



***kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* (making oneself aware of good child growing and raising) – Applying an Indigenous worldview to prevention and early intervention strategies.**

Leona Makokis, Ed.D.

Resident Elder/ Senate, University nuhelot'ine thaiyots'ï nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills

Ralph Bodor, Ph.D.

Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary

Kaila Kornberger, CYC, MSW

IRM Research and Evaluation Inc.

Kristina Kopp

Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary,

Amanda McLellan, MSW, RSW

IRM Research and Evaluation Inc.

Stephanie Tyler

Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary,

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Abstract

Given their complicity with the settler-colonial agenda, governments and service-providing agencies must do more than acknowledge the harm inflicted upon Indigenous families and communities. These organizations must intentionally engage in meaningful change by learning how to provide services that prevent further harm and authentically support Indigenous wellness perspectives and healing practices. It is in this spirit and in support of these aims that the resource, *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* (Making oneself aware of good child growing/raising), was created. Recognizing the inadequacy of Western concepts, beliefs, and values to effectively evaluate the impact of Indigenous-designed services, this resource is based on *nehiyaw* (Cree) perspectives and teachings and encompasses ceremony, language, values, and beliefs that support the resiliency and healthy development of Indigenous children and families. This article describes the context of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*'s creation, provides a summary of the framework, and highlights its current and potential impacts for program policy and evaluation, as well as for program funders.

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***kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* (making oneself aware of good child growing and raising) – Applying an Indigenous worldview to prevention and early intervention strategies.**

In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s *Calls to Action* (2015), agencies serving Indigenous children and families are obligated to develop and provide culturally appropriate services to their clients. Despite good intentions, many agencies and the funding providers are unlikely to recognize the overlay of Western ways of knowing and being on most contemporary approaches to service provision and this lack of understanding is likely to perpetuate colonial harm. Given the damage already caused to Indigenous families and communities through colonization, governments and service-providing agencies must do more than acknowledge the harm of past actions. These organizations must intentionally change and learn to provide services that prevent further harm, support healing and create opportunities for the wellness of Indigenous families.

This shift towards true reconciliation is possible if there is recognition of the support required to move forward in this direction and the creation of the resource *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* (Making oneself aware of good child growing/raising) (Makokis et al., 2020a) was created in this spirit of this process. It was an honor for our research team to support the Government of Alberta’s (GOA) Ministry of Children’s Services as they transition towards serving Indigenous peoples with more appropriate programs founded from within the *iyiniw* (First Peoples, People of the Land) universe.

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin is a resource that honors an Indigenous worldview and is intended to support the development of culturally relevant prevention and early intervention programming across the province of Alberta. *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* is based on Indigenous resiliency within mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing and encompasses Indigenous ceremony, teachings, and concepts that sustain healthy child, family, and community development. The resource is an illustration of how prevention and early intervention strategies can be inclusive of Indigenous worldviews and paralleled to Western concepts of resiliency and wellbeing.

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kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin was created as a counterpart to the Government of Alberta's (GOA, 2019) *Well-Being and Resiliency: A Framework for Supporting Safe and Healthy Children* document, otherwise known as the Well-being and Resiliency Framework, which acts as the foundation for all prevention and early intervention services. The WRF is informed by Western worldviews, beliefs, and values and does not reflect Indigenous ways of knowing-being-doing, despite framing the services utilized by many Indigenous children and families. This disconnect perpetuates the cycle of having programming uninformed by the community it is meant to serve, leading to unclear outcomes and negative evaluations.

This article describes the context of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* creation, provides a summary of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* and highlights the current and potential impacts on prevention and early intervention program design, implementation, and evaluation. We will begin by grounding ourselves in the Indigenous worldviews, languages and methodologies used to do this work and to explain the foundations, perspectives and relationships that formed the basis of our work.

