

SESSION 4: Developing, Maintaining and Expanding a Network of Native American Evaluators

Facilitators:

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Breakout Groups/Guiding Questions:

1. Training and Future Needs

Participants: Christine Chee, Pamela DeRensis, Marigold Linton, Grayson Noley, Floraline Stevens

- As the demand for evaluation increases, how can participants work together to address the need for preparing evaluators with the appropriate knowledge and skills?

2. Networking: How to Develop a Line of Communication

Participants: Everett Chavez, Rosemary Christensen, Anya Dozier-Enos, Edna MacLean

- What services are currently available to support the development of a network of evaluators for on-going communication?

3. Dissemination of Information about Training, Relevant Evaluations and Pertinent Literature

Participants: David Beaulieu, Susan Faircloth, Eric Jolly, Craig Love

- In what ways can participants use their organizations, networks and connections to disseminate information that will help to expand awareness of needs, strategies and programs (i.e., establishment of a database)?

Discussion Highlights

Training and Future Needs

Tim Begaye

This session began with a general discussion regarding where to begin our focus and in which direction to go with the ideas we generated. We were able to gain an understanding about our responsibilities and direction with the help of this guiding question:

As the demand for evaluation increases, how can participants in this working session work together to address the need for preparing evaluators with the appropriate knowledge and skills?

This guiding question helped us generate a framework for working together. We would address the need for preparing evaluators, and the knowledge and skills required for evaluators to work effectively with Native people. From this, we delved into creating a concrete framework for training and preparation. The members of the working session agreed that Indian country needs more evaluators, which means that training is necessary to prepare evaluator candidates with the necessary knowledge and skills for both theoretical and practical applications. There were a variety of opinions, suggestions and recommendations for how to achieve this.

Who is Being Evaluated

An important question that launched this discussion is: who are we talking about when we discuss relevant and appropriate evaluations in Indian country? More specifically, how do we begin to structure culturally sensitive evaluations when there exist over 500 Native nations in the United States with as many distinct languages and cultures? How do we introduce concepts of evaluation to tribes like the Hopi and other pueblo groups in the Southwest with very closely guarded and closed cultural practices, or to eastern tribes that live as part of urban communities and are not recognized as tribal groups? Another important question raised was evaluating programs that focus on young Native children today (who are constantly exposed to outside influences through music, television, media and advertising, want to be part of the mainstream society and are increasingly challenging Native leaders). In addition, how do we evaluate community programs where large numbers of tribal members are moving to urban or off-reservation areas for economic, educational or other reasons?

So, when we ask the question of “who,” the answer is complex because Native people are multicultural, multiracial and multinational. Due to the complexity of Native cultures, the group was further challenged with developing a model to fit a diverse set of people and social systems.

Next, the group tried to set the context for the knowledge and skills an evaluator must have, considering the resources available to address the problem.

The Context: Where Evaluation Takes Place

A lengthy discussion around the diversity of Native cultures made it quite clear that Indian country is comprised of vastly distinct groups of people and that we must be cautious about our definition(s) of Native culture and how to apply the term to a variety of Native people. For evaluators, being prepared to work in a Native context really means being prepared to operate within a multitude of multicultural contexts. It will be challenging to prepare evaluators to be culturally sensitive, aware and appropriate in every Native context.

An important question raised regarding context is how we begin to address the issue of cultural sensitivity with those evaluators who are already conducting evaluations without relevant or sufficient training. One suggestion was to supplement current evaluation teams, often composed exclusively of non-Natives, with Native evaluators. The assumption here is that Native evaluators are more aware of Native cultures and bring a more sensitive perspective to the evaluation team. Again, we must be cautious balancing what is appropriate with assumptions. However, the group agreed that we needed to emphasize that Native evaluators should participate in evaluations because they tend to view Native communities through a different lens than their non-Native counterparts.

Training

In order to focus the discussion regarding training, the group considered the following questions:

1. *How do we identify candidates for training?*
2. *How do we provide support for evaluators and keep them both sensitive and effective?*
3. *What kind and what level of training do evaluators require in order to conduct culturally sensitive and effective evaluation?*

The question of training teachers as evaluators was raised. However, potential barriers exist, such as whether teachers would have the ability and willingness to serve as evaluators given their considerable time and financial constraints, and whether unions would permit them to put in time for work not prescribed in their contracts. A possible alternative to teachers could be other educators, such as curriculum specialists or other non-classroom educators, who would already have some educational training and expertise. The group agreed, however, that both Native and non-Native evaluators who will be evaluating Native programs should be considered candidates for training.

