



EVALUATION
CAPACITY
NETWORK

DECOLONIAL EVALUATION LEARNING TEAM

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With mentorship from
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Tremblay, & Michelle Searle**

ANNUAL REPORT

An abstract landscape painting with a cloudy sky in shades of blue, white, and purple, and a foreground of rolling hills in earthy tones of brown, tan, and blue. The style is painterly and expressive.

2025-2026



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NOTES OF GRATITUDE

A practice our team implements in each of the events, projects, and discussions we have is to start with notes of gratitude.

Being able to create space to build connections, check in with each other, and join together in gratitude has set very open and respectful tones for us all. We want to share how grateful we are to be able to join together across Turtle Island and other parts of the world, both virtually and in person. Our team thanks everyone who has been part of this year's journey.

Our core team is made up of members located across both Treaty 6 (University of Alberta, School of Public Health, Edmonton, Alberta) and 9 territories (Queen's University, Faculty of Education, Kingston, Ontario).

Together, we are so thankful that we are able to come together and learn more about different approaches to evaluation.



A map of Canada that highlights Edmonton (Treaty 6) and Ontario (Treaty 9).



ABOUT THE EVALUATION CAPACITY NETWORK (ECN)

The Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) is a thriving network of individuals and organizations from across Canada, who are committed to advancing evaluation capacity through community-driven, culturally responsive, equitable participation, and action oriented evaluation capacity building opportunities, activities, and scholarship.

Established and funded through a SSHRC Partnership Development (2014-2017) & Partnership Grant (2019-2027), the ECN is a Hub for evaluation capacity - both virtual (through our website) and physical in the spaces that each of our partners is located.



ECN's Four Primary Pathways of Collaboration and Engagement



THE DEL TEAM'S JOURNEY

The Decolonial Evaluation Learning (DEL) team continues to journey alongside communities, learners, and experts. We have supported the co-creation of knowledge and commitments, and provided spaces for further reflection and continued learning.

As we continue with our efforts, we made an effort to stay closely aligned with the commitments that we created at the start of our collaborative DEL process in 2023:

1. Promoting evaluation practices that are respectful and responsible to the needs and values of communities.
2. Building the capacity of individuals and organizations, through ECN resources and supports, to integrate intersectional evaluation thinking that utilizes diverse knowledge systems.
3. Centering community experience and expertise in co-creating evaluation processes and knowledge generation.

2022-2023: Focus & Highlights



CREATING

Creation of the DEL team, setting goals, figuring out focus with community.



RESOURCING

Building resource hub, facilitating foundations of decolonial evaluation opportunities with others.

2024-Ongoing: Focus & Highlights



LEARNING

Reflecting on our position, refocusing, developing learning spaces.



OUR YEAR-IN-REVIEW

Community and Action

In our reflections of the previous years and what the goals were, we notice that we focused a lot on the “learning” aspect. Learning about the importance of decolonial evaluation, and the process of engaging with those practices.

While learning is still imbedded in our goals for this year, we wanted to bring emerging evaluators together to get snapshots of what decolonial evaluation learning and practices might look like. We hoped to bring the learning that was engaged with in the previous years, into more actionable and sustainable community-driven opportunities. The focus of our community and action is consolidated below.



→ 3 WEBINARS

Open-access sessions with evaluation experts on their approaches, insights, and advice to promote learning.

→ 2 TAILORED WORKSHOPS

Intimate workshops to support emerging graduate evaluators.

→ 1 COMMUNITY

A community of practice to build relationships, engage with actionable learning goals, and learn from other emerging graduate evaluators.

→ WEALTH OF SHARING

Multiple ways of sharing our learning and relationship building: webinars, conferences, journal article submissions and creative reflections.

WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS

2025-2026 Webinar Series Theme: “Informed Approaches to Evaluation: Lessons, Reflections, and Advice”

The logo for ThreeHive Consulting, featuring the word "ThreeHive" in a bold, sans-serif font with "Three" in black and "Hive" in orange, and the word "CONSULTING" in a smaller, grey, all-caps font below it.

Shelby, Alecia, and Eyerusalem
from Three Hive Consulting



Dr. Melissa Tremblay



Dr. Ayesha Boyce

This year, the DEL team implemented a webinar series to build upon all the learning we engaged with in the previous years. We were fortunate to partner with the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) and Evaluation Capacity Case Challenge (EC³) to provide these webinars.