Indigenous Worldviews, Languages and Community Contributions

Throughout this article and in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, we use Indigenous language-specific terms and concepts. Our wisdom-seeking team, based on the teachings of the land on which they are located, have also honored several *nêhiyaw* (Cree) terms and concepts. We respect that other Indigenous communities have similar language-based concepts and teachings that differ from what we have chosen to use here. It is to be understood when talking about Indigenous wisdom that theories, methods, values, and beliefs are specific to the tribe, community, or Nation of the researcher (Kovach, 2009). In addition, our team has chosen to use the terms “Indigenous” or “First Nations” or, preferably, “*iyiniw*” in place of the term “Aboriginal”.

Also included in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, are the knowledge and teachings that have been shared with us from a *niitsitapi* (Blackfoot) and *Métis* worldview. We recognize that this is not our knowledge; it is wisdom and understanding that has been shared with us to help to broaden the understanding of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*. We are grateful to Elder Reg Crowshoe and Knowledge Keepers Sharon Goulet, Shane Gauthier, and Michelle Scott for their assistance. *kinanâskomitin* (we thank you).

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Creating *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* involved incorporating knowledge from the literature into what our team experientially knew — especially through the guidance of *nôtokêsiw* Elder Leona Makokis — of the *iyiniw* (Indigenous) universe. The team needed to balance two additional goals. First, we wanted to avoid making assumptions that would reflect a pan-Indigenous understanding which disregards the diversity and unique histories among *iyiniw* peoples. The expression of *iyiniw* identity within *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* had to honor the diversity of *iyiniw* communities. At the same time, *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* needed to derive from *iyiniw* teachings. Aligning with the pedagogical practice of several Indigenous scholars (Baskin, 2011; Chilisa, 2012; Hart, 2009a), we decided to base *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* on foundational teachings that are relatively common across *iyiniw* worldviews. Hart (2009b) described this commonality as Indigenism which is “grounded in place and time. It is locally based but supports global connections between Indigenous peoples” (p. 35).

The foundational teachings on which *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* is based include the Seven Teachings (love, honesty, courage, respect, wisdom, humility, and truth), the Natural Laws (love, sharing, honesty, and determination) and the Circle Teachings (the four interconnected dimensions of human wellness — spiritual, mental, emotional, physical). Supporting the aims of Indigenism, *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* provides an opportunity for policymakers and service providers to access localized teachings and knowledge; thereby, becoming transferable across and between various *iyiniw* communities. *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* is founded on the principle that if programs embrace these teachings and core values, *iyiniw* diversity can be respected and upheld.

Indigenous Wisdom-Seeking Practices

This project is grounded in Indigenous Wisdom-Seeking Practices (IWSP), sometimes referred to as Indigenous Research Methodologies. IWSP are becoming increasingly prominent, and work has been done to strengthen and revitalize the cultural processes which Indigenous people use to seek and attain wisdom (Kovach, 2009; Makokis et al., 2020b; Strega & Brown, 2015; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). We feel that the term IWSP better describes the processes our team follows to uncover wisdom or truth from within an Indigenous worldview. The methodologies of Ceremony, Circle Process, Language and Relational Accountability form the

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heart of our wisdom-seeking approach. Like a sweet grass braid, they are intertwined yet separate and each form an integral part of the research process. It is within this epistemology that *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* was created.

Section One: The Creation Story of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*

Social services have historically had limited input from the Indigenous communities they have been developed for (Dumbrill & Lo, 2015) and Indigenous families have historically received services that contradict and deny their value systems and ways of life (de Leeuw, 2014; Linklater, 2014). Policies are often articulated and programs subsequently developed by people who are distant from the lives of Indigenous people and are unlikely to have a comprehensive understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by Indigenous communities (Burke, 2018; Montgomery et al., 2016; Thomas & Green, 2015). Services for Indigenous peoples have typically been designed from a non-Indigenous perspective using processes more suited to Western contexts and service delivery methods (Baskin, 2009; Linklater, 2014).

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin was created to address this replication of colonization within program design, implementation, and evaluation. The resource describes the inadequacy of Western concepts, beliefs, and values to effectively evaluate the impact of Indigenous-designed services. These subjects are explored in depth in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* to help build understanding of colonial history and explain why an Indigenous framework is needed. The following discussions illustrate the complexity of providing services to Indigenous families and name only some of the many considerations there are to be made when providing services to Indigenous communities.