Formal academic training in evaluation exists at institutions such as UCLA and North Carolina State University. Two concerns regarding these types of programs include: 1) cost and 2) the perception that there is not a need to change or extend existing curriculum to address issues relevant to Native evaluators or programs.

While the group agreed that training is necessary, they did not wholly agree on a catalog of skills that an evaluator requires. In general, the group agreed that training would need to provide multifaceted knowledge and skills including qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods, report writing and survey techniques. This knowledge and these skills provide the first step, or foundation, for understanding the evaluation process.

Next we must consider what differentiates evaluation in a Native context from evaluation in a non-Native context. Evaluation in a Native context must include sensitivity to and understanding of the cultural nuances at play. For evaluators who are going to work in a Native context, training must also address this issue. Addressing this component is more complex. It may be accomplished through the composition of evaluation teams to include multiple lenses and voices, which result in multiple interpretations.

The next challenge is how to inculcate the knowledge and skills into some kind of training format.

Results and Recommendations

The following model shows the progression through training levels that the group developed and used to make recommendations. Using the concept of a ladder, an aspiring evaluator would ascend the ladder beginning with level one. One would take the first step at the bottom with little previous (formal or informal) training. Gradually, the evaluator would progress up the ladder, gaining knowledge, skills and experience from a variety of formally and informally structured learning experiences.

NSF Funding ↑ Sensitivity to the Cultural Context of Communities, Programs, etc.	Level #5	Master Evaluator	Benefits	Long Term Program Goals
	Expert Level, Ph. D., Ed.D.	Capable of doing all aspects of evaluation		
	Level #4	Mid-level Evaluators II	Benefits	
	Graduate, Professional	Perform unsupervised evaluations Perform independent evaluations Certification in specific evaluation skills Master's Degree	Specialized evaluation skills	
	Level #3	Mid-level Evaluators I	Benefits	
	Graduate Professional Undergraduate	Mentoring (supervised) Perform supervised evaluations Perform simple evaluations Take courses at colleges Attend long term workshops	Preliminary training to move to higher level, take courses	
	Level #2	School/Education Professional	Benefits	Short Term
		Attend workshops Take on-line courses Mentoring	Better insight into what an evaluation is	
Level #1	Apprenticeship	Benefits		
Short Term Training, Data Specific	Native data collectors Better, more accurate data Interpretation of cultural nuances	Provides a Native perspective		

Some of the group's more specific recommendations are as follows:

- Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that are sent out by NSF may request an explanation of how culturally sensitive mechanisms will be incorporated into the evaluation component of the program being proposed.
- NSF might want to recommend what kind of training non-Native evaluators would need in order to conduct relevant and appropriate evaluations of programs in Indian country.

- NSF may need to ask proposers to establish short- and long-term goals and recommendations regarding culturally appropriate training.
- NSF may want to recommend that someone from the local Native community be a part of the evaluation team.

Networking: How to Develop a Line of Communication*Joan LaFrance*

This report summarizes a discussion on the topic of developing and supporting a network of evaluators for on-going communication. However, before addressing that question, the group discussed general concerns regarding evaluation of American Indian and Alaskan Native programs. The discussion focused on the following issues:

- The importance of embedding evaluation within the community,
- The need for evaluators to have knowledge and skills to adapt Western research methodology to fit the culture and values of Indian country, and
- The need to create opportunities to train Indians in evaluation methods that are appropriate for tribal communities and Alaskan villages.

The group thought it important to include these concerns and their related recommendations in the record of the meeting.

After expressing a number of concerns regarding evaluation in general, the group discussed the need to create an inventory of evaluators. The final discussion focused on developing the network and ways in which to promote ongoing communication.

Embedding Evaluation in the Community

The history of research exploitation in Indian country raises issues for evaluation. Evaluation is different from research in that it is responsible to a program and not to the Western knowledge creation that is the goal of research. However, in their allegiance to funders and their grounding in research methods, evaluators are just as capable of failing to be responsive to community norms and values as researchers. For this reason, evaluation in Indian country should be attentive to community ownership and participation. As one group member explained:

“[Non-Native] researchers are not even aware of a special code of ethics that might apply in Indian country. That is why I think it is very powerful to try and have the evaluation come out of the community with the elders or with teachers in the day school who are community members. If you are going to be living in your community forever, you are a little bit more aware of those ethical issues than you are if you are coming from the outside.”

