

Indigenous Australia Program DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

A CULTURAL PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATION

The practice of evaluation is multi-faceted in any context, but when undertaken in cultural contexts different from those of the evaluator, another set of ideas and practices are relevant. The Indigenous Australia Program (IAP) is committed to maximising organisational capacity in evaluation. As part of this commitment, the IAP identified there would be value in developing a specific protocol to support the quality of cross-cultural evaluations associated with our programs. This bulletin describes the process of development and identifies key lessons learnt. The intention is to share experiences to support other country programs undertaking similar capacity building processes.

Purpose

- The Cultural Protocol was developed as a guide for those who are involved with evaluation-related activities with the IAP. It aims to assist internal staff and external evaluation consultants to ensure that activities are undertaken with the appropriate respect for, and participation of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.
- It was developed incorporating internal staff knowledge and experience, as well as Australian and international evaluation and research approaches to working with Indigenous people and communities.
- It will also be useful more widely as a resource for commissioners or managers of evaluation, evaluators, those involved in evaluation capacity strengthening, and all those involved in evaluation in cross-cultural settings.
- The protocol has several elements, of which users may select one or more, to inform or support their understanding, approaches and processes in cross-cultural evaluations. This guidance is intended to complement other guidance for IAP staff and professional evaluators, such as those on ethics, approaches, selection of tools and questions and reporting.
- In the Australian context, it is important that this protocol is used in conjunction with the specific cultural and communication protocols for the individual community that is participating in the evaluation. For those working internationally, where such protocols may not exist, other sources of cultural information should be sought.

Publicity

- The Cultural Protocol for Evaluation was launched at the 2015 Australian Evaluation Society Conference, with a workshop presentation by two IAP staff members. Special mention of this presentation was made by a Key Note Speaker during the closing address at the conference.
- The Cultural Protocol has been published on the Better Evaluation Website, http://betterevaluation.org/resource/tool/a_cultural_protocol_for_evaluation
- IAP staff are in the process of writing an article describing the process of development of the protocol, to be submitted to a relevant Journal for publication. patient transport issues enabled the partnership to approach Western NSW Health Primary Health Network for their support in overcoming transport issues. Further advocacy will occur in this area until a satisfactory outcome is achieved to improve patient transport.



Background

IAP conducted an Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) readiness appraisal with all staff in December 2014, which asked:

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO EMBED ETHICAL AND APPROPRIATE EVALUATIVE THINKING INTO THE PROGRAM'S PROCESSES AND MAKE EVALUATION AN INTEGRAL AND EFFICIENT PART OF ROUTINE OPERATIONS?

One of the recommendations from this appraisal was that a cross-cultural protocol be developed to ensure that all evaluative activities undertaken through IAP are appropriate. IAP realised that in a cross-cultural setting, any evaluation activity must not only involve team members who understand the context, but be approved, guided, directed and implemented by the program team to ensure culturally appropriate, meaningful and useful findings.

Process of development

A cultural protocol is important to ensure that everyone involved in an evaluation follows the appropriate pathway to working in a community setting. Upon reflection of IAP's existing strengths and knowledge in this area, a strength based approach was used to develop the cultural protocol through working and learning from one another. IAP believes that this will contribute to stronger evaluation practices.

- IAP wanted to make sure existing long term partnerships, which have been based on trust over the long term, could be maintained. One of the aims was to build IAP's skills and knowledge by engaging external evaluators in an appropriate way so that everyone is supported.
- An initial brainstorming session was held with all IAP staff at a Participatory Program Management training workshop in December 2014 conducted by Deborah Rhodes from Leadership Strategies and organised through the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). This included small group work to read and discuss existing codes, guidelines & protocols, and a group discussion came up with a list of suggestions for our own cultural protocols. In particular, IAP reviewed the Australian Evaluation Society code of conduct, the African Evaluation Association Guidelines, the ACFID Principles for ethical research and evaluation in development, the Papua New

Guinea Evaluation Guidelines and the Guidelines for Research and Evaluation with Maori.

