

## IMPROVING THE PRACTICE OF EVALUATION THROUGH INDIGENOUS VALUES AND METHODS: DECOLONIZING EVALUATION PRACTICE—RETURNING THE GAZE FROM HAWAI‘I AND AOTEAROA

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Shared histories of “discovery” and colonization have made us wary and weary of evaluation practices that disregard indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing, which we absolutely know are valid. Even though we have been marginalized within our lands, we remain sovereign and insist on the right to develop our own evaluation methodology. We have done so by building on the indigenous framework developed by the Evaluation Hui, a consortium of *Kanaka Maoli* (Hawaiian) and Māori evaluators. This article asserts that evaluations of projects in indigenous communities must (a) be viewed and implemented in the context of a specific place, time, community, and history; (b) promote and practice an indigenous worldview; and (c) facilitate collaborations that embrace both cultural and academic perspectives.

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*He 'onipa'a ka 'oiā'i'o.*  
Truth is not changeable.

—Pukui (1983, p. 94)

As is proper in indigenous cultures, we start by telling a bit about ourselves. In *Kanaka Maoli* (Hawaiian) language/culture, one asks, “Who is your name?” (*‘O wai kou inoa*)” and not “What is your name?” In Māori language/culture, one asks “*No hea koe?*” (“Where are you from [in a tribal sense]?”). As a group of five indigenous island-dwelling evaluators, we and our *‘ohana/whānau* (families) are from Ngāti Manawa, Tainui, Tuhoe, and Ngāti Kahungunu in Aotearoa (New Zealand), from Waimea and Mō‘ili‘ili on O‘ahu, and from Nāwiliwili on Kaua‘i. Among us five authors, some are relatively new to evaluation, and some have more than 30 years of experience in the field. Some of us are steeped in our indigenous cultures; some have less experience. What we have in common is membership in Pacific island indigenous cultures as well as in Western culture, including much of our academic training. Furthermore, we are passionate in our feeling that evaluation, as often currently practiced on indigenous populations, must be decolonized.

Concurrently, we honor those who have helped smooth the path we now walk—generations of indigenous professionals who have been mentors to their protégés, standing shoulder to shoulder with us.

*Umia ka hanu! Ho‘okāhi ka umauma ke kīpo‘ohiwi i ke kīpo‘ohiwi.*

Hold the breath! Walk abreast, shoulder to shoulder. Be of one accord, as in exerting every effort to lift a heavy weight to the shoulder and to keep together in carrying it along.

—Pukui (1983, p. 314)

As mainstream-trained academics/evaluators as well as cultural practitioners and community advocates, we describe in this article facets of indigenous life that affect the evolving practices of evaluation. Using a *mo'olelo* (storytelling) approach, we begin to broach issues of values, theory, practice, and the changing profile of expectations developing in Māori and Kanaka Maoli communities.

## RELEVANCE TO EVALUATORS

In this article, we address (a) contextualizing evaluations within culturally appropriate frameworks and (b) meeting the needs of program participants, implementers, and external funding agencies. These two areas of effort are of fundamental importance to the field of evaluation because they ultimately deal with the ethical behavior of evaluators; furthermore, they can help improve evaluations for Kānaka Maoli, Māori, and other indigenous peoples, as well as for mainstream populations. We caution that although we have noticed many similarities between our *mana'o* (thoughts) and values and those of other indigenous peoples such as Native Americans and First Nations Peoples of Canada, we acknowledge that our indigenous expertise is largely limited to Māori and Kanaka Maoli considerations.

## RELEVANCE TO THE PROFESSION

Our article includes suggestions for improving methodological practices within the evaluation profession and explores basic assumptions about the epistemology and values of indigenous communities. Some of the mainstream evaluation profession's propriety standards covering respect strongly imply that methods for conducting evaluations involving indigenous peoples are fundamental issues for the profession (American Evaluation Association, 2004). However, respecting and protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects and respecting human dignity and worth require being familiar enough with evaluation participants to be able to deliver such respect. We discuss evaluation strategies that focus on access to relevant information and our perspectives, linked to values, beliefs, and worldviews.

## RELEVANCE TO SOCIETY

The world of the 21st century is shrinking. Global concerns are common conversation topics, and technological innovations allow for distant individuals and groups to be linked in real time. With these means to gain entry to previously remote and isolated (often by self-choice) communities, evaluators are compelled to face issues of social justice and equity. Awareness of indigenous perspectives, especially values, is critical today, as diversity of culture, language, ethnicity, and national origin continues to be the focus of reclaimed identity and sovereignty for indigenous peoples. We anticipate that our views will resonate with other indigenous peoples who share similar values as well as experiences of colonization and marginalization within their own lands (see Davis et al., 2002). As eloquently stated in *Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous People*, “The effective protection of the heritage of the indigenous peoples of the world benefits all humanity. Cultural diversity is essential to the adaptability and creativity of the human species as a whole” (Daes, 1995, para. 1).

## ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

One definition of indigenous is “having originated...in a particular region” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 1993, p. 591). Some key ideas regarding indigenousness include “We were here first. Newcomer, you do not have the right to impose your values on us, even if you have more destructive weapons than we do.”

We recognize the changing nature of evaluation for indigenous communities as increasing numbers of indigenous persons are trained in research and evaluation. These communities are no longer solely reliant on nonindigenous evaluators, who must “up their game” if they are to be of service to indigenous peoples. This article, while addressing issues of particular relevance to culturally appropriate evaluation conducted by indigenous evaluators, also provides important insights for nonindigenous evaluators about the expectations of, and respect appropriate for (and demanded by), indigenous communities.

As part of a larger group of Māori and Kanaka Maoli evaluators called the *Evaluation Hui* (Evaluation Team), we have recently spent much effort collectively developing, refining, and disseminating evaluation methods appropriate for indigenous peoples. A notable part of our effort to decolonize evaluation was inspired by the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), who wrote eloquently on decolonizing research methodologies for indigenous peoples. Smith argued that to begin to undo the negative effects of colonization, which included substantial amounts of research on indigenous peoples, the (Western) research methodology itself has to be decolonized.

By decolonizing *evaluation* methodologies, we aim to recenter ourselves within our own lands. From here we challenge the viewpoints of those outside of our communities who see us as less than a “norm” that is based within their worldview rather than within ours. We are therefore advocating evaluation practices that are “of, for, by, and with us”—that is, Kanaka Maoli and Kaupapa Māori methodologies (Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; Porima, 2005). Our very survival relies on the acknowledgment, at the very least by our own peoples, that our worldview, culture, and way of being are valid. When this acknowledgment comes within the context of evaluation, we increase the chances that the evaluation methods used will be decolonized.

## LOOKING AT THE WEST

We present some examples of why we are wary of “experts” from prominent Western institutions and academicians. In the first example, we ask a simple question: “Who discovered our lands?” According to the National Maritime Museum in London, the answer for Hawai‘i is “Captain James Cook,” whose efforts are honored in a “medal commemorating the discovery of Hawai‘i by Captain James Cook” (National Maritime Museum, 2005, para. 1). In a widely used dictionary, a definition for *discover* is “to obtain sight or knowledge of for the first time” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 1993, p. 331). For sure, only indigenous people can say, with honesty, that their group was there first and discovered their homeland. Even by Western definitions, *Captain Cook did not discover Hawai‘i*. Similarly, Abel Tasman absolutely was not the first person to see Aotearoa. And yet today one can read on a mainstream New Zealand tourist Web site words

like “First to discover New Zealand in 1642, Abel Tasman annexed the country for Holland...” (*Colonisation*, 2006, para. 3). The fact that Westerners continue to be incorrectly credited, for example, by a prominent Western institution as the discoverers of lands in which our ancestors were already living is just one of many reasons why we are wary and even distrustful of many Western experts.

Furthermore, these “discoveries” opened the way for newcomers to arrive on our shores with the expectation that they could acquire large portions of our lands for themselves and their offspring. Regardless of agreements and treaties between them and us, we were subjected to disease, war, illegal overthrows, Christianity, and the sheer weight of numbers of new arrivals. We became the “other” in our own lands, and the ordinariness and normality of “us” became “uncivilized” and “savage” in the constructions of the newcomers.

We know that these constructions happened. The Western “master historians” declared accordingly in their publications, such as in a volume edited by the “renowned American historian” Hubert H. Bancroft in the early 1900s, that in reference to Hawaiian natives, “morally they ranked below other races.... The sins of their ancestors have been slowly but surely sapping the vitality of the later generations...the barbarian cannot fight against the law which awards the future to the fittest” (Bancroft, 1902, paras. 1–2). In indigenous cultures, elders are honored and turned to for serious advisement. They are not accused of being sinners and are not blamed for causing the demise of current generations.

In a visit to Aotearoa in 1835, Darwin proclaimed Māori as a “fearsome people... a more warlike race of inhabitants could be found in no part of the world...[whose] shifty looks betrayed a fierce cunning, and tattooed face revealed a base nature” (Desmond & Moore, 1991, pp. 174–175). These descriptions of our ancestors surely helped justify the dispossession of our lands and resources during colonization.

Also in the book by “master historians” is the following tribute to the Christian missionaries who first visited Hawai‘i in 1820: “The transformation of semi-savages into a remarkably progressive people was mainly accomplished by the efforts of American missionaries...who taught the growing generation to read and write” (Bancroft, 1902, para. 3). Tributes were also made to the missionaries in Aotearoa for their “civilizing” influence on Māori, with Wakefield (1837, p. 29) noting that “these poor savages have a remarkable capacity for being civilized—a peculiar aptitude for being improved by intercourse with civilization.”