Since it is not always possible to use community members to conduct evaluations, tribes should consider developing their own research and evaluation review processes to guide outsiders. The group strongly endorsed such a process, with one member noting:

“If I were an [outside] evaluator... what I would find helpful is if that community had some kind of body established to review the kinds of research that would come into the community along with the type of evaluation that would occur with the research. In some of our communities, they have a cultural sensitivity board. When a new policeman comes into town, he or she has to sit with these elders and people who know about the culture for a couple of days just to get immersed in the community's expectations. I would find that a really helpful resource.”

The group agreed that tribal review boards should assist in moving the process of evaluation forward. They should not be viewed as an obstacle to be overcome, but a resource to help guide the process and assure the community that the evaluation will lead to improving services to tribal members. Given the history of abuse from researchers, an internal board or committee to review the purposes and methods of evaluations could ease community fears that evaluation may be exploitive and detrimental to tribal programs.

Developing review boards will take resources. Funding sources that require evaluations should consider developing a program to assist tribes to establish research review boards. The funding agencies could look at models currently being used and develop a package or kit explaining how to develop a review board.

Review boards could serve a much broader purpose than just meeting federal requirements. As one group member noted:

“I think, when we are designing programs, we are trying to design programs that meet the needs of the community. I think that this is a way to move beyond just having federal programs mandating this process, but a way for tribes to develop road maps for their communities that are really attentive to some of their human, health, environmental and educational needs.”

Another member of the group explained that working on establishing a community review process would encourage a tribe to say, “This is how our particular culture and community evaluates itself, these are its values, and this is what is held sacred or important for improving the community processes.” She concluded, “That is what an evaluation does—find ways to improve a project or a process.”

Special Knowledge and Skills

Complementing the discussion about embedding evaluation in community processes was the concern that evaluators should have special skills and knowledge to work in Indian country. The conversation centered on cultural competencies for evaluators.

Ethics is an important concern. Although informed consent is basic to ethical practice in evaluation, there are deeper issues at stake when interviewing in Indian country. Tribal elders need to be made fully aware of what will be discussed in an interview. Interviewers need to be sure that what they write or interpret from an interview is an accurate reflection of what was said. As one member explained:

“It’s making sure that the evaluators comprehend what you are saying , and that you understand and consent to how what you are saying will be used....”

She concluded that there should be cultural competencies for working with elders so that evaluators don’t make mistakes.

The group noted that attempts to develop cultural educational competencies have had mixed results. Some efforts to identify educational competencies have merely put an Indian veneer on general education competencies, such as learning a number system in a Native language. Most members of the group felt that the competencies developed to train educators in Alaska could serve as a model for training evaluators.

The group concluded that there are some commonalities among tribes regarding ethics of working among Indians and Alaskan Natives. As one member noted, it would be possible to describe in behavioral terms what you need to do to respect elders in an Indian community. Other aspects of a protocol could explain that invasive questions are rude and that it is important to build trustful relationships before engaging in questioning. A protocol could stress the importance of negotiating the use of the evaluation outside the community.

Resources are needed to explore the development of competencies relevant for evaluators. It was recommended that funding sources that require evaluation assist American Indian and Alaskan Native evaluators develop competencies in partnership with Indian and Alaskan Native communities. These competencies could then be incorporated into criteria for evaluation for their grants and programs. The National Science Foundation (NSF) could start such a process.

Evaluators need to consider methodological approaches that work best in Indian country. For example, tribes and villages are small communities. Although sampling may be appropriate to obtain enough representation for an evaluation, it can cause some participants to wonder why they are not being talked to, why their neighbor's views are important, but not their views. Confidentiality can be a challenge in smaller communities and even a short description of a program participant can be revealing. Context is critical in understanding Indian country. This suggests that qualitative methods are just as important, or even more important than quantitative measurement.

Creating Training Opportunities

Establishing competencies and encouraging tribal research and evaluation review boards creates a need to recognize that evaluators will require special training to work in Indian country. Also, to embed evaluators in communities requires programs to train community members, program staff and educators in evaluation. The group had a number of suggestions for training. These included:

- Using tribal colleges for training. Tribal colleges could infuse cultural knowledge into evaluation training.
- Creating cohorts to go through evaluation training. This is based on the teacher education model where fellowships fund graduate study for educators. Although this training would be in major universities, partnerships with tribal colleges or Indian evaluation experts could ensure that cultural knowledge and competencies were included in the training.
- Establish summer institutes to train evaluators to work in Indian country.
- Provide internships for evaluators-in-training to work in Indian country, and internships for staff and community members to attend university programs.
- Seek funding from NSF and other funders to sponsor evaluation sessions at major Indian and Alaskan Native conferences. The presenters could discuss special issues in evaluation as well as recruit tribal community members, especially young people, into the field of evaluation.

