

Centering Indigenous Knowledge, Culture and Communities: Indigenous Evaluation as an Alternative Method for Documenting Impact

Presented by Seven Directions, an Indigenous Public Health Institute
in partnership with NNPHI and CDC

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SEVEN DIRECTIONS
A CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS PUBLIC HEALTH

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Session Goals

- Promote foundational understanding of Indigenous Evaluation concepts and approaches
- Build understanding of distinctions between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing
- Discuss Indigenous success measures and knowledge-gathering methodologies as alternative paths to document impact for Indigenous-serving groups



About Seven Directions at the UW

Mission

Advance American Indian and Alaska Native health and wellness by honoring Indigenous knowledge, strengthening Tribal and Urban Indian public health systems, and cultivating innovation and collaboration

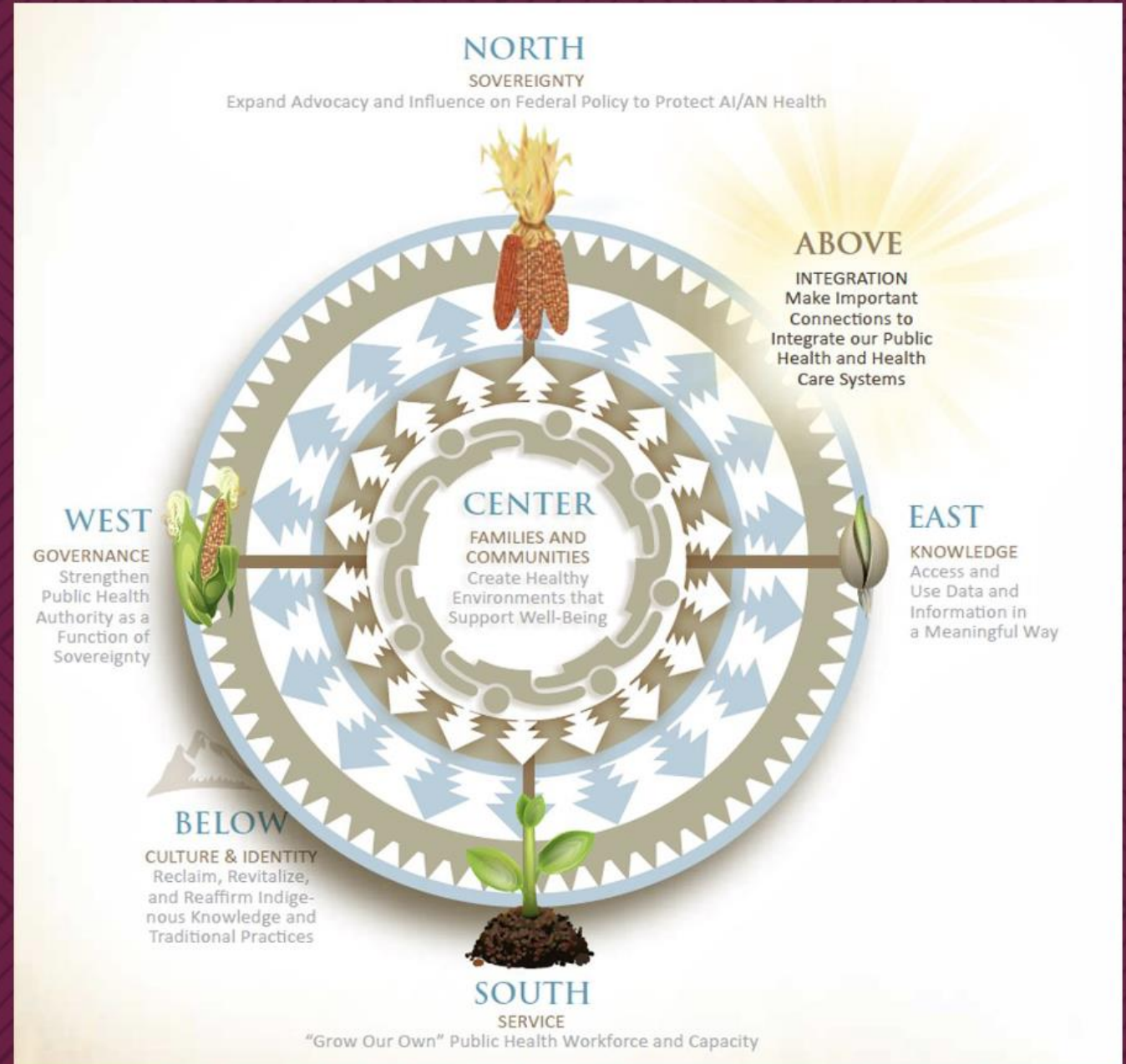
Key Services for Indigenous Health Programs

- Technical Assistance
 - One-on-one Coaching
 - Cohort-based professional development
- Trainings & Conferences
- Research-based Toolkits for Practitioners
- Literature Reviews & Environmental Scans
- Facilitated Communities of Practice
- Translational and Community-Based Participatory Research



Values


1. Culture & Identity
2. Families & Communities
3. Tribal Governance
4. Respect for Sovereignty
5. Integration – Holistic Wellness
6. Indigenous Knowledge
7. Service



An aerial photograph of a dense evergreen forest, likely a coniferous forest, with many tall, green trees. The forest is the left side of the slide.

Land Acknowledgment

We recognize that at the University of Washington in Seattle where Seven Directions is based, we learn, teach, and live on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people. We have a responsibility to acknowledge the history of Indigenous land dispossession, and to address current disparities resulting from past harms.

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide, consisting of several colored segments: gold, grey, blue, light blue, and dark blue.