Those of us from Hawai'i find much irony in the condescending attitude of such prominent scholars toward our "semi-savage" ancestors in that the missionaries, supposedly less superstitious and more enlightened than the Kānaka Maoli, told the "heathen natives" that Jesus, the son of (the Western) God, was born of a virgin birth, walked on water, and later rose from the dead. The missionaries declared that it was *pono* (proper) to *pule* (pray) to the Christian God but not *pono* to *pule* to the Hawaiian gods, and they told the Kānaka Maoli that a man named Noa (Noah) was about 900 years old and saved the world by bringing pairs of animals onto a huge ark to survive a flooding rain dumped on earth by an angry God. While doing all this "civilized" proselytizing to the natives, who were viewed as immature, superstitious, naive, and morally destitute in comparison with Westerners, the missionaries and their families acquired much land and wealth in the islands. Those of us from Aotearoa find that this all sounds very familiar.

## ECHOES OF OUR COLONIAL PAST

The negative legacy of our colonial past remains with us today. Some of the inappropriate writings just described are still being used today to make arguments against the will of indigenous peoples. For example, a 2000 U.S. Supreme Court decision against allowing only Hawaiians to vote for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustees was described as follows: "Relying selectively on decades-old historical works written by non-Native Hawaiians..., the [U.S. Supreme] Court invoked... how the white man 'civilized' the Native savage" (Yamamoto & Iijima, 2000, para. 21). In a major journal of the American Educational Research Association, Kana'iaupuni (2004) described several other devastating *hewa* (wrongs) committed against Kānaka Maoli by those in power.

These echoes of our colonized past are also found within evaluations that have been conducted on us. Māori, for the most part, continue to be the subjects of research and evaluation that are undertaken primarily to assess the impact of government policies on the economic and social position of Māori and the extent to which government programs and services "close the gaps" between Māori and non-Māori (Pipi et al., 2003). Many Māori communities have developed an increasing resistance to evaluation for a number of reasons:

1. Māori feel overresearched (Smith, 1999) and evaluated too often. It is not unusual for Māori individuals or communities to be subjected to several evaluation projects in the same year. One Māori provider, closely related to one of the authors, reported that their organization had been subjected to four different evaluations in a 12-month period, as they were part of an interagency funding program.
2. Māori are not part of the evaluation decision-making process. For example, decisions about what, when, and why to evaluate are typically driven and managed by government objectives and invariably managed by government officials who in turn contract evaluators.
3. Māori are typically portrayed within an evaluation deficit model in which Māori are identified as the problem, or the problem is deemed to be within Māori communities (Cram, 1997). For example, education statistics report Māori as two and a half times more likely to leave school without a formal qualification than non-Māori. In contrast, the problem or the issues could be redefined as “the New Zealand education system is two and a half times more likely to fail Māori students than non-Māori students,’ or again as, ‘New Zealand society, through the education system, privileges Pakeha [nonindigenous New Zealanders] by the time they leave school” (Robson & Reid, 2001, p. 21).

All too often we continue to be constructed as the “other,” then compared to a nonindigenous norm and found to be wanting or judged to be failing to reach acceptable standards (Cram, 1997). Too many nonindigenous evaluators have stood with their feet planted firmly in their own worldviews and have themselves failed to gain any true understanding of our ways, our knowledge, and our world.



## PROTECTION OF CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL RIGHTS

In our analysis of widely used mainstream evaluation methods, we have found that the methods themselves include colonialist aspects that result in disrespect of indigenous participants. Although there is acknowledgment in the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* that they “were developed in the context of Western cultures” (American Evaluation Association, 2004, Preface, para. 1), given that most Māori and Kānaka Maoli live and work in places dominated by Western culture, we assert that the principles should also fully apply to evaluations involving these indigenous peoples. We also note that conflicts between indigenous and nonindigenous values can occur when projects are developed as well as when they are evaluated.

We acknowledge that some evaluators and funding bodies have been striving for several years to improve evaluation practices through cultural considerations. For example, in her 1994 American Evaluation Association (AEA) presidential address, Karen Kirkhart (1995) proposed the construct of multicultural validity as essential to improving evaluation, and three years later Jennifer Greene (1997) argued that advocacy in evaluation is not only inevitable but also supportive of democratic pluralism. There are other noteworthy efforts (e.g., Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Health Research Council of New Zealand, 1998; Patton, 2002; SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004); however, our experiences have shown us that evaluation practices are often not aligned with the guidance that has been offered.

We do, however, acknowledge these efforts and the improvements in evaluation practice that they have sometimes brought to our communities, including higher valuing of personal relationships and a higher regard for mo‘olelo and other subjective evaluation methods. It is not our intent to disrespect these efforts by nonindigenous evaluators; rather, we wish to push them further in increasing the relevance of their work for our peoples as well as hold back those evaluation practices (such as in the examples that follow) that continue to include inappropriate but widely practiced methods.

## VIOLATIONS OF INDIGENOUS VALUES AND MAINSTREAM EVALUATION OF STANDARDS

When the *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, together with much of current evaluation practice, are viewed through our Māori/Kanaka Maoli lenses, we see violations that are not likely to be apparent to nonindigenous evaluators. For example, we assert that major violations have occurred in evaluations involving indigenous peoples when any of the following have occurred: (a) There were no discernible benefits to the community involved, (b) elders were not considered primary determiners of quality, (c) spiritual outcomes were not highly regarded, or (d) cultural protocols (e.g., sharing family lineage, exchanging gifts, formal inviting to enter into discussion) were not honored. We contend that such evaluations violate the AEA *Guiding Principles* related to cultural competence and respect for stakeholders.