Drawing from feedback we received from the ECN community, this year's webinars focused on actionable lessons, reflections, and advice from expert evaluators. These experts brought in examples of evaluations and walked us through the learning, the challenges, and the next steps of reflection they engaged in. We have summarized some key highlights for each of the webinars in the following pages.



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EC³ MAX BELL SCHOOL
of PUBLIC POLICY
EVALUATION CAPACITY
CASE CHALLENGE

Summary Report for Webinar with Trauma-Informed Approaches with Three Hive Consulting

Total
Registered



316

Total Q&A
Questions



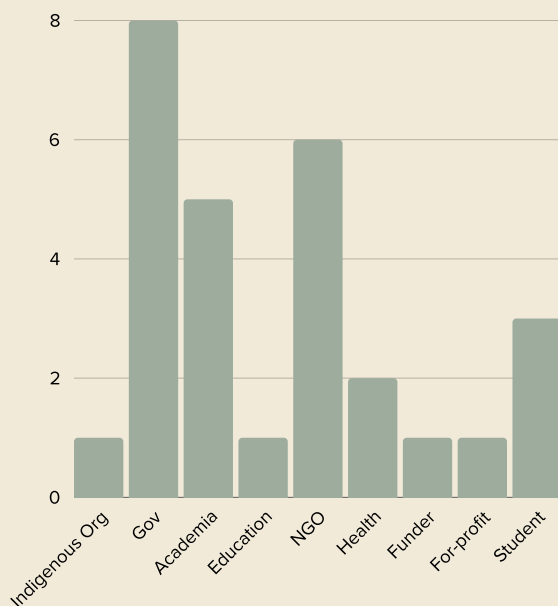
23

Total Survey
Responses

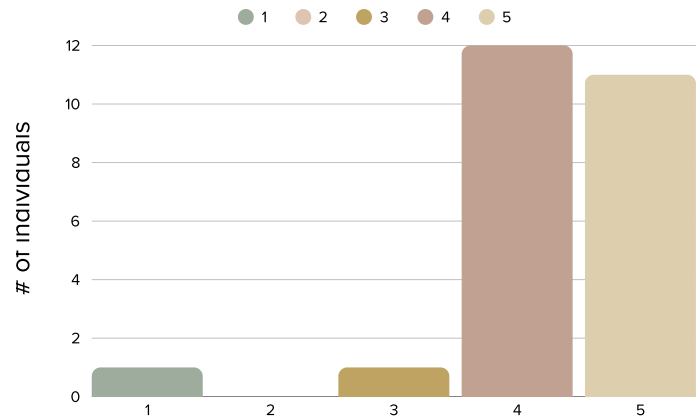


25

Sector of Attendees That
Completed Survey



Satisfaction Rate of Webinar:



Audience Geographical Insight*



159
Canada



10
United States

“The session was very insightful and more so the real scenarios provided. what stood out for me is how trauma-informed evaluation transforms when data, decisions, and meaning-making are treated as shared responsibilities rather than extractive processes. It reminded me that decolonizing evaluation is not theoretical, it becomes real through collaborative practices that honor trust, context, and community wisdom.” Session attendee

“The idea that trauma-informed doesn't have to be deeply entrenched in literature; it is often about being sensitive to the specific situation you're in as a researcher / evaluator.” Session attendee

* Represents total live attendance

Summary Report for Webinar with Indigenous-Informed Approaches with Dr. Melissa Tremblay