Early Intervention and Prevention

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) strategies are applied with the intention of providing the most effective supports in the early years of childhood. The Alberta Prevention and Early Intervention Framework (2012), an earlier version of the Well-being and Resiliency Framework (GOA, 2019), stated that “primary prevention refers to programs and services that provide families with the support that they need to build protective factors and prevent the development of risk factors” (p. 7). This document goes on to define PEI as “involvement with

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families when vulnerabilities are first identified in order to strengthen protective factors and reduce the impact of risk factors” (GOA, 2019, p. 7).

A common conversation in the world of PEI services is the attempt to differentiate between the service needs of children at risk and all children. In the context of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, it was important to share research exploring Indigenous children in community. A report on child poverty in Canada (MacDonald & Wilson, 2016) stated that, in 2010, while child poverty in non-Indigenous communities was approximately 18%, the level of child poverty on reserve was approximately 60% (p. 11). When viewed through the lens of “neglect”, this figure suggested that these 60% of children on reserve are at risk. When linked with Trocme et al.’s (2004) study, which found that Indigenous children are predominately taken into care for ‘neglect’ and the purposeful lack of reserve-based economic opportunities or resources, almost all Indigenous children on reserves could be considered ‘at risk’.

Culturally Relevant Services

Recognition of “culture-as-treatment” (Brady, 1995) or “culture-as-intervention” (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2017), while always understood in traditional communities (Chandler & Dunlop, 2015; Linklater, 2014; Richmond, 2015), has become increasingly accepted within mainstream domains, such as the social services and academia (Gone et al., 2019). The central challenge is to make the translation meaningful such that the services are genuinely based in *iyiniw* traditions, history, teachings, values, and ceremony. The process is further complicated by the need to provide services that are helpful to all Indigenous peoples — traditional, non-traditional, or somewhere in between. Finally, evaluation of culturally relevant services and goal achievement must also occur from within an Indigenous worldview.

Practice-based Evidence as an alternative to Western Evidence-based Practice

Current Western approaches to social service provision are strongly grounded in scientific method and are often referred to as evidence-based practice, which is “a structured and systematic approach to using research-based knowledge of effectiveness to inform practice” (Naquin et al., 2008, p. 21). This is a strict model of research that is considered the gold standard of service provision, creation, and evaluation but, for a variety of reasons, is not easily applied within an Indigenous context. Solutions or theories that arise from evidence-based research do not always

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apply to real-world practices, especially when population demographics, culture and other circumstances vary greatly, and as a result, findings from clinical trials cannot always be easily generalized for use in practice settings.

Often, “the evidence-base... generated by academicians, is rooted in urban environments, assumes typically ideal conditions and appropriate levels of resources for implementation, and has been developed among white populations” (Naquin et al., 2008, p. 14). Evidence-based practice research often excludes vital contextual factors, such as language, ceremony, and Indigenous teachings, and, by itself, is not an effective foundation to service provision especially when relationships are involved (Naquin et al., 2008). Bartig et al. & Shim (as cited in Jude, 2016) emphasized that “both funders and researchers may be required to re-think their long-standing biases and begin to consider ‘practice-based evidence’ as significant as evidence-based practice” (p. 46). It is crucial to look at what is actually working in the community in question and use that knowledge to broaden efforts for prevention and early intervention strategies.

Naquin et al. (2008) continued to say that, “for Indigenous populations, promoting these Euro-centric practices as the standard of care is doubly problematic as the mechanisms for developing an evidence-base often are not congruent with Indigenous knowledge or values” (p. 14). Naquin et al. (2008) further suggested a model of practice-based evidence that includes three levels based on Indigenous methods and practices of wisdom-seeking. Level I is focused on client-based evidence (satisfaction surveys, comment cards, interviews, etc.); Level II relies on practice-based evidence (Indigenous expert opinion, articles, awards, Elder interviews, ceremonies etc.); while Level III includes research-driven evidence (journal articles, review panels, participatory research etc.). These levels of evidence gathering will likely lead to more reliable sources of information and create more appropriate standards for programming (Naquin et al., 2008).