For an example of an officially approved “evaluation” that we have found disturbing, we turn to a principal at a public elementary school on Hawaiian homestead lands. Following the release of a report as part of a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) review, the principal wrote, “Did you know that...PricewaterhouseCoopers did not visit my school? They subcontracted [the University of California, Los Angeles] to do the job, which in turn hired three graduate students (with no background in education) who—after a two-day visit—produced a 26-page report. It is full of inaccuracies” (Theroux, 2004, para. 11).

That aforementioned evaluation was regarded by the U.S. federal government and the Hawai‘i State Department of Education as an acceptable approach to evaluating a school’s efforts to comply with NCLB. Yet, *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* declares that “evaluators should ensure that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence” (American Evaluation Association, 2004, B. Competence section, para. 2). Another guideline is “Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of...evaluation stakeholders” (American Evaluation Association, 2004, D. Respect for People section). We did not see any evidence of cultural competence, and certainly the self-worth of personnel at the school was not respected. Quoting the principal at that school again: “When the PricewaterhouseCoopers audit was published, some of my staff were nearly in tears. They felt that their careers...were dismissed as meaningless because someone expressed the opinion that they had low expectations of our children” (Theroux, 2004, para. 10). We have also not seen much protesting from the AEA that NCLB-sanctioned methods used to evaluate schools violate the association’s professional *Guiding Principles*. We, however, assert that many evaluations conducted following NCLB regulations are culturally and technically invalid.

Another specific example comes from the earlier use of Kaho'olawe, one of the islands of Hawai'i, for bombing practice by the U.S. military. This island was used from 1920 (officially from 1941) through 1990 as a bombing target for the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy as well as for Pacific Rim allies. Given our Western evaluation training, we can describe what might be a typical approach to evaluating Executive Order #10436, which placed the island "under the U.S. Secretary of the Navy with the assurance that it would be restored to a 'habitable condition' when no longer needed for naval purposes" (Lewis, 2001, para. 4). A common evaluation practice would be to initially conduct a needs assessment covering such things as national security or safety for the bombing personnel. There also likely would be a fiscal analysis that looked at the possible effects on the local economy attributable to increased spending accompanying the military presence. There might even be formative evaluation conducted to improve the situation by making more efficient use of the targeted island or minimizing disturbances to residents within hearing range. An "indigenous evaluation" approach, on the other hand, would simply refer to the fact that in indigenous cultures inanimate things such as *'āina* (land) have *mana* (spirit), and of course it is not pono to bomb things that possess spirit.

At times, our Western governments try to provide services for health or education that reflect indigenous cultural values; however, all too often the evaluation of these initiatives reflects mainly the newcomer's "truth." There are now more calls for evaluation methods that reflect indigenous values. Later we describe a project whose planning and evaluation reflect such values.

The United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 1993) speaks to our rights to our identity, to name ourselves, and to maintain our indigenous citizenship alongside our state/country citizenship. In doing so, the Draft Declaration speaks to the dual realities of many indigenous groups. We effectively inhabit two worlds, one of which is our birthright and the other of which is a product of the colonization of our lands (Reid & Cram, 2004). In effect, we bring both Western mainstream and indigenous methods to our evaluation practice.

We have lived under the gaze of newcomers who have evaluated us within their own belief systems, only to find that we are not only different but also deficient compared to their cultural norms. However, this gaze has come to represent a truth about us, a truth that is not of our own making. It is appropriate that the gaze be returned now and that we do our own gazing.

## THUS ONE LEARNS

*Nānā ka maka; ho'olohe ka pepeiao; pa'a ka waha.*

Observe with the eyes; listen with the ears; shut the mouth.  
Thus one learns.

—Pukui (1983, p. 248)

Note that the “shut the mouth” part of this traditional Kanaka Maoli saying is at odds with much of today’s Western teaching practices, in which students are encouraged to speak up and ask questions early in the learning process. *Titiro ki o taringa; whakarongo ki o whatu* (Look with your ears, listen with your eyes). This saying acknowledges *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) and an innate ability that indigenous people have in understanding the subtleties of how, what, and when we communicate through the spoken language.

## AN INDIGENOUS EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

We now turn to an indigenous framework for evaluation, which we and the Evaluation Hui have developed and see as useful in bringing indigenous and nonindigenous evaluators together to improve evaluation practice. Following the description of the framework is a real-life application that illustrates some methods that are consistent with our model of identifying and describing “value” within the community in its own language and its own way as a means of being able to develop comprehensive community plans and set priorities for future initiatives.