Total
Registered



222

Total Q&A
Questions



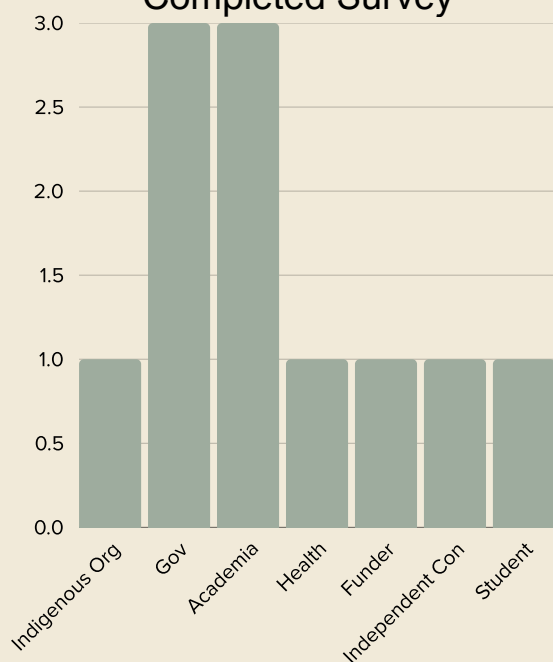
8

Total Survey
Responses

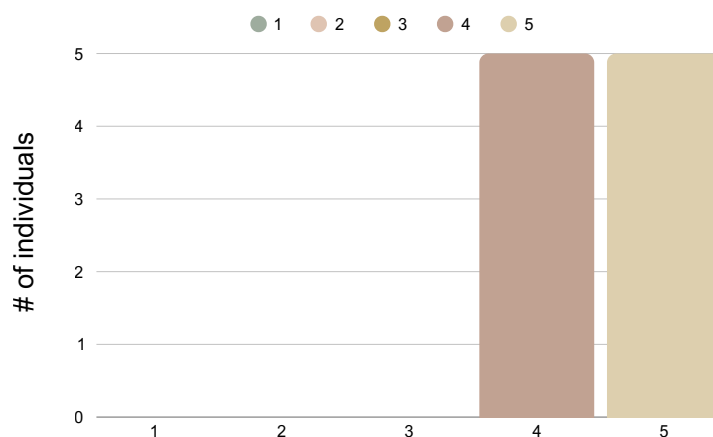


10

Sector of Attendees That
Completed Survey



Satisfaction Rate of Webinar:



Audience Geographical Insight*



133
Canada



26
United States



1
Bahamas

“The idea that “academic rigor” and its tools and processes is not always relevant to every circumstance and population especially when considering who defines it.” Session attendee

“Understanding the differences in some of the terminology (e.g., culturally sensitive, culturally responsive) and how they apply in real world situations.” Session attendee

Summary Report for Informed Approaches with Dr. Ayesha Boyce

Total
Registered



157

Total Q&A
Questions



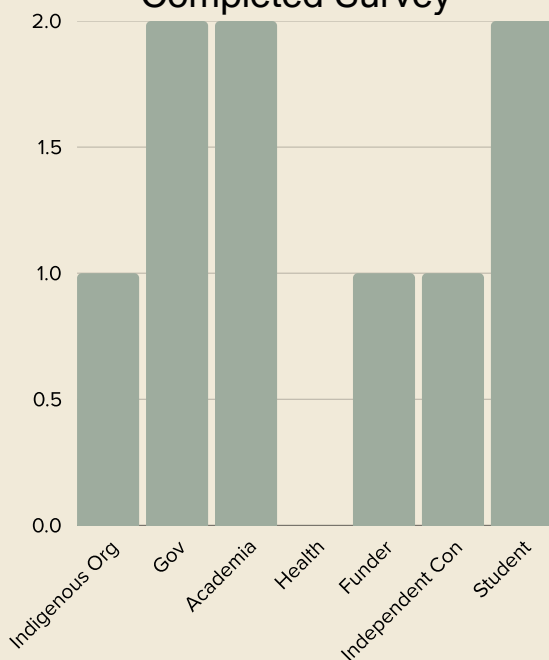
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Total Survey
Responses

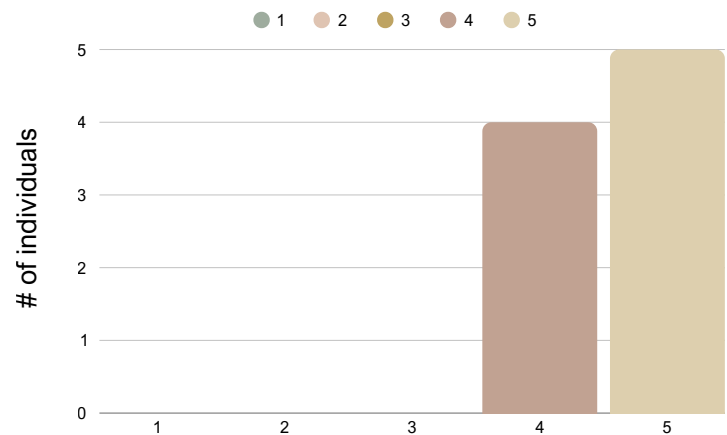


9

Sector of Attendees That
Completed Survey



Satisfaction Rate of Webinar:



Audience Geographical Insight*



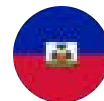
80

Canada



9

United States



1

Haiti

“Joy can be infused into almost every aspect of the evaluation. We should be seeking to measure joy. We ourselves as evaluators should be seeking joy, and finding moments to stop and celebrate.” Session attendee

“Sometimes it takes doing additional work to ensure that you are producing something that is useful to the community and meets their needs, and not just the needs of the funders. There are others working in the same space.” Session attendee

* Represents total live attendance

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



The Decolonial Evaluation Emerging Scholars Fellowship

The goal of the DEL Community of Practice Fellowship was to create a space where emerging graduate evaluators could engage in decolonial evaluation learning practices and be part of a collaborative reflection with others across Canada.

We had 25 applicants from 5 of the ECN's partner institutions. We awarded 13 scholars with a small grant that would help them engage in their evaluation learning and action journeys. We had an exceptional group of scholars, from a variety of disciplines, who were committed to learning and sharing about decolonial evaluation and understanding how they could engage with these practices.

Total Applicants

→ 25 Applicants

Total Emerging Scholars

→ 13 Scholars

From Across ECN Universities

→ 5 Universities

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WORKSHOPS



Lauren Alston



Daniella Dorancy



Drashti Zaveri



Elliott Young

CoP Career Panel

The career panel, made up of Dr. Lauren Alston, Daniella Dorancy, Drashti Zaveri, and Elliott Young, joined the community of practice group for a focused conversation. DEL fellow had the opportunity to build relationships with graduate and post-graduate students who are currently engaged in evaluation throughout their studies, and/or making a career out of what they have learned. The panel shared their insights, pathways, and advice.



Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack

Associate professor, Faculty of Arts - Women's & Gender Studies, University of Alberta

Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack is a nêhiyaw (Cree) visual storyteller, scholar, and arts actionist educator. She is a multidisciplinary artist, scholar, and author from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in Treaty Six, Alberta, now based in amiskwaciy waskahikan, Edmonton. She demonstrates innovative interdisciplinary Indigenous knowledge translation and mobilization through arts and land-based practices, community-engaged research, scholarship services and teaching.

She facilitated an intimate workshop for the scholar community of practice to explore arts-based practices to support decolonial evaluation learning.

REFLECTIONS & CREATIVE OUTPUTS

Community of Practice Reflections & Creations

We are so fortunate to be able to share some feedback, reflections, and creative pieces the community of practice scholars created as they engaged with their learning and the different opportunities they experienced. Explore a few of the reflections in the following pages.



From left to right: Dr. Melissa Tremblay (and her daughter), Abigail Gallimore, Mariam Busari (CoP scholar), Dr. Rebecca Gokiert, Elliott Young (CoP scholar).

Conferences & Journals

Our team, alongside some of our community of practice scholars, has attended a few conferences (e.g. UofA's Festival of Teaching and Learning, 2026; CES, 2026) to share experiences and knowledge. The DEL team has a publication forthcoming in the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, which shares the our journey.



Abigail Gallimore (left) and Cheryl Lee-Yow (right)

Stylized Resource Guide

We have continued to create stylized resource guides! This year's guide is in connection to our webinar series, workshops, and community of practice - all of which have shared insightful resources and information that we have collected into one document. Scan the QR code to access the guide.



QR code for stylized guide

STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND REFLECTIONS

As we were creating this annual report and thinking back on our own journey together throughout the past three years that we have been part of this team, we decided to engage in some critical reflection in the form of dialog (Phillips et al., 2026). See below for some key highlights from our conversation and reminiscing together.

Sincerely, Cheryl Lee-Yow & Abigail Gallimore

→ Community as Joy

Throughout the past three years that we have been part of this team, we have worked with others to find different ways to bring together communities and centre our conversations around the joy that can be cultivated through continued learning and capacity-building opportunities.

→ Exploring “Decolonial”

We have transitioned and evolved from the initial creation of this team, where we navigated what the key goals were and how we were going to respectfully implement them without reducing the importance of holding space for each interconnected perspectives around decolonial approaches, not just in evaluation fields.

→ Learning and Practice

One thing we continuously balanced was the gap between learning and putting the learning into actionable practice opportunities. We continue to reflect on the fact that “our work is always in progress and the journey continues” (Absolon, 2022, p. 3). We are only beginning to explore the possibilities that emerging evaluators can engage in.