- Some IAP staff found the workshop to be an opportunity to express existing knowledge and ideas, individual experiences and lessons learnt over the years working within IAP, and to learn to use them as a foundation for the development of the cultural protocol.
- A small working group was set up, and progressed by communicating on a daily to weekly basis, which gave the group time to reflect on how we work within a community setting and how we implement our programs. Communication within the group focused on suggestions, inputs and comments and kept the philosophy for the human rights based approach with the community development principles.
- A review of existing documents was carried out in order to collect relevant materials to contribute to the resource. Gathering as many resources as possible allowed for individual experiences and expertise to be understood in the context of these resources. Key documents included Oxfam cultural protocols, NH&MRC protocols about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights in research, and many others from both Australia and worldwide. The working group thought that the protocol could also be linked to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
- One of the key group members, through reflection on their past experiences, came up with the words for the three elements to the protocol: reciprocal respect, cultural humility, and acknowledgement. These three words are also similar to those used in a number of protocols that represent other issues relating to Indigenous communities around the world, including basic human rights, land rights and culture.

“ IT IS NOT JUST THAT REPRESENTATION FROM THE TARGET POPULATION ETHNICITY OR CULTURE IS ‘NICE’ OR ‘GOOD TO HAVE’ ON AN EVALUATION TEAM; YOU ARE ACTUALLY GOING TO SERIOUSLY COMPROMISE THE EVALUATION’S VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY WITHOUT IT.”

Wehipeihana, Davidson, McKegg, & Shanker (2010)

Key features

- The protocol brings together information and experience from a range of sources and summarises IAP's perspectives on important elements of cross-cultural evaluation.
- There are three elements to the Cultural Protocol for Evaluation, which each complement one another:
 1. Reciprocal Respect
 2. Cultural Humility
 3. Acknowledgement
- A diagram was developed to represent these three elements, which aimed to capture a community development and human rights approach from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander point of view, as well as fit in with the organisational structure of IAP. The diagram also aims to reflect the journey of an evaluator, which should create a pathway for communication, transparency, two-way learning and learning from the community experience.
- It is hoped that IAP's thinking and synthesis in this area will help many others working cross-culturally, and that the guidance provided in the protocol will support and encourage good practice in cross-cultural evaluation.

"THERE IS SOME GREAT STUFF COMING OUT IN COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY WHERE YOU CAN JUST SEE COMMUNITIES ACTUALLY BEING ENGAGED, NOT JUST AS SOURCES OF DATA BUT ACTUALLY DRIVING THE EVALUATION AND USING IT TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE..... THE SESSION ON PROTOCOLS FOR DOING EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES WAS REALLY CLEAR ABOUT HAVING AN ATTITUDE OF MUTUAL LEARNING."

Professor Patricia Rogers, key note speaker, closing address at the 2015 Australasian Evaluation Society Conference

~ The journey of each evaluator

- Communities

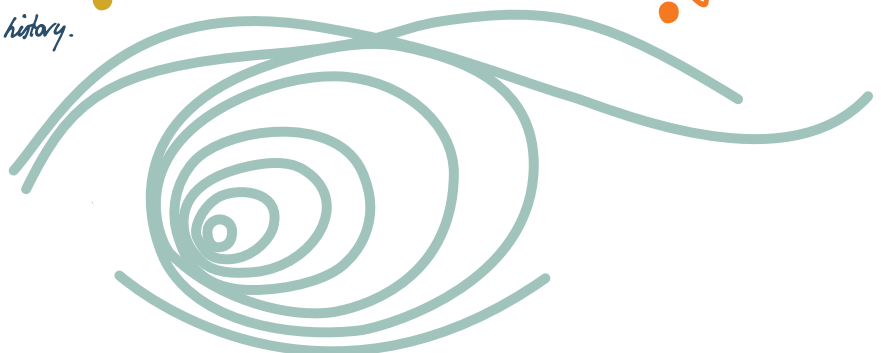
© The circles represent the many layers of community perspectives: Spirituality Physical mental wellbeing, empowerment, engagement & history.