Other Key Acknowledgements

- Indigenous communities since time immemorial
- AIHEC, Drs. LaFrance & Nichols
- OTAG
- Tribal public health partners (piloting, launching)
- Seven Directions team members



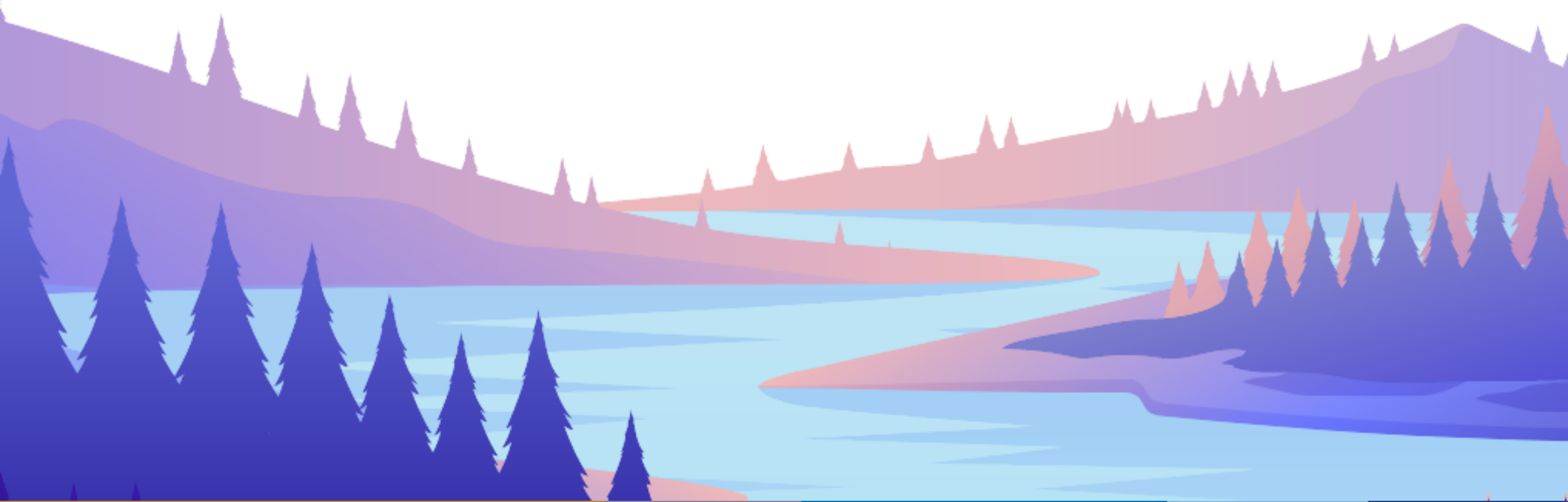
Seven Directions team members at ONOJ Conference 2023

Part 1. Introduction to Indigenous Evaluation



What is Indigenous Evaluation?

The long-relied upon use of Indigenous ways of knowing and deep community involvement when assessing or evaluating an effort's effectiveness or community impact.



Why we should prioritize Indigenous Evaluation

- Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by historical trauma, and continued structural inequities including harmful SDOH
- American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) disproportionately impacted by the opioid epidemic, suicide, and other preventable injuries
- Response → culturally grounded *programming* requires culturally grounded *evaluation approaches* that support ancestral and cultural wisdom



Why is IE Important for Prevention Professionals

- Important for practitioners to consider the unique context, history, and **other knowledge forms** impacting clients' substance use, decisions, behavior, truth
- Can inform **clinic- or program-level operations** (e.g., include AI/AN voices in program design, success measures, data collection)
- Especially useful for work in and with specific tribal communities. Not designed for widespread use across non-Native communities.

Western & Indigenous Evaluation

Both: Systematic gathering of information about community services, needs, outcomes. They differ in WHAT and WHO are included, and HOW the evaluation is done.

Western:

- Emphasis on “Objective” knowledge types and evaluator role (often outsider)
- Outside questions addressed; emphasis on “external validity”
- Can include community participation in but rarely ownership of evaluation process, data

Indigenous:

- Emphasis on “Holistic” knowledge types, people involved, and relationality
- Community-defined questions addressed; emphasis on local relevance
- Deep community involvement and ownership, capacity building, data sovereignty & stewardship

Conceptual Origins: LaFrance and Nichols' Indigenous Evaluation Framework (2008)

Four foundations:

1. Reliance on core cultural values
2. Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing
3. Ensuring community engagement
4. Use of metaphor



Indigenous Evaluation Values

Indigenous Knowledge	People of a Place	Centering Family and Community	Honoring Our Gifts	Respecting Sovereignty
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Honor multiple ways of knowing-Moral responsibility to reflect on and use what is learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Include local context when telling evaluation story-Respect that what works well in one setting may not translate to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Deep community engagement, participatory methods-Community-level outcomes, not just individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Multiple ways to measure accomplishment-Different starting points, strengths, experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Tribal ownership and control of data; permission at all steps-Build evaluation capacity-Report findings to community in meaningful ways

(Adapted from LaFrance and Nichols, 2008)

Types of Indigenous Knowledge

Empirical Knowledge	Traditional Knowledge	Revealed Knowledge
Observations and experiments in natural settings	Handed down through generations; frames and conveys community's values & beliefs	Dreams, visions, ceremony, feelings. Result of spiritual and ancestral interaction
Examples: Weather; resources; food's readiness to harvest; number of people at a gathering; other quantitative data	Examples: Community origin stories; clan histories, oral tradition describing relationship with the land; agricultural knowledge; elders' opinions about a program	Examples: Feelings about a program; feelings of sacredness; Art

Making it Actionable: The Indigenous Evaluation Toolkit (2023)

Seven Directions, with the support of the CDC & NNPHI, has produced a Toolkit that provides: **step-by-step guidance, worksheets, and concrete examples to support communities looking to Indigenize & decolonize their program evaluation**

