



SUPPORTING PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: CULTURAL CONTEXTS, EVIDENCE GAPS, AND THE WAY FORWARD

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What this talk will focus on

⦿ **Cultural Contexts**

- What are American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) priorities for young children and their families?

⦿ **Evidence Gaps**

- Do we know what works for AIAN children and families?

⦿ **A Way Forward**

- How can we best begin to address gaps?

Cultural Contexts

Children are at risk

Research on AIAN populations show great variability across tribal cultures and contexts, but consistent themes are:

- ◎ **Health disparities are pervasive**
 - Obesity, oral health, substance abuse, suicide, and more
- ◎ **Developmental disparities are significant**
 - AIAN children drop below national norms between 6 and 15 months
 - Academic performance falls behind in elementary school and graduation rates are low
- ◎ **Exposure to trauma is common and devastating**
 - Exposure rates are high in AIAN populations (>60%); and first exposure almost always (>90%) occurs in childhood
 - Historical trauma continues to impact families and communities
 - The effects can be devastating
 - Substance use problems
 - Suicide
 - Depression, anxiety, other mental health issues
 - Sexual risk

Parents are at risk

- ◎ A history of disrupted parenting has lingering effects on AIAN families
 - Boarding schools (late 1800s through 1960s)
 - Child welfare policies (ICWA 1978)
 - Urban Indian Relocation Program (1950s)
- ◎ AIAN parents face high levels of stress
 - Poverty
 - Discrimination
 - Trauma exposure
 - Substance abuse

Communities:

“We have the answers here”

- ⦿ Language and identity
- ⦿ Cultural teachings – transmission of values
- ⦿ Kinship structures and roles
- ⦿ Cultural values for child development

Evidence Gaps

Services are being provided . . .

◎ Federal programs

- Head Start/Early Head Start
- MIECHV
- Child Care
- Project LAUNCH (SAMSHA)

◎ Tribal/community efforts

- Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) review of >130 parenting/family interventions found many are being used in AIAN communities
 - e.g., Positive Indian Parenting, Triple P, Parents as Teachers

. . . but the evidence base is thin

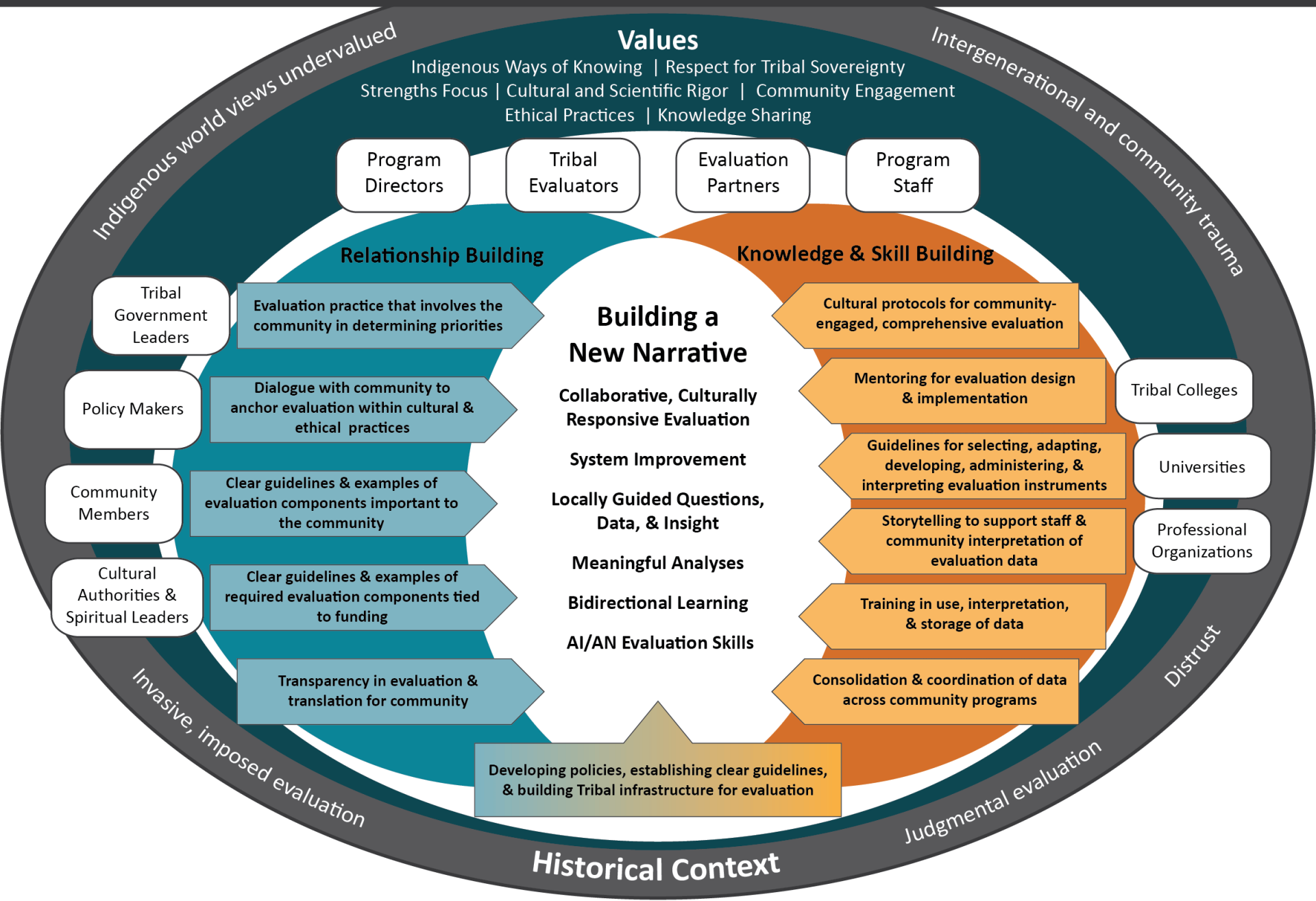
- ⦿ AIAN (Region XI programs) excluded from studies of HS/EHS to date
- ⦿ HomVEE Review – ONE home visiting intervention – Family Spirit (Barlow et al, 2015) has met criteria for evidence with AIAN populations
- ⦿ BTC Review – NO parenting/family engagement interventions reviewed had research evidence of **effectiveness** (criteria = 1 peer-reviewed publication) for AIAN parents/families
- ⦿ Evidence about the role of culture is particularly scant – mechanisms of cultural impact not well articulated, measures of cultural constructs underdeveloped