→ Wâhkôhtowin

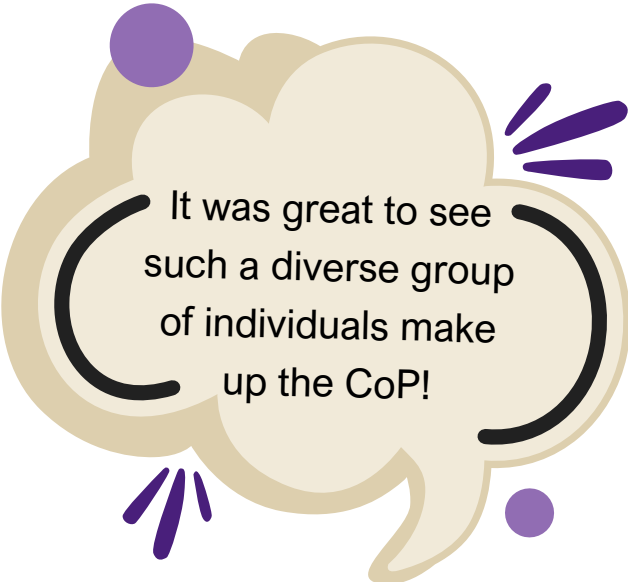
Drawing from the teachings that we received from Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack, we really connected with the teaching of wâhkôhtowin, where the work we are practicing is for the seven generations that come before and after ours. It is where our knowledge stems from, and the kinship that we are intentionally building continues to guide all the work we do.

Absolon, K. E. (2022). *Kaandossiwin: how we come to know, Indigenous re-search methodologies* (Second edition.). Fernwood Publishing.

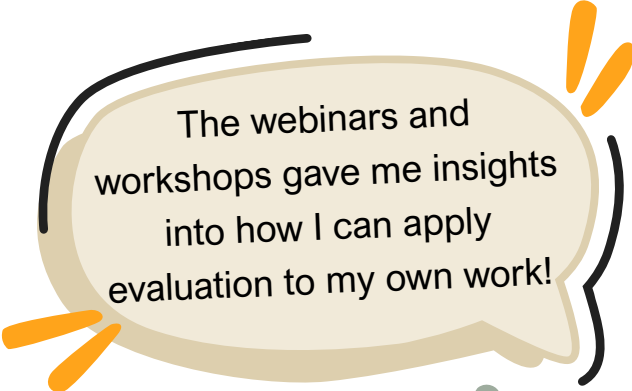
Phillips, G., Bowman, N. (Waapalaneexkweew) R., & Boyce, A. S. (2026). Positionality as dialog. *The American Journal of Evaluation*, 47(1), 142–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10982140251396831>

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FEEDBACK & REFLECTIONS

In the following pages, some of the community of practice members have shared their reflections and learning journeys. They are formatted as “DEL-byte” reflections, where they recount their knowledge development, the connections they made, and the stories they listened to. On this page, we also highlight some memorable messages from the CoP members.



It was great to see
such a diverse group
of individuals make
up the CoP!



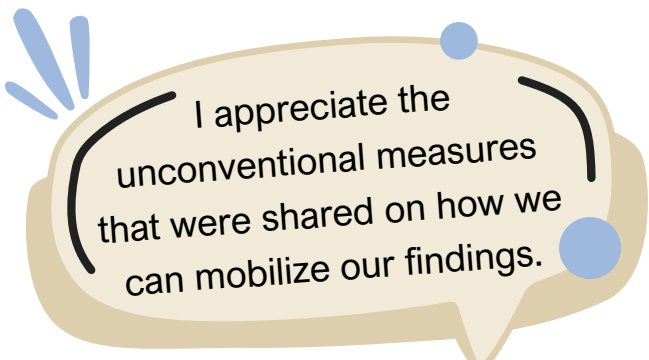
The webinars and
workshops gave me insights
into how I can apply
evaluation to my own work!



The CoP webinars
challenged my
assumptions I
had before.



I'm thankful for the
opportunity to be able to
be part of a space where
we don't have to be
apologetic for taking
up space.



I appreciate the
unconventional measures
that were shared on how we
can mobilize our findings.