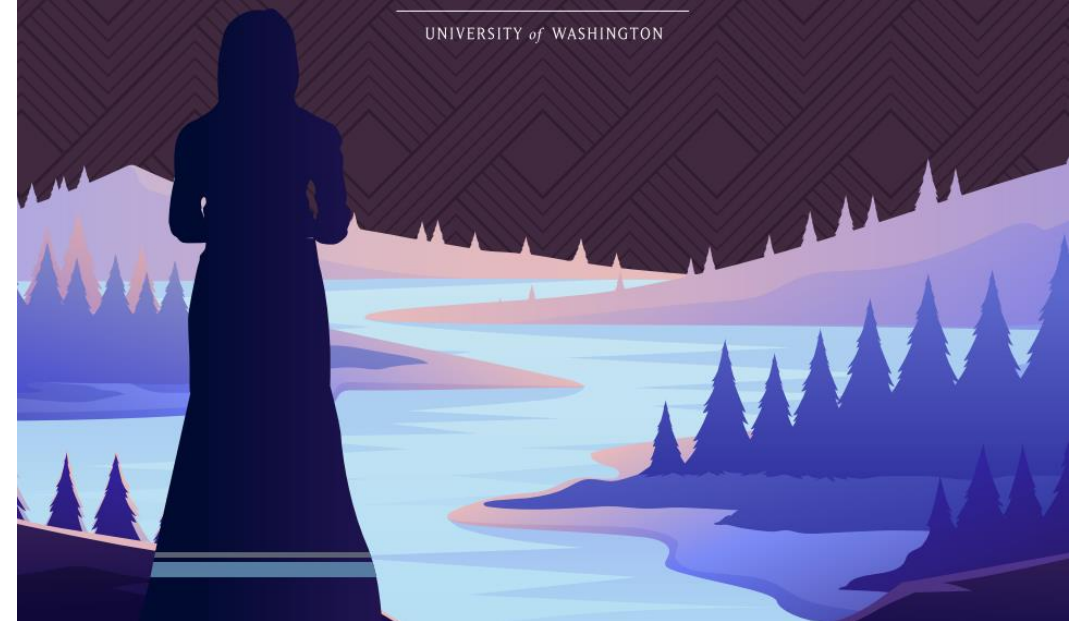
INDIGENOUS EVALUATION TOOLKIT:

An Actionable Guide for Organizations Serving
American Indian/Alaska Native Communities
through Opioid Prevention Programming

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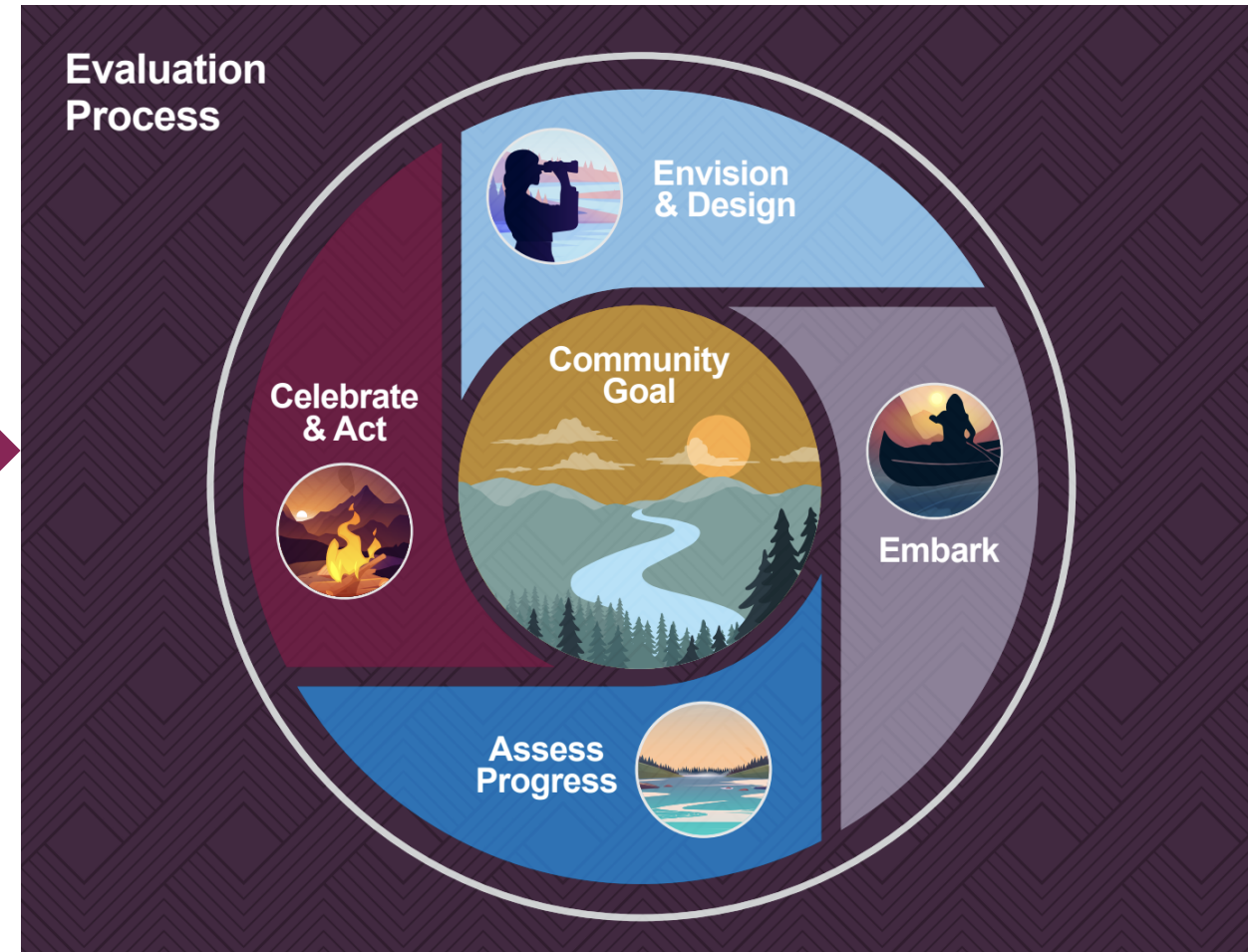
Translating Values into Actionable Steps

