important redresses in fulfilling the TRC Calls to Action and decolonizing practices that have upheld inequities and oppression in Canada.

The ILC believes that this evaluation Bundle is one component of a larger strategy to build community capacity for evaluating. It is critical that community evaluation practitioners are trained and supported with the necessary knowledge and skills to design and

implement evaluations based upon this Bundle. Another key part to the success of this work will be in the sharing of this knowledge with community members and leaders and in their driving of the education around the importance of the Bundle. It will also mean educating those who are funders and policy makers.

Indigenous peoples continue to assert traditional knowledges, cultural practices, teachings, and ways of knowing and being as valuable contributions to health and wellness for not only Indigenous peoples but also community members in general. Ways of helping and the worldviews and values that they are based upon have existed for generations within the cultures of the First Peoples of Turtle Island[1]. These practices, which continue to exist in community care, have also been incorporated more formally into programs and organizations that are funded to work with individuals, families, and communities. In Winnipeg, a city with a high population of Indigenous peoples, incorporating Indigenous ways of practice into helping programs and organizations makes sense, as organizations work to support community. Incorporating Indigenous ways of measuring learning, growth, transformation, progress and success that align with Indigenous practices therefor is necessary.

[1] The First Peoples of the geographic area of North America often refer to this as Turtle Island, which is consistent with stories that tell of the creation of this land.

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References available upon request.

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