Indigenous evaluation seeks to identify the value added by community-based projects in terms that are relevant to that specific cultural community. Often, indigenous communities do not experience evaluations that are culturally and historically meaningful. Absent are processes for involving the community in discussions to (a) initiate and design projects, (b) determine data collection methods that are respectful and follow cultural norms, and (c) analyze data in

ways that include longstanding strategies that are aligned with the cultural context. Usually the process of determining value has been conducted for foreign purposes and reported to external agencies, often focusing on culturally irrelevant outcomes. We propose a framework for discussing indigenous perspectives of community, culture, and value that directly affect evaluation in indigenous communities. We explore emerging methodologies and challenges as well as assumptions about the nature of data and the honoring of “contextualized realities.”

## AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE ON “VALUE”

Identity is central to the concept of value in Kanaka Maoli and Māori communities (Porima, 2005). Maaka (2004) described the essential connectedness of individuals to their land, their family and ancestors, and their language. Identity is built on perspectives that value proper relationships with spiritual power inherent in every location, ancestral lineage, living family members, and obligations to the collective good of the community (Kawakami, 1999; Kawakami & Aton, 1999; Meyer, 1998, 2003; Osorio, 2004). Value is situated with specific communities and people in a specific time and place and endures in these communities long after the completion of the final evaluation report. Value is viewed in terms of practical and respectful impact on the lives of the people and communities involved (Mead, 2003). To tap into data that penetrate below the surface of rigor as defined by Western epistemology, we must consider new and expansive paradigms that include cultural identity, relationships, sense of place, and impact in terms of immediate and long-term contributions and service to the community.

Much of currently accepted evaluation practice takes what we consider to be a narrow cost–benefit perspective, using data that are readily obtained. Data may be limited to a review of financial activity; attainment/nonattainment of stated objectives, benchmarks, and timelines; student test scores; completion of written deliverable products; and dissemination plans. As the core data of many mainstream evaluations, they limit the scope of evaluation and thus inadequately address the community’s interest in the determination of value. From the standpoint of the community of individuals who conceive of and carry out work in their own communities, much more than those variables count in describing value (Kamehameha Schools, 2003; Smith, 1999).

If evaluators attempt to document more substantial community processes and outcomes, they may still be at a loss to describe, for example, the spiritual elements at play within a program, or how uplifting program participants' cultural esteem is an important building block to achieving the outcomes desired by a funder (see Cram, Pihama, Jenkins, & Karehana, 2001). What often remains missing is information on culturally significant impacts tied to the context of individuals and groups.

From an indigenous perspective, who we are, where we are, and how we work together are of utmost importance in promoting the values of the community (Porima, 2005). Evaluation from the community perspective is about *value added* to the quality of life that the community cares about. In addition to data that are collected through prevalent mainstream evaluation methodology, insights into cultural value can be found through humble and quiet observation and listening (Cram, 2001).

## ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE CONTEXT

Evaluation should be based on indigenous epistemology and operate within the following general guidelines:

1. The evaluation must be viewed and implemented as a holistic and contextualized experience with respect to a specific place, time, community, and history.
2. Evaluation of projects in indigenous communities must promote and practice an indigenous worldview, including, but not limited to, consideration of indigenous identity, epistemology, values, and spirituality.
3. Colleagues who have complementary knowledge and skill sets must collaborate to embrace both the cultural and academic perspective during this time of emerging methodology.

Holistic approaches must be used in addition to the more typical methods of gathering and analyzing discrete data. Contextual variables are essential to understanding the value of projects and even for answering seemingly straightforward evaluation questions such as “Who is involved?” “Where are they?” “What was done?” and “How is it perceived?” The impact of projects in the short term and over time should be considered as well. Multiple points of entry into dialogues and gathering and confirming observations and interpretations are necessary to obtain accurate data, draw conclusions, and interpret those data.

To promote an indigenous worldview, projects in indigenous communities must be initiated by the community, and evaluations of those projects should focus on variables that the community hopes to change in positive ways. Sometimes these projects are well thought out and planned with evaluation in mind. At other times projects and services are initiated by indigenous communities when they see that there is a need for them, and the first thoughts are to fill this need rather than attending to the methods of a “scientific intervention” (Pipi et al., 2003).

Evaluations that promote indigenous epistemology must be innovative and creative, including data that extend beyond conventional constructs. Those variables may include certain impacts as proof of attainment of project objectives as well as clarification and strengthening indigenous identity, values, and spirituality. Contextual variables such as location and relationships are features that are essential to understanding and participating in a cultural community. Contextual information and insider views must be used as data to assess value within the realities of the community (Cram et al., 2001).

Both project design and evaluation phases must be conducted by individuals (including community members) with familiarity and competence in cultural and academic realms; however, because of the systematic historical dismantling of indigenous cultures, there is a “gap” generation of indigenous people who have lost much of their language and culture as they gained skills that allowed them to navigate successfully in Western society (Lai, Cram, Kawakami, Porima, & Aton, 2005). These individuals may have been raised by grandparents and parents who had been punished for practicing their culture and speaking their language (Simon & Smith, 2001). Or, as responsible caretakers of the young, they refused to pass on these practices, believing that a successful future for their children lay in assimilation into the dominant culture. Instead of learning and practicing their culture in the home and community, the “gap group” was groomed for success in

the Western world of school and commerce. Many have indeed achieved success in academia and mainstream life and have recently begun to acknowledge the value of their indigenous culture and language. Lost cultural practices are now being acquired as knowledge and skills through formal instruction instead of through family lifestyle and practice.