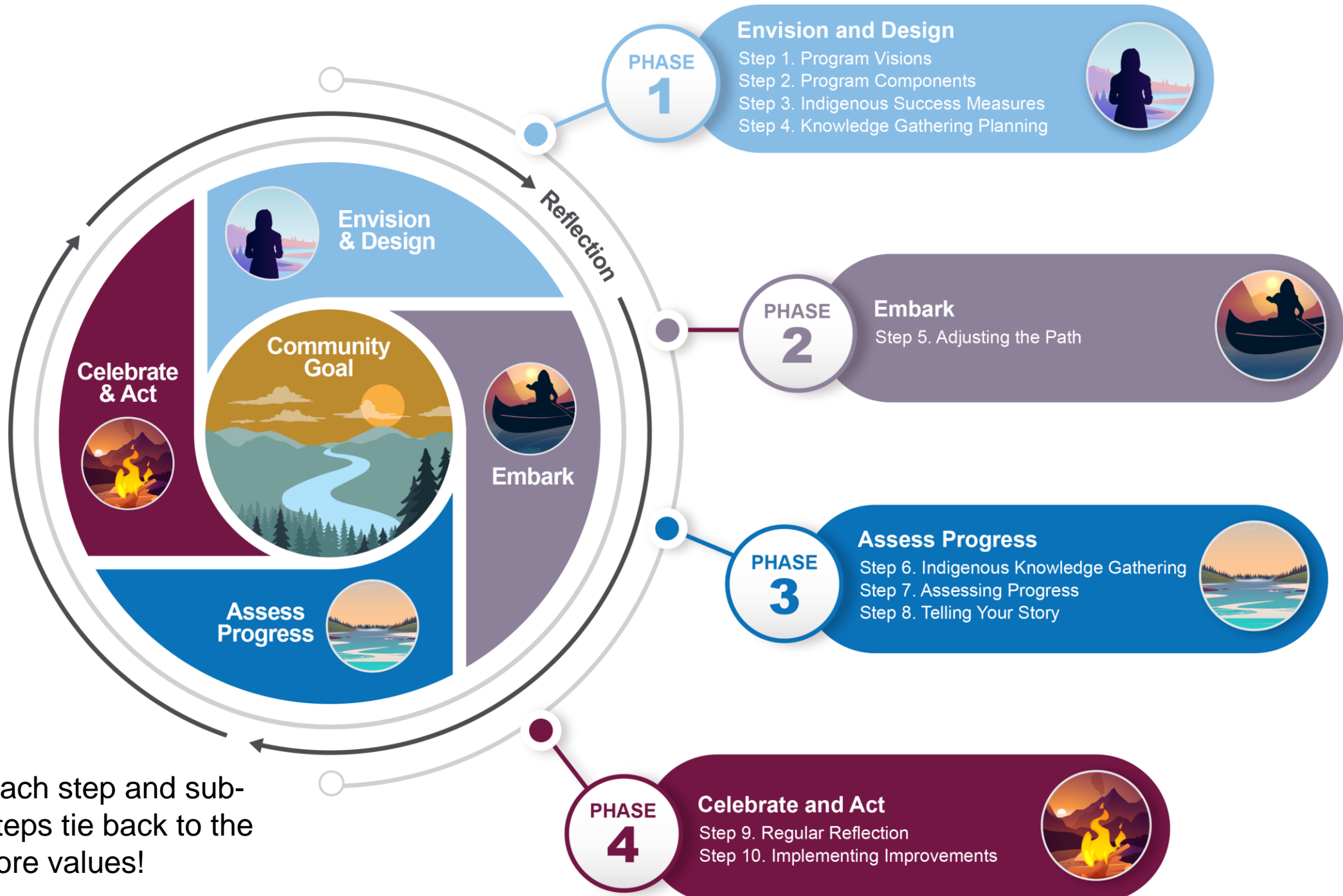
...as a way to illuminate existing Indigenous systems for evaluation

Core Cultural Values



(LaFrance and Nichols, 2008)