• Reciprocal Respect

• Cultural Humility

• Acknowledgement

• Cultural Protocol

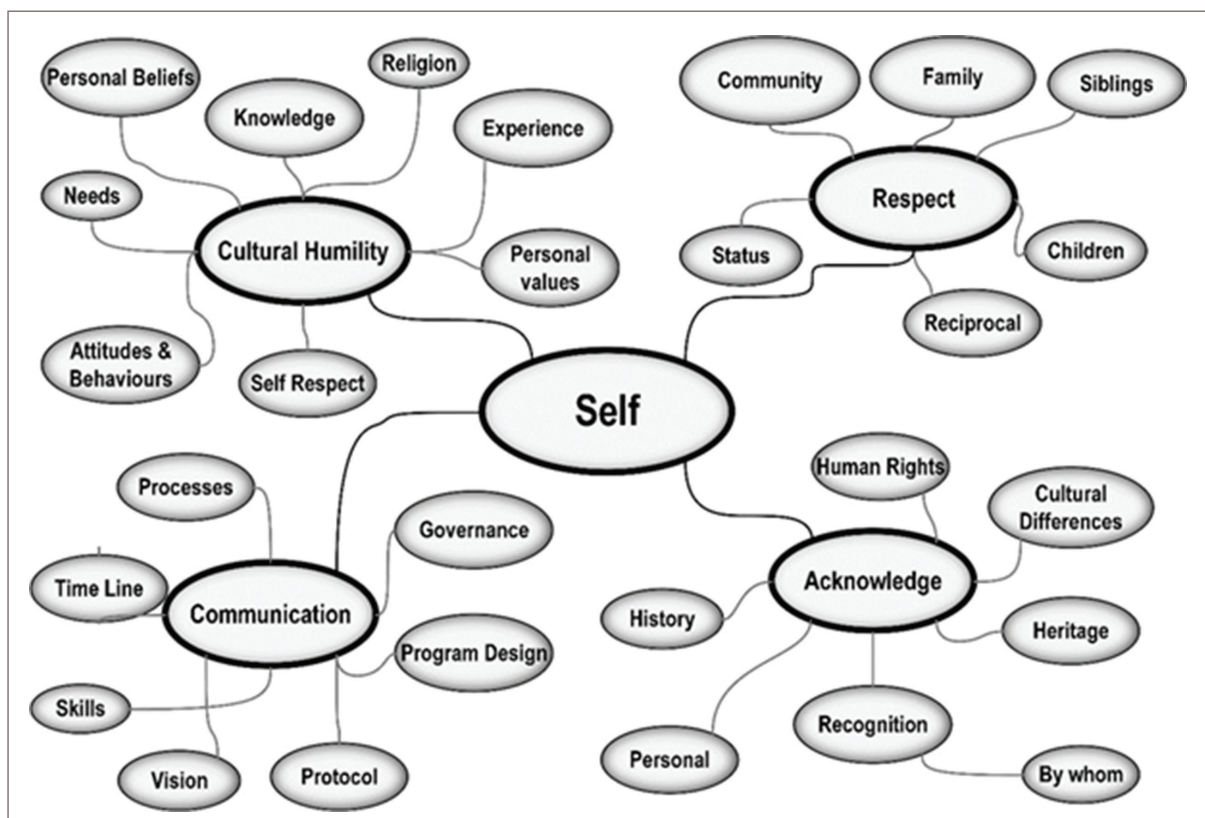


Reflections on the Importance of Cultural Protocols

- Further reflection on the importance of the use of Cultural Protocols for evaluation within IAP was carried out by key IAP staff involved in the development of the protocol. Questions asked were: How do cultural protocols improve cross cultural evaluations? Why is there a need to raise the profile of cultural protocols amongst non-Indigenous evaluators in Australia?
- Mind maps were developed to express how IAP staff saw that the cultural protocols fit into the bigger picture needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia. This reflection emphasised the importance of taking an organisational approach, with processes that ensured that the protocol would suit communities. Communication, the provision of information and advocacy provide necessary support and engagement and create key roles for evaluators.