Indigenous Program Evaluation

The development of appropriate tools through which these programs can be evaluated is also incredibly important. To ignore this aspect of program planning is to risk continuing the legacy of colonialism and assimilation and overlooking the meaningful results of centring Indigenous knowledge and values in program creation. Strategies for program evaluation are typically derived from western research methods and approaches using other than empirical (quantitative or qualitative) methodologies are generally unrecognized, much less having any influence in

program evaluation.

As a result, even programs making efforts to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing generally apply the Western version of reality (Burke, 2018; Echo-Hawk, 2011). As argued by Saini (2012), “when Aboriginal knowledge is evaluated by Western standards of reliability and validity, this can lead to assimilation into Western frameworks” (p. 4). Programs are required to conform to mainstream expectations since future funding typically relies on Western forms of evaluation to document achievement of ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes.’ Such requirements effectively colonize Indigenous programs since they require compliance with the Western paradigm (Saini, 2012).

The development and implementation of Indigenous strategies for the evaluation of social services could be considered part of what *nêhiyaw* author, Dion Stout (2015) called a *nâtamakéwin-miýw-âyāwin*, or a “middle part” between where Indigenous people currently are and where they need to be to take full control of their wellness. Dion Stout (2015) described this as a movement “from *atikowisi-miýw-âyāwin*, ascribed health and wellness, to *kaskitamasowin-miýw-âyāwin*, achieved health and wellness” (p. 144).

Achieved health and wellness occurs “when the visions of traditional peoples in Indigenous communities formulate Indigenous concepts of health and wellness and its requisites” (Dion Stout, 2015, p. 144). The ideal that Dion Stout (2015) envisioned is not a blend or combination of Indigenous and Western traditions but rather a recognition and strengthening of Indigenous approaches to health and healing. This is a view we also share, and one that is common among Indigenous scholars and activists, such as Steinhauer and Lamouche (2015), who argued for the reinvigoration of ‘Indigenous healing practices’ and affirmed that “this is in no way a call for combination or integration of ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ systems” (p. 153).

Outcomes associated with Western models of health and wellness portray and are constitutive of a reality that does not capture the scope of the Indigenous experience (Hill et al., 2012; Pace et al., 2006). According to Marks et al. (2007), they “do not adequately reflect Indigenous health concerns from the holistic approach espoused in communities” (p. 94). Indigenous communities have expressed resistance to the imposition of Western wellness models and measurements, and a preference for those derived from their own worldviews (Anderson & Spence, 2008; Assembly of First Nations, 2018; First Nations Health Authority, 2014; Howell et al., 2016).

Section Two: *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin (Making oneself aware of good child growing/raising) was created to provide recommendations on how to incorporate an Indigenous worldview into the Provincial Prevention and Early Intervention Framework (PEIF). This project was undertaken based on the understanding that Western-held concepts of prevention and early intervention strategies are often not an effective or appropriate approach when working with Indigenous families and communities. Similarly, Western-based evaluation is often ineffective or misleading when working with Indigenous communities. *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* was created to be used by Indigenous organizations or in Indigenous-serving programs.

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin begins with an introduction and review of an Indigenous worldview and context surrounding PEI literature and provides, through the use of terms and concepts, ways to evolve language in PEI. Some of these terms and worldview differences have been discussed in the previous section of this article. *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* then provides recommendations on how government can develop and apply informed and inclusive performance measures to programming and includes an example of the Indigenous Program Indicators (Makokis et al., 2016) which have been developed to provide meaningful and appropriate evaluation methods for Indigenous-focused programming. The *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* project objectives were to:

- A) Provide recommendations incorporating an Indigenous worldview into the PEIF.
- B) Provide recommendations and support to multiple stakeholders in developing outcomes and performance measures that consider an Indigenous Worldview and allow for appropriate PEI program assessment.
- C) Provide recommendations and support to multiple stakeholders with respect to evolution of PEI definitions and programming definitions to reflect an Indigenous worldview.