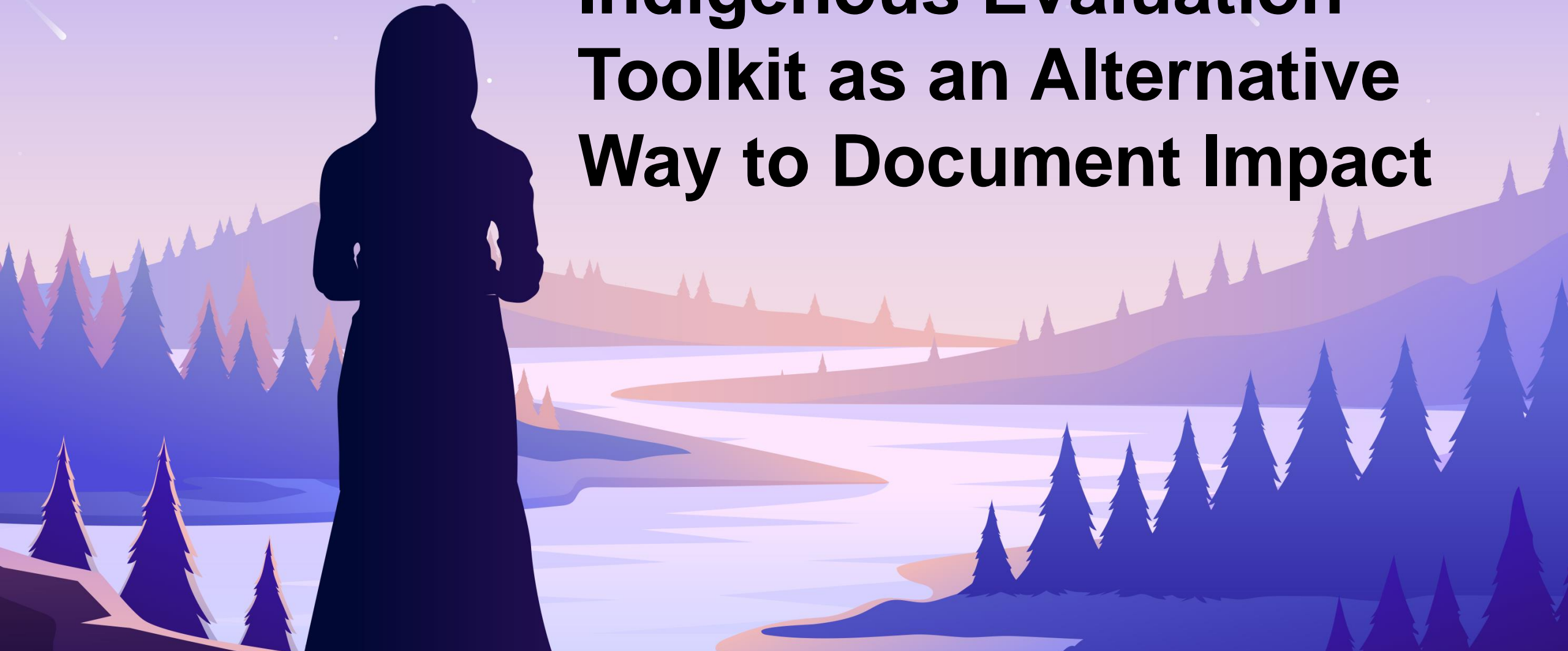


Each step and sub-steps tie back to the core values!

Reflections or Reactions?



Part 2. Using the Indigenous Evaluation Toolkit as an Alternative Way to Document Impact



Foundational Activities in the IE Journey

(corresponding guided activities included in the Toolkit!)

- Which **values** guide this evaluation (BH team, Indigenous community served, funders)?
- How can we **engage community** at every step of program and evaluation design and implementation?
- How we give **ownership** over the evaluation and data to our Indigenous community partners?
- What are our 3-4 **driving Visions** for doing this work?

What makes a strong vision?

- An ideal future state grounded in group's values
- Vivid, community-defined description of program's intended impact, using senses as helpful (like LT outcome/Impact measure)
- May incorporate dreams or ceremony to elicit visions
- Brief, yet motivating and powerful

Vision 1:

Youth perceive language and culture as a way to be healthy

Vision 2:

Participants find themselves and reconnect to their role in the community

Vision 3:

Community paradigm shift: pride vs shame that we can heal our own

Developing Indigenous Success Measures

Western vs. Indigenous Notions of “Success”

Western

- How well an effort impacts participants
- Fidelity to plan
- Objective framing and measures prioritized
- Benchmarks can be funder-defined

Indigenous

- How well an effort supports community wellbeing
- Flexibility to meet responsibilities
- Multiple forms of knowledge incorporated when framing
- Multiple ways to measure success
- Community-defined benchmarks

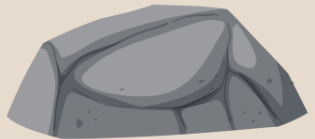
What are Landmarks?



Landmarks are ways to measure your success towards your vision as you progress in your journey.



Evocative, sensorial, aligned with “look, feel, sound, taste” responses from community



Akin to “indicators” in a standard logic model.
Can be short, medium, or long-term



Can use wide range of qualitative and quantitative measures

Landmark Example

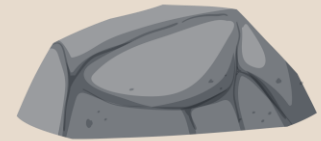
Vision: Participants find themselves and reconnect to their tribal community roles and responsibilities