- A self-mind map was also created by a key IAP staff member involved in the development of the cultural protocol, reflecting on each of the elements of the protocol: cultural humility, reciprocal respect, and acknowledgement, and how they link to personal work practices. This staff member described using the cultural protocols as a two-way learning tool in regards to working towards meaningful outcomes – sharing, learning and developing together to ultimately education myself to ensure that I can ask the right questions when doing an evaluation.

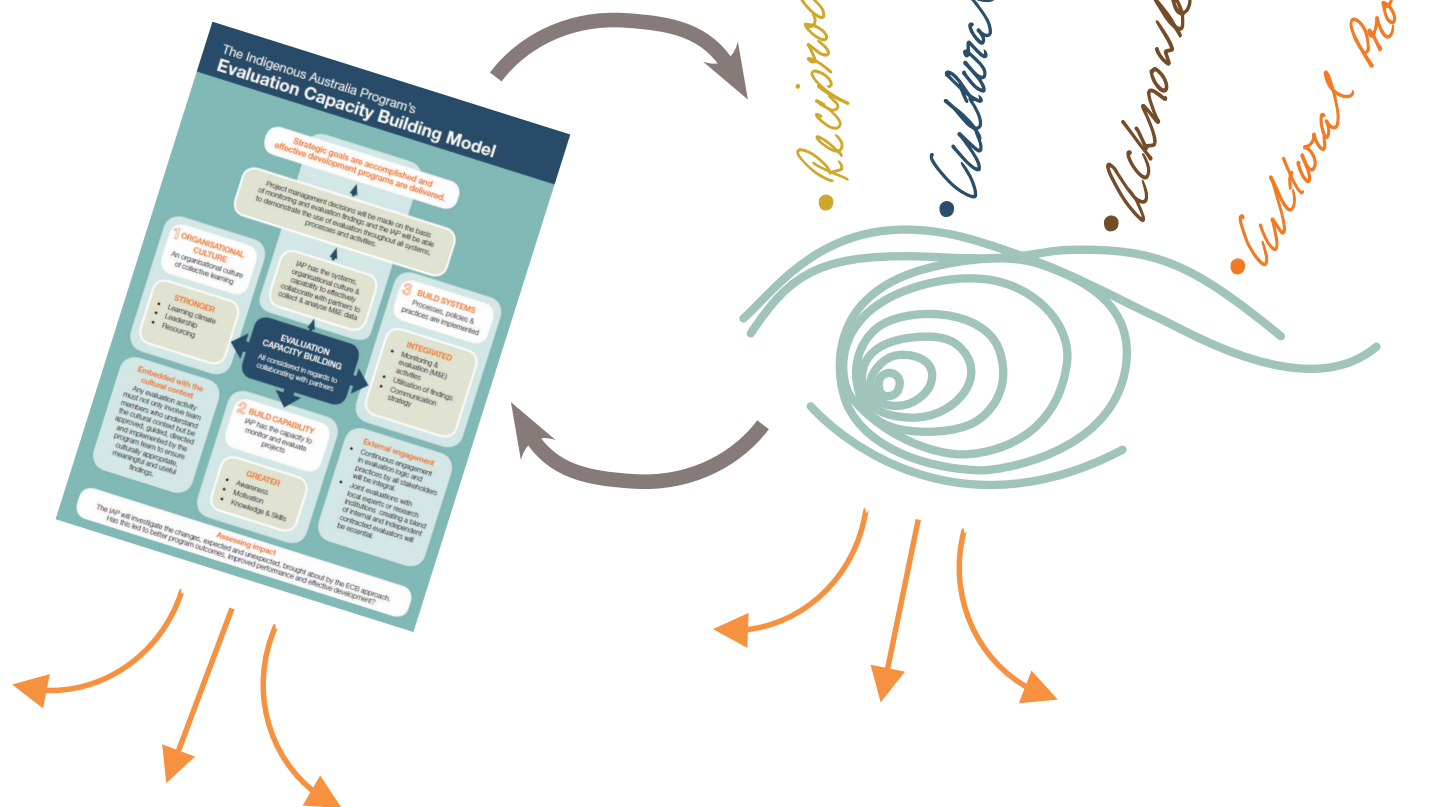
“EACH LARGE BUBBLE REPRESENTED MY MAIN LINKS TO EVALUATION THAT I PRACTICE AND TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN GOING THROUGH THE PROCESSES. THERE’S PROBABLY A FEW WORDS MISSING, BUT I WANTED TO STICK TO THE BASICS FROM MY POINT OF VIEW. THE SMALLER BUBBLES ARE SOME OF THE ELEMENTS THAT REFLECT DIRECTLY TO HOW I PRACTICE. IT INVOLVES MY EMOTIONS, THE LESSONS LEARNT THROUGH MY WORK AND PERSONAL LIFE, MY PASSIONS, MY OBLIGATIONS AND THE SELF-DISCIPLINES NEEDED TO EVALUATE MYSELF AS AN ABORIGINAL RESEARCHER AND EVALUATOR.”