Conversely, “lucky ones” have learned their mother tongue and native culture through immersion in culture practices with guidance by elders or expert teachers who had the wisdom, foresight, and opportunity to resist Western domination and colonization. In the acquisition and maintenance of cultural knowledge, these lucky ones have had the advantage of learning the full range of *nā mea Hawai‘i a me ngā mea Māori* (things Hawaiian and things Māori), behaviors and skills and, most importantly, understanding of the spiritual dimension of cultural life.

Projects and evaluations in indigenous communities will benefit from collaborations of individuals who bring together both the indigenous cultural and Western perspectives. The “gap group” has the *kuleana* (obligation) to learn about the cultural practices of their ancestors and in return must use their positions and skills in predominantly Western institutions to create a place and space for the practice of indigenous protocols, to acknowledge indigenous points of view, and to promote and protect the value of the “lucky ones,” who are obligated to guide and teach the gap group so that indigenous ways become standard procedure. Evaluation in indigenous communities needs collaborative teams of indigenous people with both types of knowledge and skills.

To empower indigenous communities to determine what is valuable in projects conducted in their midst, evaluation designs need to be viewed in broad and complex ways that begin with the essential cultural factors. Again we acknowledge that not all Western methodologies are as culturally insensitive as the evaluation practice construct we are arguing against; however, there are a plethora of examples of culturally inappropriate evaluations. The following framework is proposed to facilitate discussion of an expanded perspective on evaluation in indigenous communities.



## EVALUATION COMPONENTS

At the outset of an evaluation, we must be explicit about who are the “we” during the planning phase. Are we the indigenous Kanaka Maoli/Māori advisor, evaluator, or provider? We need to ensure we have common agreements on the purpose and goals of the evaluation. The purpose and goals of a project or initiative should be determined by the community based on its priorities and needs. Many times projects are imposed on communities by external funding agencies intent on providing services that will “fix” community “needs.” True community priorities are essential to promote sustainable benefits over time. The question that evaluations must address is, “Has the community been affected in a positive way as a result of the program/project/initiative?”

Methods that are to be used in evaluations involving Māori/Kānaka Maoli must be inclusive and appropriate for indigenous communities. Multiple measures and sources of data must be used to capture the impact on the life of the community. In an indigenous perspective, data include information that extends into many facets of the lived experience. Spiritual, cultural, historical, social, emotional, cognitive, theoretical, and situated information all contribute to that understanding. In addition to written reports, methods and media for communicating results of the evaluation may include graphic representations, mo‘olelo (narratives), culturally created manifestations (e.g., *oli* [chant] and hula) valid to the community, and documentation of *hō‘ailona* (naturally occurring environmental conditions or omens). Analyzing and interpreting these data require the team approach mentioned previously. Results must then be viewed in multiple contexts in terms of cultural, historical, political, economic, and environmental significance.

In consideration of respect and courtesy, findings should first be communicated to the community. Findings may be shared as mo‘olelo told in community gatherings as well as written as formal reports to funding agencies. These mo‘olelo must acknowledge the cultural relationships that exist in communities and may be portrayed through photos, DVDs, CDs, and videos. Communication of the data in visual and performance formats may be more effective in depicting the richness of impact than written reports (Lai, Yap, & Dunn, 2004).

The results and conclusions of evaluations should be useful for both the community and the funding agency. The community should see the impact of projects and use that information to revise the community agenda and priorities. Funders should use the information to revisit and inform the development of their own benevolent priorities and goals.

The impact of culturally grounded projects and evaluations should lead to better understanding of strategies and methods. These lessons describe communities' dynamic and unique responses to initiatives. Appropriately conducted projects and evaluations should bring clarity and empowerment to indigenous communities and assist in advancing their agendas toward an improved quality of life.

Table 1 provides a summary and comparison of the evaluation methods that are being proposed and discussed.

**TABLE 1** A conceptual framework for indigenous evaluation practice

Functions	Methodology	
	Primarily indigenous (includes some mainstream and adds dimensions)	Primarily widely practiced mainstream
Purpose and goals	Set by community agenda.	Externally generated.
Driving question	Has the community been affected in a positive way as a result of the program/project/initiative?	Have proposal goals/objectives been met?
Methodology	Quantitative, qualitative, and more.	Primarily quantitative.
Data	Spiritual, cultural, historical, social, emotional, cognitive, theoretical, situated information.	Objective decontextualized data.
	Graphics, narratives, culturally created manifestations ( <i>oli</i> [chant], hula) “valid” to that place.	Objective validity and reliability.  Statistical and practical significance and effect size.
Analysis	Cultural and environmental significance.	Statistical and practical significance and effect size.
Format for findings	Narratives, <i>mo’olelo</i> (stories), relationships, photos, DVDs, CDs, videos.	Written reports, charts, tables, graphs, databases.
Conclusions and recommendations	Shared among project, community, evaluator, and funder.	Fulfillment of contract.
	Revised community agenda.	Submitted to funder.
Impact	Value added, lessons learned, clarity, empowerment.	Revised funding priorities.

## BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Ideally, the model for culturally grounded community projects and evaluations would be implemented easily. However, as an emerging process, many barriers and challenges need to be considered. The following list presents a number of issues:

- How to promote the expansion of paradigms?
- How to develop both cultural capacity and “academic” capacity of individuals involved on community evaluations?
- How to develop alternative models for analysis and data collection?
- How to avoid paralysis due to the fear of being disrespectful in relation to cultural dimensions and protocols?
- In the absence of traditional governance and authority structures, who speaks for the community?

Indigenous peoples working on new paradigms for projects and evaluation are covering ground that has only recently begun to be chartered in a widely accessible way to indigenous scholars (e.g., Cajete, 2000; Kahakalau, 2004; Smith, 1999). Discussion about variables and perspectives that allow for validation of *nā mea Hawai‘i a me ngā mea Māori* is essential to understanding the value that programs add to the communities. Each project or evaluation that includes these perspectives will advance the understanding of the paradigm that includes indigenous ways of knowing and being. Capacity to conduct these evaluations will increase over time as old methods are adopted and adapted, new methods are developed, and more individuals learn to include new perspectives and tools in their professional repertoire. While cultural aspects are often wrapped in mystique, if cultural practitioners and academics collaborate, progress can be made. Respectful attitudes will help to guide proper behaviors, and guidance from cultural practitioners will mitigate the fear of approaching the cultural realm.

In traditional times, indigenous cultures functioned with governance structures intact. As a result of colonization, traditional leaders no longer can be easily identified, and cultural structures within communities are fragmented and diffused. To begin the dialogue with communities, evaluators and funding agencies need to approach many people in the community and listen carefully to determine who and where to gain access.

Indigenous and nonindigenous evaluators must work together to understand and develop a more enlightened appropriate approach and a more precise methodology for conducting evaluations in indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are finding their voices in the current context of evaluation and empowerment. Many indigenous professionals have been staunch supporters and advocates for their communities and will continue to raise the issues, create the time and space for dialogue, and speak for their communities.

## AN EXAMPLE SHOWING SOME ASPECTS OF CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EVALUATION PRACTICE

*He pūko'a kani 'āina.*

A coral reef that grows into an island. A person beginning in a small way gains steadily until he becomes firmly established.

—Pukui (1983, p. 100)

The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture's (INPEACE) *Ho'owaiwai Nā Kamali'i* (HNK) initiative provides an example of a community-initiated and culturally based project. INPEACE's mission is to improve the quality of Native Hawaiians' lives through community partnerships that provide educational opportunities and promote self-sufficiency.

Ho‘owaiwai Nā Kamali‘i can be translated as “valuing the babies” and focuses on Kanaka Maoli children prenatal to age 5 on the neighbor islands of Hawai‘i. The primary goal of the project is to design and develop a system of data collection and use it to set community priorities that ensure that Native Hawaiian children will be ready to succeed in school. HNK’s approach was designed to ensure that the indigenous community did not experience an evaluation that was weak on cultural and historical meaningfulness.

INPEACE staff members serve as Community Based Early Childhood Advocates (CBECAs), who are a part of the target communities. CBECAs work with community stakeholders, such as parents, grandparents, cultural resources, service providers, educators, cultural experts, community leaders, and policymakers, to develop and implement a community-based plan to address critical early childhood education and care issues. Data collection from cultural experts, consumers, and service providers uses several unique, culturally aligned features.

This project strives to empower communities to determine the future of their *keiki* (children) through the use of data that describe their vision for the 5-year-old keiki, their desired support system, the cultural resources available, and the gap between desired and available support. With this information, advisory councils develop an early childhood plan that is community-owned, community-driven, adaptable, culturally based, and sustainable.

At the core of this project lies the vision Hawaiian communities hold for their children at age 5 as being safe, healthy, ready to succeed, and culturally prepared. This vision reflects the overall State of Hawai‘i vision but has added cultural competence. Focus groups held in Kanaka Maoli communities consistently brought up cultural competence as key to defining what readiness for kindergarten is from an indigenous viewpoint.

### *Data Collection*

The data collection procedures took into account the impact on communities, which were leery of providing information because of past efforts that failed to produce positive changes. A clear articulation of purposes was necessary for families to buy into the project. The data collection tools focused on cultural factors that contribute to readiness for kindergarten, informed the well-being of Kānaka Maoli, stayed connected to Native Hawaiian values, were usable by Native Hawaiian communities, and added to the statewide early childhood data picture.

An example of the type of data collection tool just described is the INPEACE Consumer Survey (University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, 2002), which taps into the lives of community members to assess grassroots perceptions of early childhood support in their local area. Kanaka Maoli communities were able to identify needs and gaps in services as well as comment on the quality of the services and suggest ways to improve. This survey includes questions concerning the availability, accessibility, cost, and quality of services for four key contributors to early childhood well-being: family support, parenting support, health support, and early child-care support.