Creating an Indian Evaluation Network

As the discussion moved to supporting the development of an Indian evaluation network, it was clear that there is no inventory of evaluators who work with American Indians and Alaskan Natives. A first step in supporting a network is to build the network. The American Evaluation Association (AEA) is not well known in Indian country. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) has a Special Interest Group (SIG) for indigenous educators. It is likely that some members of this group are experienced evaluators. There were a number of recommendations regarding creating an inventory of evaluators who work in Indian country:

- Use the AERA listserv to locate Indian evaluators.
- Use the EvalTalk listserv sponsored by AEA to locate Indian evaluators.
- Use the listserv for Indian professors to locate Indian evaluators.
- Research the Kellogg Foundation Consultant Database to find evaluators with experience in Indian country.
- Set up booths at major Indian conferences. The booths can promote the importance of having culturally appropriate evaluation and seek out conference participants who are or know Indian evaluators.

Creating an inventory will require resources. The group identified a number of potential supporters for this effort (listed later in this report).

Organizations to Assist in Creating and Supporting a Network

A number of organizations important to creating and supporting an Indian and Alaskan Native evaluation network have already been identified. However, it is helpful to list the results of the brainstorming session on organizations that could be used to assist in moving this effort forward. The list generated by the group includes:

Organizations for education and program evaluation:

American Evaluation Association (AEA)
 American Educational Research Association (AERA)

Indian Organizations in which to promote culturally appropriate evaluation:

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
 National Indian Education Association (NIEA)
 American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)
 National Indian School Board Association (NISBA)
 Association of Contract Tribal Schools (ACTS)
 State Indian Education Associations
 Alaskan Federation of Natives (AFN)
 Consortium of Alaskan Native Higher Education (CANHE)
 Alaskan Native Education Council (ANEC)
 Indian publications

Indian organizations that can provide political support for culturally appropriate evaluation:

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
National Tribal Chairmen Association (NTCA)

Organizations that can provide support for developing and sustaining a network:

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), especially the section on ethno-mathematics
National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME)
National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) – Deans of Education Schools

Sponsoring or Funding Organizations for Building a Network

The recommendations in this report will require support and funding from organizations that have a vested interest in promoting more effective evaluation of American Indian and Alaskan Native programs. The group brainstormed and developed a list of potential funders. This list is preliminary and should not be viewed as comprehensive or exhaustive. It includes:

National Science Foundation (NSF)
Office of Indian Education (OIE)
Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education (formerly the Office of Educational Research and Improvement)
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
Justice Department
Defense Department
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
Federal Government Interagency Councils
Kellogg Foundation
Casino Tribes

Recommendations to Support Communication Among Native American Evaluators

Assuming that a network of evaluators is created, there were a number of recommendations regarding support for ongoing communication:

- Use electronic media for networking.
- Encourage AERA to partner with AEA so Native Americans in AEA can participate in the AERA listserv.
- Create a link to an evaluation network in the Native American Professors listserv.
- Partner AEA with Indian organizations; place AEA exhibits at national organization meetings to continually build the network.
- Promote participation in AEA and attendance at the annual conference in November 2002 in Washington, D.C.
- Create an American Indian/Alaskan Native Evaluation Association that speaks specifically to Native American evaluators. Ask NSF to fund it as a pilot until it can stand on its own.

- Request funding to convene a conference on evaluation in Indian country for members of the network of Native American evaluators.

Additional Recommendations

There were a number of recommendations that emerged from the discussion regarding creating evaluation protocols and training opportunities. These included the following:

- Seek funding to create a summer institute for Native American evaluators. This needs to be a special institute developed specifically to address issues and concerns.
- NSF should provide training in evaluation for American Indian and Alaskan Native proposal writers to enable them to include more thoughtful approaches to evaluation rather than using the standard approaches.
- Government funders should require that some cultural perspectives in their evaluation criteria be written into proposals. Train government funders in the special needs and considerations for evaluation in Indian country and Alaska.
- When the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) requirements for quantitative measurable objectives are implemented in tribal programs, it is important to consider special cultural issues in measurement.
- Request that the pending study of Indian education being undertaken by the Office of Indian Education look at evaluation issues in Indian education.
- Use the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and other similar organizations that reach out to students to involve young people with Indian evaluators, or find ways to include some information about evaluation in these organizations' programs. Find ways to engage students in evaluation. Learning how to do observations and reflect on an event, a critical aspect of evaluation, is a good critical thinking skill.
- Use Indian newspapers and magazines to promote and discuss evaluation issues.
- Create an evaluation strand at NIEA and in the AISES teacher track.
- Work with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) to sponsor technical assistance and discussions of evaluation issues.
- Have exhibits on evaluation at national conferences (Indian and others).