Evolution of PEI Language

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin provided recommendations and support for the evolution of PEI language through discussion and current definitions with considerations given to existing programming. This was done with the intention to bridge these definitions and concepts

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with those identified by the research team as being important for PEI programs to understand and embody in their work with Indigenous families and communities and when designing programs and evaluations. Examples of these concepts described in the document include traditional storytelling, pre-contact teachings about Indigenous family life, the *niitsitapi* (Blackfoot) Creation Story, and the unique experiences and teachings from the *Métis* people.

Development of Outcomes and Performance Measures

The recommendations provided in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* support government and PEI stakeholders to develop program planning, outcomes and performance measures that are inclusive of Indigenous worldviews. These recommendations support appropriate program review and assessment by outlining an evaluative framework that recognizes culturally-based practices and the effective achievement of outcomes in a meaningful way.

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin recognizes the application of practice-based evidence, as opposed to evidence-based practice, to reflect the extensive cultural teachings that inform Indigenous knowledge systems (Abe et al., 2018; Naquin et al., 2008). In taking this approach, the evaluation framework aims to assess prevention and early intervention programming in terms of ‘meaning’ as opposed to ‘measurement’. By prioritizing meaning, the evaluation framework enhances the cultural credibility of community-based prevention and early intervention programs because of its embodiment of foundational Indigenous values regarding collective wellbeing, reciprocity, balance, and good relationships (Makokis et al., 2016; Wilson, 2008). These values derive from the practice-based evidence found in Indigenous teachings, language, and ceremony, all of which inform the *Indigenous Program Indicators* – the program evaluation reporting tool included in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*.

Indigenous Program Indicators

The intention of including the *Indigenous Program Indicators* in *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* is that they may function as a component of this “middle part” between where Indigenous people currently are and where they need to be to take full control of their wellness that Dion Stout (2015) envisioned. The search for a middle way is understandable given the potential threat of funding loss. The *Indigenous Program Indicators* can act as this “supportive system” (Dion Stout, 2015, p. 144) as they contain aspects of Western measurement but center the

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meaning of Indigenous constructs and are adaptable to local contexts. The *Indigenous Program Indicators* tool (Makokis et al., 2016; Turner & Bodor, 2020) is particularly critical as it offers a vehicle through which programs can be understood and held accountable to ways of knowing and enacting wellness that are congruent with Indigenous realities. This, in turn, facilitates the design of programs that are grounded in the Indigenous universe even when they must exist within — and often be held accountable to — the Western universe.

The *Indigenous Program Indicators* offer an alternative to the two approaches to research and evaluation currently dominant in the literature. Programs reliant on government funding may initially be hesitant to discontinue the use of empirically-based approaches to evaluation. Since their inception, this tool has evolved from an initial reliance on scaling practices to a focus on meaning. It has also moved away from being ‘applied’ to Indigenous service-users by service-providers and has come to be used as a tool for reflection as opposed to being strictly for outcome measurement.

The *Indigenous Program Indicators* are based on the teachings of *miyo pimatisiwin* or living a good life which occurs when a spirit on a human journey is able to maintain balance between the four interrelated realms of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. If disruption occurs, the resulting imbalance is a result of colonization and/or the forced loss of connection to community, family, and spirituality (Turner & Bodor, 2020). Through the *Indigenous Program Indicators*, Indigenous PEI programs possess the necessary language and Indigenous worldview concepts to meaningfully assess the culturally-restorative, healing-based, and ceremony-centered programming being offered. However, as a consequence of colonization, Indigenous communities have varying levels of understanding and acceptance towards cultural and spiritual practices. This variance has influenced how Indigenous communities across Alberta apply the *Indigenous Program Indicators* and how they are revitalizing their PEI programming. The *Indigenous Program Indicators* have provided Indigenous communities with an opportunity to link disruption and disconnection to colonization; thereby, reviving their cultural traditions in order to heal collectively and affirm their distinct tribal identity resulting in less replication of Western-based services.