Landmark 1:
Participants feel
a sense of
belonging



Landmark 2:
Involvement in
community/tribal
ceremony and events



Landmark 3:
Parental involvement
among program
participants

Landmark Example

**Vision: Community perception shift to
pride that we can heal our own**



Landmark 1:
Participants feel
less stigma

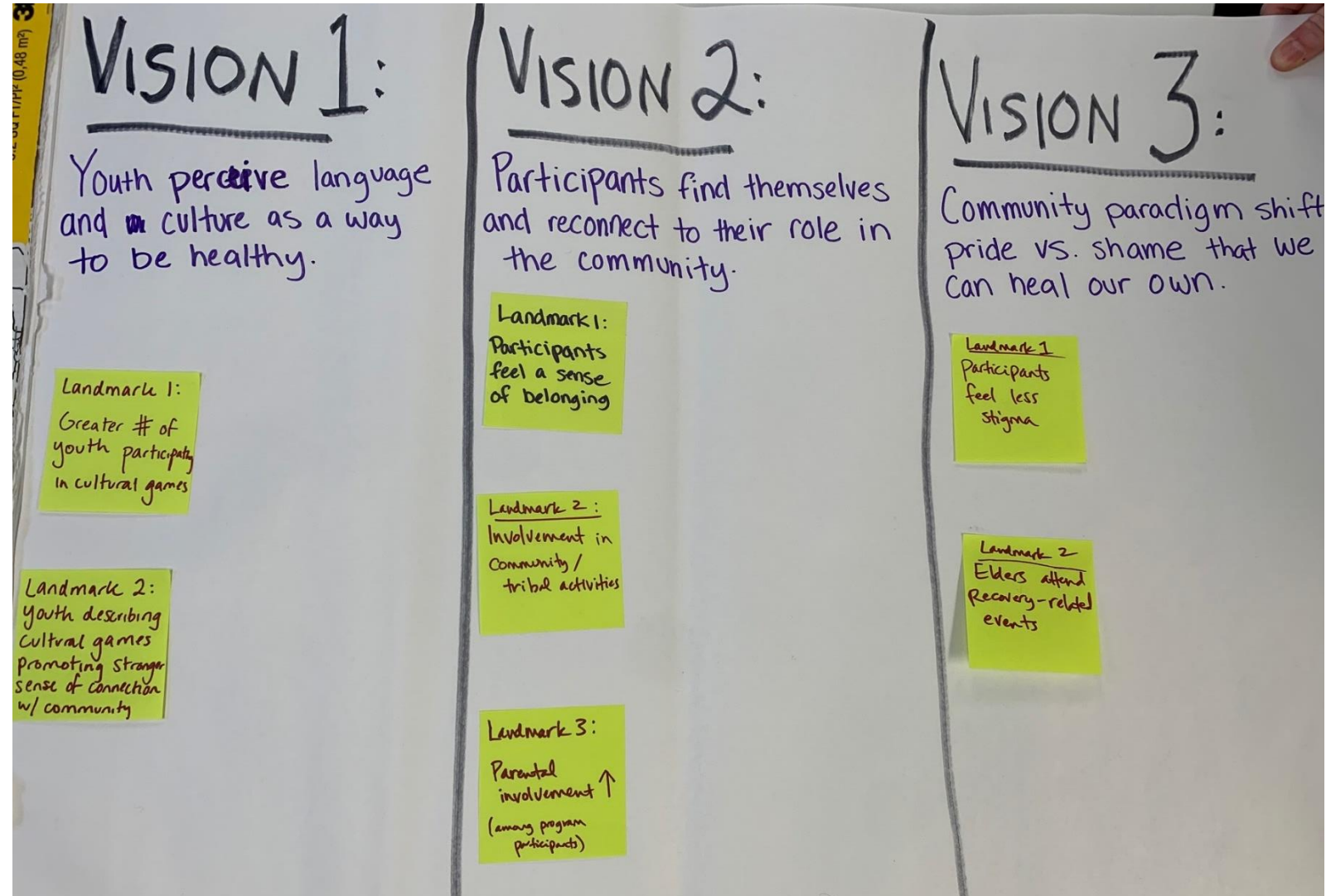


Landmark 2:
Elders attend
recovery-related
events

Group Landmark Activity (at home/in community)

Work with your team to begin listing "landmarks" for your Visions.

- Use post-its or write under each vision



Questions or reactions?



Indigenous & Decolonizing Knowledge-Gathering Methodologies

Indigenous Approaches

- Ways Indigenous Peoples have collected information about the world, people, processes around them, since community inception
- Restoring and remember Indigenous practices and ways of being, formal and informal
- Value-, strength, and land-based

Decolonizing Approaches

- Changing western research methods from extractive to generative
- Involving community in research design and data collection
- Ensures community ownership over process and data

Examples to follow...

Examples of Indigenous Methodologies

- Speak with elders' council and youth groups to either create a group for your department or be invited into their groups to work together
- Facilitate conversations with youth about their feelings of connectedness to adults with substance use disorders in their lives
- Invite relatives to share their journey to recovery how it affected their relationships with family, community, natural world
- Capture descriptions among people who currently or formerly used drugs about their feelings of stigma
- Use cultural and art-based activities to help respondents articulate their feelings
- Gather attendance records at tribal meetings
- Collate Tribal Epidemiology Center data capturing morbidity or mortality rates.

See
page
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Examples of Decolonizing Methodologies

- When conducting a survey, mindfully gather data that is project-essential vs. compiling all accessible data (keep it relevant and useful)
- Meet as a team to reflect, de-brief on relationship building and action taken
- Integrate Indigenous language(s) throughout materials
- Adjust instruments for different populations (e.g., Elders).
- Know the community you serve through research, take time to visit council, coalitions, committees
- Consider cultural appropriateness of incentives or gift giving, act from a non-transactional place

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See
page
82

Mapping on Methodology Example

Vision: Youth perceive language and culture as a way to be healthy



Landmark 1:
Greater number
of youth
participating in
cultural games

Method 1:
Attendance
numbers at
cultural games



Landmark 2:
Youth describe
cultural games
promoting
stronger sense of
connection with
community
members

Method 2:
Conversations
with youth

Methodology Example

Vision: Participants find themselves and reconnect to their role in the community