During the data collection process, one CBECA was assigned to each of the five survey sites. All surveys were completed by parents and caretakers of Native Hawaiian children from prenatal up to 5 years of age. Each advocate gathered surveys from consumers at agencies or programs providing services in each domain, as well as from community events and gathering places such as parks, beaches, laundromats, cultural events, athletic games, grocery stores, and churches. Incentive gifts such as crayons, jump ropes, coloring books, and puzzles were provided to respondents. Because CBECA's are from the communities, they are involved in the daily routines of families in the community and are often present at community events.

CBECA's focused on honoring community and cultural values. The CBECA job position description included a requirement of sensitivity to Hawaiian culture and knowledge about the educational issues that challenge the vulnerable prenatal to age-5 child. Communities were wary of sharing information, but the specialized community knowledge of the CBECA's helped dispel some of the wariness.

### *Results*

Analyses of the 2004 INPEACE Consumer Survey (University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family, 2005) showed that respondents rated health-support services in their communities the most favorable, followed closely by early-care and education-support services. These results have two main implications. First, more services in each area of support are needed. Specifically, it appears that not only is there a need for more services, but there is also a need for a wider variety of services. This was by far the most frequent suggestion provided by respondents. Second, the results suggested that more publicity and advertising to promote awareness about the availability of these services are needed.

With these community-based data, HNK is currently working closely in communities to target identified issues and gaps in services. From the statewide perspective, a pattern of priorities is emerging from the community advisory councils on the numerous early childhood issues. These priorities reflect the results regarding the need for a variety of services and more publicity, as shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2** Community priorities and data results

Advisory council priority	Data result
Smoothing transitions into kindergarten	Increasing variety of education and care services
Family-focused projects	Increasing variety of family-support services
Supporting children of incarcerated parents	Increasing variety of education and care, family support, parenting-support services
Cultural maps	Increasing the variety of family-support services
Raising early childhood awareness	More publicity
'Ohana (family) resources kits	Increasing access to available services

From the project's perspective, a notable result is the statewide creation of community-based advisory councils, which will continue to advocate at executive/legislative/local policymaking levels, at education institutions (Department of Education, university, private/public schools), and at the family level for referrals to appropriate social services. Also noteworthy are community-based capacity-building efforts through the HNK first-ever Native Hawaiian Early Childhood Summit and the synthesis of all the community-based plans. Finally, the HNK project developed an extensive network of supporting partnerships and relationships that will continue to help to close service gaps in communities. Ultimately, HNK communities have been able to determine their needs in ways that are important to them and respect their cultural protocols. HNK provided a viable venue to do this.



Although this example may be more of a needs assessment than a full external evaluation, it provides us with instances of how the indigenous perspective may be honored within a community-based self-evaluation that respects who we are and what we value and leads to the identification of fully functioning (valuable) support systems currently working in the community. As a needs assessment, it provides the community with data to develop community plans and to identify its priorities to increase the value of culturally and community-based support for the future.

This traditional Hawaiian saying speaks well to the overall HNK project:

*E kaupē aku no i ka hoe a kō mai.*

Put forward the paddle and draw it back. Go on with the task that is started and finish it.

—Pukui (1983, p. 39)

This culturally and community-based project was a valuable effort that was in sync with national initiatives focused on making sure our most vulnerable populations of young children are prepared to succeed in school. Of value in this project is the way this synchronicity stemmed from the family, up to the community, to the island, to the state, and to the nation.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We began this article by introducing ourselves and talking about our shared histories of “discovery,” colonization, and misrepresentation. These histories have made the indigenous peoples of our lands both wary and weary of evaluation practices that disregard our worldviews and our place as *kama‘āina* and *tangata whenua* (peoples of the land). Such practices are an offense to our mana. They also further marginalize us when our own aim is to improve our life circumstances within the societies we now know. New evaluation practices are therefore sought that honor the dreams and aspirations of indigenous peoples in Hawai‘i and Aotearoa.

The time for this is long overdue. As our understandings of our own cultures and our training in mainstream approaches to evaluation come together, the opportunities for synergies are many and exciting. At their core, these synergies are about valuing and respecting the voices of indigenous peoples and ensuring that interventions and evaluations speak to those who are most involved—our communities. Tied to this is the recognition that our worldviews, our ways of knowing, and our knowledge are fundamentally valid and legitimate.

Even though the processes of colonization have marginalized us within our own lands, we remain sovereign people who insist on the right to find our own solutions and our own ways of evidencing social transformations. Evaluations that support us in this effort must exhibit both academic and cultural validity. We look forward to the day when this approach becomes the norm of our evaluation experience.

*He 'a'ali'i ku makani mai au; 'a'ohē makani nana e kula'i.*

I am a wind-resisting 'a'ali'i; no gale can push me over.... I can hold my own in the face of difficulties. The 'a'ali'i bush can stand the worst of gales, twisting and bending but seldom breaking off or falling over.

—Pukui (1983, p. 60)

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