Section Three: Implementation

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin and the *Indigenous Program Indicators* are being used as an PEI funding, program planning and reporting framework across Alberta. Facilitating a reflective process, the *Indigenous Program Indicators* are used to explore an individual's life through the Circle Teachings of the four realms of mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being (Turner & Bodor, 2020). For example, one Indigenous community began using the Indigenous Program Indicators to evaluate their Daycare Program which was funded from within a Western funding framework (Turner & Bodor, 2020). The program manager was eager to begin using the evaluation tool and completed it on their own, as they had previously done with Western-based program evaluation models. Their first attempt did not yield as much information as the program manager would have liked and, as a result, this led to further exploration and discussion of the Indicators and a deeper understanding of the process of Indigenous program evaluation (Turner & Bodor, 2020).

Recognizing that the *Indigenous Program Indicators* are meant to be completed within the foundational values of collective well-being, reciprocity, balance and good relationships, the program manager met with their staff to discuss their program and the tool using Circle Process. Through this process, staff were able to indicate several ways in which programming was inclusive of foundational Indigenous values and teachings. The Circle Process also brought forth conversations around program development and Indigenous teachings within their community that they will use in future programming (Turner & Bodor, 2020).

Another community has reported that the *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* and the *Indigenous Program Indicators* have been used to inform future program development. These resources have achieved this by teaching staff about the four realms (*miyo pimatisiwin*), and how the daily programming is reflective of the teachings and meanings within each realm. The program has reported that, through good relationships and collective well-being, they are able to report outcomes on cultural meaning, instead of content and quantity. Consequently, the reporting is not only focused on the number of attendees and the actual activities that are occurring in the programming but is also focused on the conversations that are happening with Elders, children and families regarding Indigenous identity and pride, grief and loss, trauma, and the impact of colonization. The meaning and importance of these conversations would have been missed if Western methods of evaluation had been used.

In another instance early in the implementation process for the *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, a meeting was set up in a northern Alberta Indigenous community to review the new resources. Several representatives from various PEI programs attended the meeting, along with a government representative of the initiative, an Elder, and some of the *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* developers. There was extensive discussion about the resource and its use, and everyone agreed that the new system, based within Indigenous teachings, would assist with maintaining and improving the Indigenous focus of their programming. The group conversation centered on one of the longstanding challenges within the PEI funding framework - the provision of “hot lunch programs” for children within an Indigenous community. While there was general acknowledgement by the funder of the need for good nutrition for children within the community, hot lunch programs were not seen to fit within the funding framework and there was a push to exclude them. However, with the advent of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* and the *Indigenous Program Indicators* focus on holistic wellbeing, there needed to be a discussion about the potential fit of these hot lunch programs within the new Indigenous- focused programming and evaluating processes.

Within the *nêhiyaw* worldview, children are understood to be small spirits on a human journey to experience love, and the honoring of the gifts they bring to the community (Makokis et al., 2020b). The *nêhiyaw* term for a child, *awasis*, literally means “a small spirit on a human journey” (Makokis et al., 2020b). This is a fundamentally different understanding from the Eurocentric, western, legislated concept of a child. The *nêhiyaw* perspective also teaches that the ancestors (the grandmothers) prepare the spirit, long before its birth, for its human journey and ‘choose’ the family and community where the *awasis* will experience love, nurturing, and acceptance (Makokis et al., 2020b).

It was from this perspective and these teachings that the Elder present at the meeting responded to questions seeking an Indigenous rather than Western understanding of the hot lunch issue. The Elder also shared some of the teachings concerning food and feasts – and how all these concepts and practices occur within the context of ceremony and protocol. She concluded by sharing the *nêhiyaw* term, *âsam âcakwe*, for ‘feeding a child’ or ‘feeding a small spirit on a human journey’. When viewed within the teachings of food and feast food, the four realms – especially that of the physical and spiritual – and *miyo pimatisiwin*, the feeding a child became not only a physical act but a nourishing of the child’s spirit.