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the discussion all members of the group felt that the effort to create a network of Indian evaluators is only at the beginning stages. Continued support is critical to keep up the momentum. Exploring ways to make evaluation more responsive to Indian communities and Alaskan villages will be an important contribution to the field. As one group member said, *"The conversation we are having is important to the evaluation community in general. The role of community, the role of ownership, the role of ethics... I think evaluators will welcome it."*

Dissemination of Information about Training, Relevant Evaluations and Pertinent Literature

Joan Esnayra

This discussion may be divided into six parts. First, the group defined what information is being disseminated. Second, they identified multiple dissemination vehicles. Third, they identified evaluation informants and dissemination partners. Fourth, they considered relationships among them. Fifth, they identified obstacles to dissemination. Finally, they discussed ways these obstacles may be overcome. Summarized below are the six parts of the discussion.

What information is being disseminated?

1. Results from relevant evaluations
2. Innovations in evaluation (i.e., new analytical approaches, new models)
3. Pertinent literature
4. Information about funding opportunities
5. Information about training

What are the dissemination vehicles?

Discussants generated a list and offered the following proviso: just because these dissemination vehicles exist does not mean they are effective at reaching all audiences. One group member added that training educators in this context *is* the vehicle.

1. Professional journals
2. The Internet
Via web sites, listservs, archived online discussions with case studies, literature databases such as the Education Resource Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) and distance learning sites. The latter are not yet well developed.
3. Funding agencies and their contractors
4. Curricula of Colleges of Education
(Carnegie 100, state school systems, Harvard University, Brown University, Coalition of Essential Schools)
5. Curricula of various evaluator training groups
6. Accrediting associations
Via representatives who conduct site visits, publish reports and convene or participate in regional meetings
7. Professional association meetings
Via talks, workshops, poster presentations and conference materials
8. American Evaluation Association (AEA)
9. American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)
10. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
11. National Science Teachers' Association (NSTA)

12. President's Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities
13. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school systems meetings and workshops
14. American Indian Education Research Association (AIERA)
15. National Indian Education Association (NIEA)
16. National Indian School Board Association (NISBA)
17. State Indian Education Associations

Who are the Evaluation Informants and Dissemination Partners?

One group member noted there are 1300 schools in 27 states that have 10 or more Native American students. There are 29 two-year tribal colleges, 4 four-year tribal colleges and 500,000 Native American students in the United States.

The group identified the following evaluation informants and dissemination partners:

1. Federal Government:
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Education, National Science Foundation, Department of Defense, White House Interagency Council, White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities
2. State Government:
Departments of Education, Indian Affairs, Criminal Justice, Juvenile Justice
3. County Government:
Criminal Justice, Juvenile Justice
4. Public Schools
Head Start and other early development programs
K-12 public schools
5. Public and Private Colleges and Universities
6. Tribal Schools
Head Start and other early development programs
K-12 tribal schools
Tribal colleges
Tribal Education Offices
7. Private Industry
Nonprofit community-based organizations
Evaluation Industry (Westat, Orbit, AIR, etc.)
8. Private Foundations

What are the Relationships among Evaluation Informants and Dissemination Partners?

The group examined relationships among informants and dissemination partners in an attempt to locate critical communication blocks that can negatively impact dissemination. The table below is a visual representation of the results of that discussion. Dark gray boxes represent GOOD information flow. Light gray boxes reflect VARIABLE information flow. Striped boxes identify information BLOCKAGE. Black boxes are relationships the group did not consider. After mapping these relationships, the group took a closer look at obstacles to dissemination in the next part of their discussion.