WELCOME TO

DELBYTE

MARCH 2026

**Authors: Mariam Busari, John Faheem, Basel Tobail & Bernice Yamoah**

OVERVIEW

As part of the Decolonial Evaluation Learning (DEL) mini-series, Approaches to Evaluation: Lessons, Reflections, Advice, the session “Trauma-Informed Approaches to Evaluation: Lessons, Reflections, Advice,” held on January 15 and facilitated by Three Hive Consulting, explored what it means to incorporate trauma-informed principles into evaluation practice. The webinar focused on practice-oriented and reflective conversations with experts in the field. Throughout the session, speakers discussed lessons learned from their professional experiences and shared reflections on how evaluators can create safer and more responsive evaluation spaces. They also offered practical advice for practitioners who are continuing to develop and apply trauma-informed approaches in their own work. By centering ideas such as community voice, relational accountability, and cultural safety, the discussion highlighted how evaluation practices can become more collaborative, respectful, and responsive to the communities they engage with. The session left our group buzzing with new ideas and perspectives. The reflections below highlight key insights and takeaways from the webinar as interpreted by members of the Decolonial Evaluation Learning Community of Practice Scholars.



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MARIAM'S REFLECTION

I am currently enrolled in my Master's of Education in Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta. My research interests lie in community based research that explores how marginalized communities access mental health services, as well as how knowledge from research can be mobilized back to the communities it is meant to serve. I am especially interested in how evaluation can become a healing and reciprocal process rather than a hierarchical one. The idea of a community of practice, where we gather to question, reflect, and learn from one another, resonates deeply with me because it aligns closely with my work in mental health advocacy and community programming.

I also locate myself at the intersection of several worlds: as a Black, visibly Muslim Nigerian Canadian woman, a 1.5 generation immigrant, and a graduate student on Treaty 6 territory. These identities shape how I move through academic, cultural, and community spaces, and how I understand power, belonging, responsibility, and care. Because of this, conversations about decolonial and trauma informed evaluation feel deeply personal to me. They invite us to ask not only what we are studying, but how we engage with the people and stories entrusted to us.

The case examples shared during the webinar helped bring these ideas to life. They demonstrated what it looks like to be intentional and thoughtful when conducting evaluation work. For me, community based research in counselling psychology is closely connected to the core principles guiding the work at Three Hive Consulting. I appreciated how the facilitators emphasized the ethical responsibility evaluators have toward justice for the communities they work with. This included ensuring that evaluation reflects the community's truth and actively involving community members in the process of sense making, method selection, data collection, and interpretation. Rather than positioning communities as subjects of research, the discussion reinforced the importance of engaging them as collaborators and knowledge holders.

One moment that particularly stayed with me was when one of the facilitators spoke about vicarious trauma and the ways they care for themselves while being exposed to difficult stories and experiences through their work. As I move through my practicum and continue training in counselling psychology, this is something I have also begun to notice and reflect on more intentionally. Hearing their perspective helped validate the emotional realities of this kind of work and reminded me that caring for ourselves is also part of caring for the communities we work alongside.

I also appreciated how the facilitators spoke honestly about the successes, challenges, and ongoing evolution of their work. Often within institutions and bureaucratic systems there can be pressure to follow rigid processes or predefined expectations. Hearing their stories about adapting and responding to the needs of the communities they were working with reminded me that flexibility, humility, and responsiveness are essential. It reinforced for me that evaluation should not simply measure outcomes, but should prioritize safety, trust, and respect for those who entrust us with their experiences.

Overall, the webinar left me reflecting on the responsibility that comes with research and evaluation work. It reminded me that the goal is not only to generate knowledge, but to do so in ways that honour the communities involved and contribute to their wellbeing. As someone interested in community based mental health research, these conversations continue to shape how I think about the role evaluation can play in fostering healing, accountability, and meaningful change.





Our first session on “Trauma-Informed Approaches to Evaluation: Lessons, Reflections, Advice” offered us insightful strategies and examples of trauma-informed approaches in evaluation. As an MSc student at the University of Manitoba, my work involves investigating postgraduate physicians’ perspectives on interprofessional education in musculoskeletal medicine. While my current work in medical education does not directly focus on trauma-informed approaches to evaluation, I recognize strong similarities in their emphasis on building relationships, promoting collaboration, and respecting diverse perspectives. From this session, I believe that although evaluation metrics can provide adequate data, they must also be designed to protect the well-being and dignity of participants involved. A trauma-informed approach to evaluation emphasizes building safety and trust, recognizing the importance of collaboration, and promoting empowerment and cultural humility.