As a result of this conversation and learning, the Western concept of ‘hot lunches’ was replaced by the *nehiyaw* understanding of *âsam âcakwe*. It was noted that two of the attendees were busy texting on their phones and engaging in an animated discussion. When asked to share what was occurring, they explained that they were contacting their parents and Elders to figure out the equivalent concept for *âsam âcakwe* in the language of their community. This highlighted the need for each Indigenous community to discover and explain their language-equivalent term to the funder. In response the funding representative present at the meeting affirmed that the learning and knowing of these terms was part of her responsibility – which, appropriately, placed some of the responsibility for language learning on the funder and created a significant turning point in the exploration of the new *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* reporting and programming processes.

While the conversation at the time did not seem especially significant, later discussion highlighted several of the significant moments and shifts. The act of bringing the hot lunch issue into a cultural context and viewing it from an Indigenous perspective allowed for a meaningful change in the understanding of physical and spiritual nourishment. Recognizing that language creates reality, this was further illustrated through the use of the *nehiyaw* language, and the accompanying teachings shared by a respected Elder. Exploring similar concepts from within a second Indigenous language provided an opportunity for further understanding and emphasized the commonalities and distinctions among Indigenous communities. The openness of the funder to embrace the responsibility of having a working understanding of the various terms, languages, and teachings created an extremely collaborative process between a western funder and numerous Indigenous programs. These examples demonstrate the opportunities for understanding and collaboration that are generated through the use of *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* and the potential for these transformative experiences to translate to other programs, organizations, and institutions.

Section Four: Meaning

Funding organizations typically have been supporting Indigenous organizations and Indigenous-serving organizations to deliver PEI programming using Western funding models and evaluation frameworks. The disconnect between Western and Indigenous worldviews has made it challenging for these organizations to meet the outcome requirements of funders and, as a result, they have had to adapt their programming to fit Western models of evaluation to continue service year after year. Breaking from this cycle, *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* has provided a framework for Indigenous-based PEI programming, as well as the ability to evaluate this work from an Indigenous perspective. These programs can now submit program funding reports that reflect their authentic and meaningful service provision.

As illustrated in the highlighted examples, some Indigenous organizations have become very familiar with the *Indigenous Program Indicators* and have been able to effectively transition to an Indigenous model of program evaluation. Often these organizations have had a strong cultural base to their programming. Other programs have reported that the transition is more challenging and have expressed some confusion with the suggested evaluation methods. These organizations tend to have a more Western influenced program delivery model with limited inclusion of Indigenous concepts. Both Indigenous organizations and Indigenous-serving organizations have requested the need for further training on both the foundational Indigenous knowledge contained within *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, and on the overall process of Indigenous program evaluation.

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin provides both a tool and a method for Indigenous program evaluation but requires organizations to understand how the inherent Indigenous teachings and processes can be applied. This need also extends to grant funding organizations and managers who review program reports and ultimately decide whether the program is fulfilling the grant agreement. If grant funders/managers misunderstand this information, there could be significant financial consequences. It is, therefore, imperative that program managers/evaluators and grant funders/managers gain an understanding of the foundational Indigenous knowledge within *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*, as well as the overall process of Indigenous program evaluation.

Conclusion

kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin and the *Indigenous Program Indicators* provide a ‘new way’ for PEI program design, implementation, and evaluation that honors Indigenous ceremony, language, and teachings. This resource embodies *miyo pimatisiwin* (living a good life) and Indigenous concepts of health, wellness, and wholeness — which have historically been excluded from PEI frameworks. Rooted in this ancestral knowledge, *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* supports the return to culture, ceremony, and language in order to revive the ‘old ways’ of our ancestors. Indigenous communities have always known that living *miyo pimatisiwin* in the context of ceremony and community creates and sustains health and wellness which is then modeled to children and families through the teachings and language of their ancestors.

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