Maddy Bower on Cultural Humility, Communicating, Acknowledging and Respect



Continuing the cycle

- The idea for the development of the cultural protocol for evaluation derived from the ECB process which is being undertaken by IAP, and is in and of itself an innovative tool that has articulated IAP's vision and put us on an empowerment path. There will be more tools that will come from both the cultural protocol and the ECB model that will support IAP on the journey to embed evaluative thinking.
- The cyclic component will occur when IAP returns to the ECB model to embed the cultural protocol. Questions that will be asked include:
 - What training is required to use the protocol?
 - How can it be embedded within our collective learning mechanisms?
 - What systems & processes can be tapped into so that this doesn't become a document that sits on a shelf but lives and breathes with the passion of those that created it?



Cultural Humility

WE ARE ALL SHAPED BY THE CULTURES IN WHICH WE WERE RAISED. HOWEVER, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT RESEARCHERS AND CARE PROVIDERS DO THEIR BEST TO STEP OUTSIDE OF THE CULTURAL FRAMEWORK THEY ARE USED TO FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE THEY SERVE.

Where to from here?

- IAP will now work to embed the Cultural Protocol into all evaluative activities, both internal and external. Feedback will be sought from those who use the protocol in order to continually monitor and make adjustments to the process of its use.
- Further publicity of the Cultural Protocol, including submitting an article for publication to a relevant journal, and some relevant media.
- Distribution of the Culturazzl Protocol to IAP's key partners and other relevant organisations.
- There are further questions which IAP can aim to develop processes to answer, including:
 - How can cultural protocols contribute to cultural humility by influencing attitudes and changing behaviour?
 - How can they be used as a communication tool to lead towards systematic change?
 - How can they be used as a guide for evaluators to feel comfortable to ask the 'right' questions?

This cultural protocol could be used to:

- generate discussion about cultural considerations
- clarify expectations
- be incorporated into organisational processes to lead towards system change
- explain why cultural considerations may influence an evaluation process; local procedures, appropriate timing, avoidance and gender relationships
- inform the design and implementation of evaluation processes
- as a tool to link the historical context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the impact that still resonates
- provide an opportunity for self-reflection
- build cultural capacity and competence
- as an educational tool
- be part of the healing process
- as a guide to feel comfortable to ask questions
- deepen cultural understanding to consider sub-cultures and the complexity that exists in the political landscape
- contribute to developing cultural humility for everyone involved