Landmark 1:
Participants feel
a sense of
belonging

Method 1:
Number of
requests to stay
at treatment
center for more
than 30 days

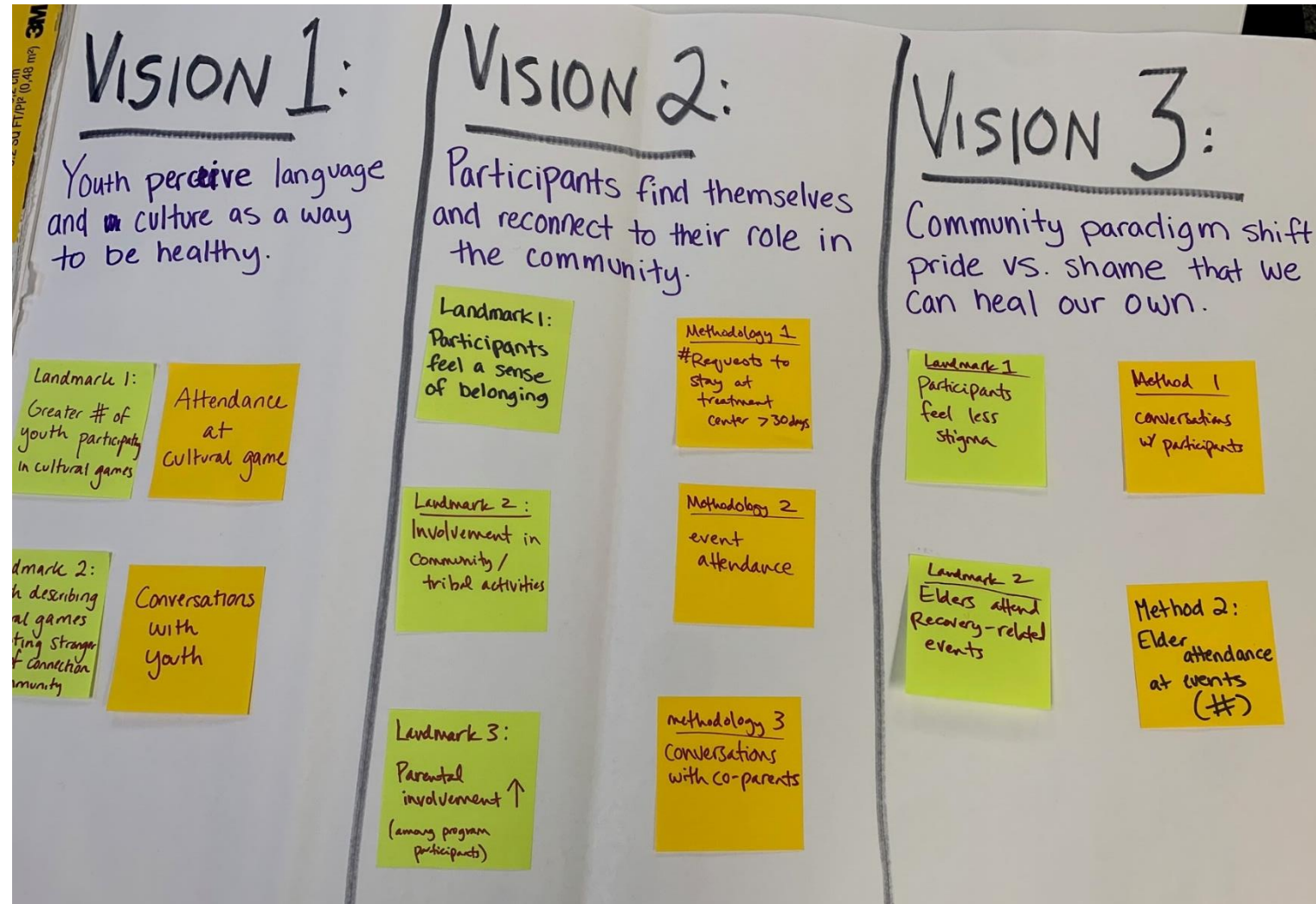


Landmark 2:
Involvement in
community/tribal
activities

Method 2:
Event
attendance

Activity (at home/in community): Add Indigenous or Decolonized Methodologies for each Landmark

- See **Methodologies Menu** handout
- Thinking ahead:
 - Who will be involved (as knowledge gatherers and respondents)?
 - When/how often will you do this?



Bringing it all Together: Documenting Impact

- Summaries of various methodologies used
- Center and anchor findings around community-defined visions of success
- Remember “people of a place” – what worked for THIS community at this time?
- Documentation/reporting format should be community-defined and owned (data sovereignty)