Why the gap?

- **Small, diverse population**
 - Determining effectiveness in small samples requires creative, imperfect design
- **Measurement challenges**
 - Little data on reliability and validity of measures for AIAN children
 - Relevant measures don't exist (e.g., cultural socialization, cultural parenting)
- **AIAN resistance to research**
 - Rooted in a history of research abuses
 - Mismatch between indigenous and western ways of knowing/standards of evidence
- **Implementation challenges**
 - Insufficient AIAN research workforce
 - Scarce community resources
 - Rural settings and dispersed urban communities (distance to services)
 - Resistance to RCT – randomization and “denial of services”
 - Tribal sovereignty – oversight of research, ownership of data
 - Expense

A Way Forward

CO-CREATING COLLABORATIVE & EFFECTIVE EVALUATION TO IMPROVE TRIBAL CHILD WELFARE PROGRAMS



A vision

- Scientific & cultural rigor
- Creating the new narrative will take time
- Addressing each piece will bring us closer to better – more trustworthy – evidence

Download the publication: [*A Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities*](#).

View the companion videos:

- [*Creating a New Narrative: Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities*](#)
[Tribal Video 1]
- [*Collaborative & Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities: The Roles and Voices of Key Stakeholders*](#) [Tribal Video 2]

Watch the conference session: [*“Creating a Strategic Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities: Panel Presentation at 2013 Tribal Early Childhood Research Center Summer Institute”*](#)

Examples

- AIAN FACES Design
 - Community partnership in study design on a national level (strategically including Region XI programs)
- MIECHV evaluation partnerships
 - TA for research/evaluation capacity building in the context of program implementation by tribal grantees
- SWYC Feasibility Study
 - Engaging diverse AIAN communities in measure validation

Parting words for moving forward

Intentional scientific-community partnerships focused on understanding how to best support parenting among AIANs will be critical to understanding how to redress the gaps.

It will not be easy, cheap, or quick.

It **WILL** have the potential to address some of the most significant health and developmental disparities in the country.

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Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

www.tribalearlychildhood.org



Native Children's Research Exchange

www.ncreconnect.org

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