One of the most important ideas discussed in this session was recognizing that trauma-informed approaches to evaluation require a paradigm shift, moving from prioritizing data collection to prioritizing participants’ emotional and psychological well-being. Standard evaluation methods, such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups, may require individuals to revisit traumatic or emotionally difficult experiences. A trauma-informed approach to evaluation allows us to collect knowledge without harming participants and to address hidden power hierarchies within evaluation. As evaluators, I believe that we need to recognize our position of power, which can influence participants’ experiences through feelings of guilt, pressure, and/or judgment for their responses. A key benefit of this approach is that it helps us recognize that we are actively collaborating with our population, allowing us to prioritize building relationships and trust rather than collecting data. For instance, providing participants with flexible evaluation protocols, informing them of the evaluation’s intent, and allowing them to skip questions or pause discussions are just a few examples of trauma-informed approaches. Ultimately, these practices shift power back from evaluators to participants, allowing them to dictate whether they feel comfortable and psychologically safe within evaluation processes.

Additionally, trauma-informed evaluation approaches must continue to prioritize and acknowledge broader social and historical contexts. As evaluators, we need to recognize how trauma is shaped by historical and systemic forces, including colonial practices that continue to contribute to harmful ideologies and influence how knowledge and expertise have traditionally been constructed. In my previous learning, an Indigenous Elder shared a teaching that trauma is not only an individual struggle, but rather something that “Remains embedded throughout all of our relationships. Whether it is the relationship that we hold between each other, the land, animals, and spirit, rather than just being contained within an individual.” Reflecting on both of these perspectives encourages me to consider how evaluation practices must account for these broader contexts rather than focusing solely on program outcomes or reported data.

This session has encouraged me to reflect on the roles and responsibilities that evaluators hold when engaging with individuals and communities. As evaluators, we have both a professional and moral obligation to ensure that the knowledge that we accumulate does not come at the expense of the well-being, dignity, and lived experiences of those who participate in our research. As a researcher using evaluation metrics, I hold myself accountable to continue placing lived experiences at the center of evaluation, to prioritize psychological safety and participant autonomy. My goal is to continue promoting a culture of empowerment by using evaluation to guide evidence-based practices that respect and support the communities we have the honour of serving.





BASEL'S REFLECTION

Coming out of the “Trauma-Informed Approaches to Evaluation: Lessons, Reflections, Advice” session, I initially felt unsure whether I had taken away any major insights. At first, none of the lessons resonated deeply with me, but as I spent time reflecting on the stories we had the honour of hearing, a quiet teaching became clear. The most impactful takeaway was not explicitly mentioned, but instead revealed through the stories that were shared. Through the panellists’ projects, we saw what it truly means to meet people where they are. Not where our systems assume they should be, nor where we want them to be. But rather where they stand in the here and now, with all the unique complexities that have shaped them into who they are. This insight encouraged me to reconsider how often we subconsciously simplify people to make it easier to perform our roles efficiently. As a second-year medical student, I have begun to spend more time on the wards and noticed the pressure to adopt a reductionist lens towards patients. Patients become diseases to cure. Stories become data. Efficiency slowly erodes altruism and compassion. Watching evaluators slow down and take a step back to acknowledge lived experiences reminded me of how common it is to lose ourselves in evaluation. It also emphasized the importance of resisting the pressure towards conformity.

This lesson reminded me of the Indigenous teaching of Debwewin (truth), one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Although I am not Indigenous, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from these teachings, and Debwewin has shaped my understanding of complexity in human experience. It has taught me that two realities that at first seem to be mutually exclusive can both be entirely true. In the case of these diverse populations, it is crucial to understand that a person can be living with deep trauma and yet display enormous strength. They can struggle and simultaneously be resilient. In Shelby’s study, I noticed that Jules was not defined by a singular story. Her trauma was acknowledged and respected, and her right to decide how her story was told was simultaneously honoured. The evaluation process allowed for both her vulnerability and autonomy. By allowing the two to coexist in unison, the process captured the profound sense of humanity that was revealed through their interaction. This same approach could also be appreciated in Alecia’s evaluation of gender-based violence services and in Eyerusalem’s Safe Supports Project. Survivors were seen as people living with ongoing vulnerability, but also as people who deserve dignity, compassion, and respect. When safety concerns arose, the teams adapted their methods, eliminating interviews, prioritizing anonymity, and working through trusted intermediaries. These changes ensured that the lived experience of participants was valued and directly informed the methods used. Trauma and capability were not treated as opposites, but rather as equally important truths that shaped both the evaluation methods and how participants were understood.