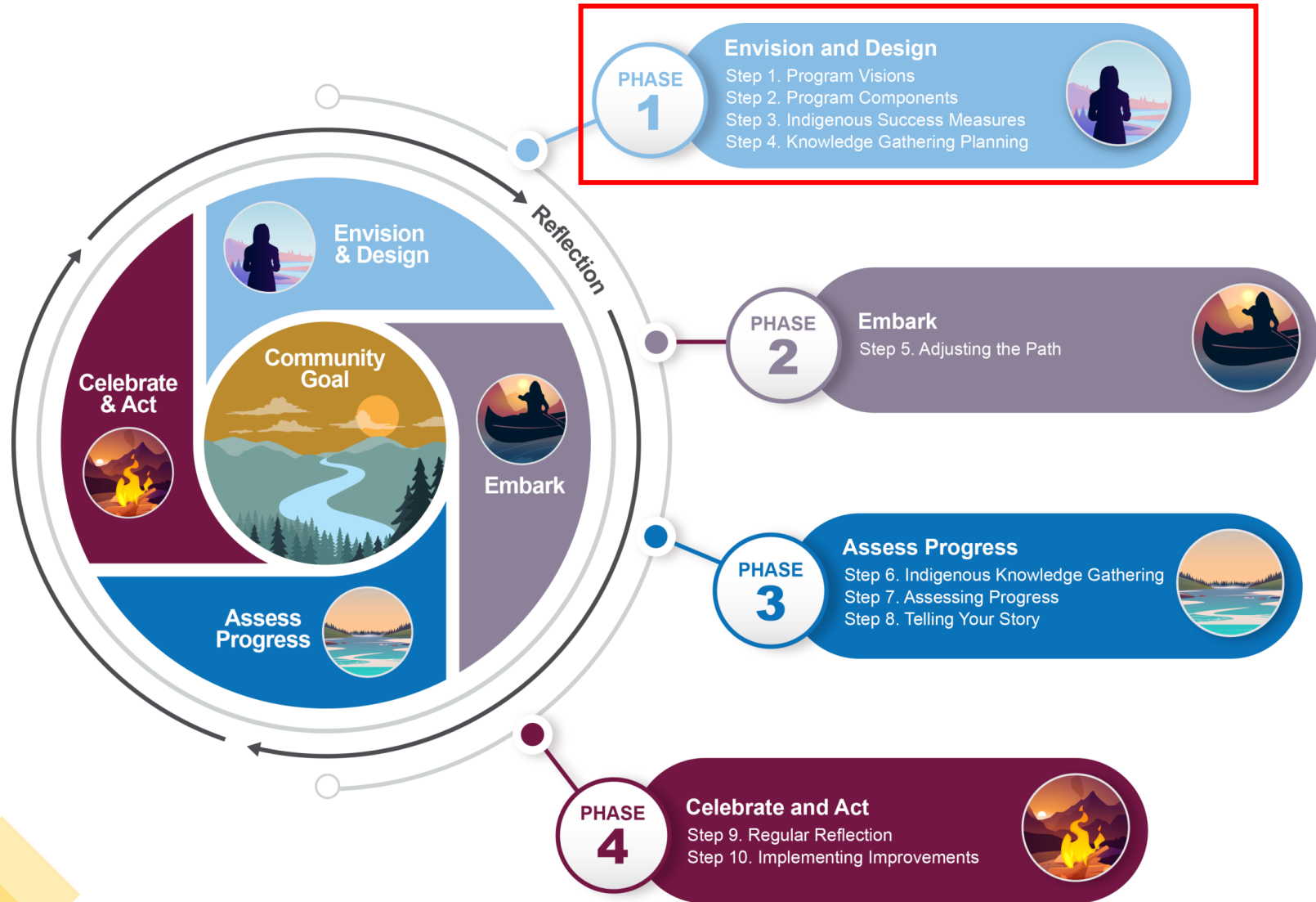
Reflection

How do these approaches to gathering information about a program's impact on its community differ from what you normally do?

Remember:

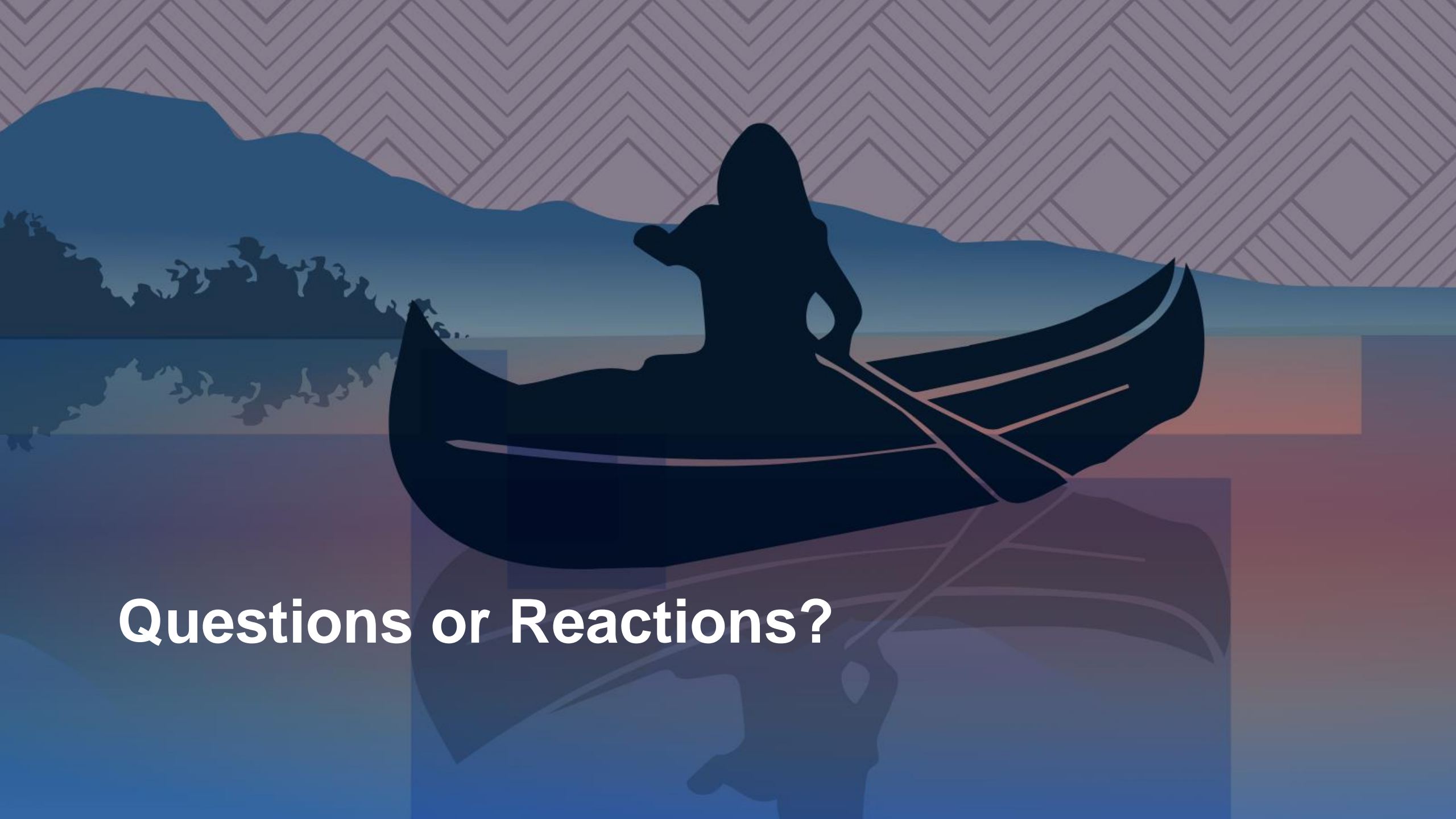
You can use Western evaluation methodologies to understand Indigenous success measures, provided you use a **decolonized approach**

Conclusion



Reflect, Celebrate, and Act





Questions or Reactions?



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Thank You!

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Seven Directions' Socials: [@indigenoussphi](https://www.instagram.com/indigenoussphi)