	Fed	State	County	Pub/Priv Collg	Public K-12	Public Hedst	Tribal Collg	Tribal K-12	Tribal Hedst	Priv. CBOs	Priv. Indsty
Fed	Black	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Striped 1	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 2	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
State	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
County	Black	Light Gray	Black	Black	Light Gray	Black	Black	Black	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray
Pub/Priv Collg	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Black	Striped 3	Light Gray	Striped 4	Striped 5	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 6
Public K-12	Striped 1	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 3	Black	Light Gray	Striped 7	Striped 8	Light Gray	Black	Striped 9
Public Hedst	Light Gray	Black	Black	Light Gray	Black	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black
Tribal Collg	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Striped 4	Striped 7	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 10	Black	Light Gray	Striped 11
Tribal K-12	Striped 2	Light Gray	Black	Striped 5	Striped 8	Light Gray	Striped 10	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 11
Tribal Hedst	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black
Priv. CBOs	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Black	Black
Priv. Indsty	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Striped 6	Striped 9	Black	Striped 11	Striped 9	Black	Black	Black

Relationships where information flow is BLOCKED include:

1. Feds & Public K-12
2. Feds & Tribal K-12
3. Public/private colleges & Public K-12
4. Public/private colleges & Tribal colleges
5. Public/private colleges and Tribal K-12
6. Public/private colleges and Private Industry
7. Public K-12 & Tribal colleges
8. Public K-12 & Tribal K-12
9. Public K-12 & Private Industry
10. Tribal colleges & Tribal K-12
11. Tribal colleges & Private Industry

What are the Obstacles to Dissemination?

The group agreed that there is no generalized knowledge about how dissemination among the partners is carried out. This absence of information impinges upon our ability to fix the dissemination problem.

Consider the private evaluation industry. Government provides information to industry, but the flow of that information is unidirectional. Most of the data provided to industry are not made available to others who might be able to use them. Resentment towards the federal government is another obstacle to dissemination. Some believe that federal authorities view evaluation simply as a way to get rid of programs. Such a belief is most prevalent among tribal education systems and public K-12 schools.

Migration is another obstacle. Native American students often move between public and tribal education systems. Our ability to measure outcomes for these students is proportional to our ability to track them. Unfortunately data between these systems are not shared.

One group member pointed out another obstacle: the lack of capacity in Indian country.

“We need more Native American statisticians, mathematicians and researchers. We need information technology infrastructure such as fiber optics, T1 lines and satellite transmission for rural areas. The 1996 Telecommunications Act excluded Indian reservations.... The Act was amended in 1998 because of that, and that left Indians behind everyone else. Did you know that telephone service penetration on Indian land is only 48%?”

Another obstacle to dissemination is the enduring cultural gap between Natives and non-Natives. Even among Indians there is a cultural gap between those who live in urban areas and those who don't.

“Only a small group of individuals know how to avail themselves of Indian resources. Indians in Indian country know about many of the existing Indian resources. In contrast, non-Indian evaluators are often unaware of these resources, especially when they evaluate Indian students in urban settings. Similarly, those evaluators who come into Indian country as part of a systemic initiative generally do not know about existing Indian evaluation resources.”

Recommendations: How Can These Obstacles be Overcome?

A shift in thinking is needed on the part of federal authorities. Evaluation should not be regarded, as it has been, as an under-funded afterthought. Summative evaluations are passé. The classic “strings attached” evaluations that punish for negative findings have to go. Instead, evaluation should be formative, positive, developmental and ongoing. One group member added, “Evaluations need to include frontline educators, not just the administrators who are responsible for managing funds.” The unidirectional data flow between federal government and private industry needs to change. Industry needs to make publicly funded data sets available for others to analyze and benefit from. Longitudinal student tracking is sorely needed. In California, children of migrant farm workers are provided with their own CD containing information about their educational history. When they move, the CD goes with them to the next school.

One group member asked, "How do you evaluate Native American communities?" and went on to say, "Get them involved! Conduct collaborative evaluations. Have program providers participate in the development of the evaluation. Make it a required activity on the part of the funding agency. Invite program providers to help identify the questions that will be asked and what the outcome measures should be. Let them participate in interpreting the data and their implications. Make them full partners on the evaluation team, and be sure to share the results of the evaluation with the program participants. In this way, the evaluation itself is the collaboration vehicle."

Yet another suggestion was to assemble reciprocal evaluation teams between public and tribal colleges and K-12 schools. On the subject of information exchange, one group member said, "There are 22 Indian teacher training programs and all are connected to a college of education. The teachers must come from either a tribal school or a public school with a large Indian student population. Let's get them talking to one another. The Navajo have an accreditation program called the North Central Association. It is a good model for local information exchange." Another group member added, "The Bureau of Indian Affairs should convene a meeting of stakeholders in Indian education evaluation." A final suggestion for overcoming obstacles to dissemination is to merge the membership lists of relevant professional organizations to create a more powerful vehicle for dissemination.