Ultimately, trauma-informed work requires more than protective measures; it is shaped by how we choose to see and understand others. The session reinforced for me the importance of holding space for both pain and strength, rather than reducing people to a single narrative. This is the core lesson I am taking forward: always strive to meet people where they are and honour their stories through my interactions, whether with family, colleagues, or patients.



BERNICE'S REFLECTION



My doctoral research at Queen's University examines access to culturally safe mental health and addictions services for immigrant men in Kingston, Ontario. This work requires me to hold with care the stories, vulnerabilities, and silences of people who are often navigating multiple, compounding systems of marginalization. The DEL Fellowship has deepened my commitment to approaches that challenge extractive and Eurocentric evaluation norms, and this webinar arrived at exactly the right moment to sharpen that thinking. During the talk through their case studies, I recognized something I had felt but had not yet named: the tension between the ethical obligation to gather evidence and the equally ethical obligation to cause no harm in doing so. This reflective piece explores the insights I drew from this session, how they challenge and affirm aspects of my own practice, and where I see opportunities to deepen my approach to community-engaged, trauma-informed evaluation.

Of everything shared during the webinar, the most enduring insight was delivered by Alicia when reflecting on her decision to remove client interviews entirely from an evaluation of gender-based violence services: "Do I regret the choices that were made? Absolutely not." Their reframing from data limitation to ethical affirmation is deeply important. In traditional research and evaluation paradigms, adapting or abandoning a data collection method reads as a methodological weakness, something to be explained away in a limitations section. But in this case, it was repositioned as a demonstration of what rigorous, principled evaluation looks like when it is truly trauma informed. The decision not to collect data became itself a form of evidence, evidence of a values-driven practice that places safety above completeness.

This speaks directly to the core commitments of the DEL Fellowship, which challenges evaluators to interrogate whose interests are centred when we design our methods, and who bears the cost when those methods cause harm. For populations that have historically been over-studied and under-served, including the immigrant communities at the centre of my own research; the evaluator's willingness to step back, reassess, and refuse extractive methods is not a retreat. It is an act of solidarity, and a decolonial one.

A second most important lesson was the centrality of trusted relationships for ethical data collection. It was reassuring on how safety protocols were utilized in high standards by ensuring that survivors were never cold-contacted by an unknown evaluator. They worked through existing relationships, treating proximity to the community as a methodological asset rather than a logistical detail. One of the most transformative aspects of this fellowship for me has been the invitation to examine my own positionality as a researcher: as an immigrant woman, as someone working across the Global South and Canada, and as someone whose personal history intersects with the communities I study. The approach used in the cases affirmed that this positionality, when held reflexively, is not a bias to be managed but a resource to be mobilized in the service of more ethical, more relational evaluation.

In my own community-engaged narrative inquiry, I have been intentional about building my Community Advisory Council as a genuine co-governance structure rather than a token consultative body. This webinar affirmed that posture. The frontline staff and case managers in the examples were not simply informants but co-decision-makers who held real authority over methodology. That redistribution of methodological power is the practical expression of what collaboration and mutuality actually mean, and these are values that sit at the heart of both trauma-informed and decolonial evaluation practice.

The most immediate application for my research concerns how I structure participant recruitment and contact. Like the gender-based violence evaluation, my participant community of immigrants is navigating mental health and addiction systems. This includes people who may be in unstable, unsafe, or highly volatile situations at any given time. With my current protocol of collaboration and recruitment through community partners in Kingston, this webinar reinforced why that intermediary relationship is not merely pragmatic, but ethically necessary. Going forward, I will build explicit decision checkpoints into my Community Advisory Council protocol, predetermined moments where community partners and I jointly assess whether proceeding with data collection remains appropriate given the safety context at that time.

To me, this webinar offered something rarer than technique: it offered permission. Permission to adapt. Permission to say no. Permission to feel the weight of the work and to name that weight without apology.

CLOSING REMARKS

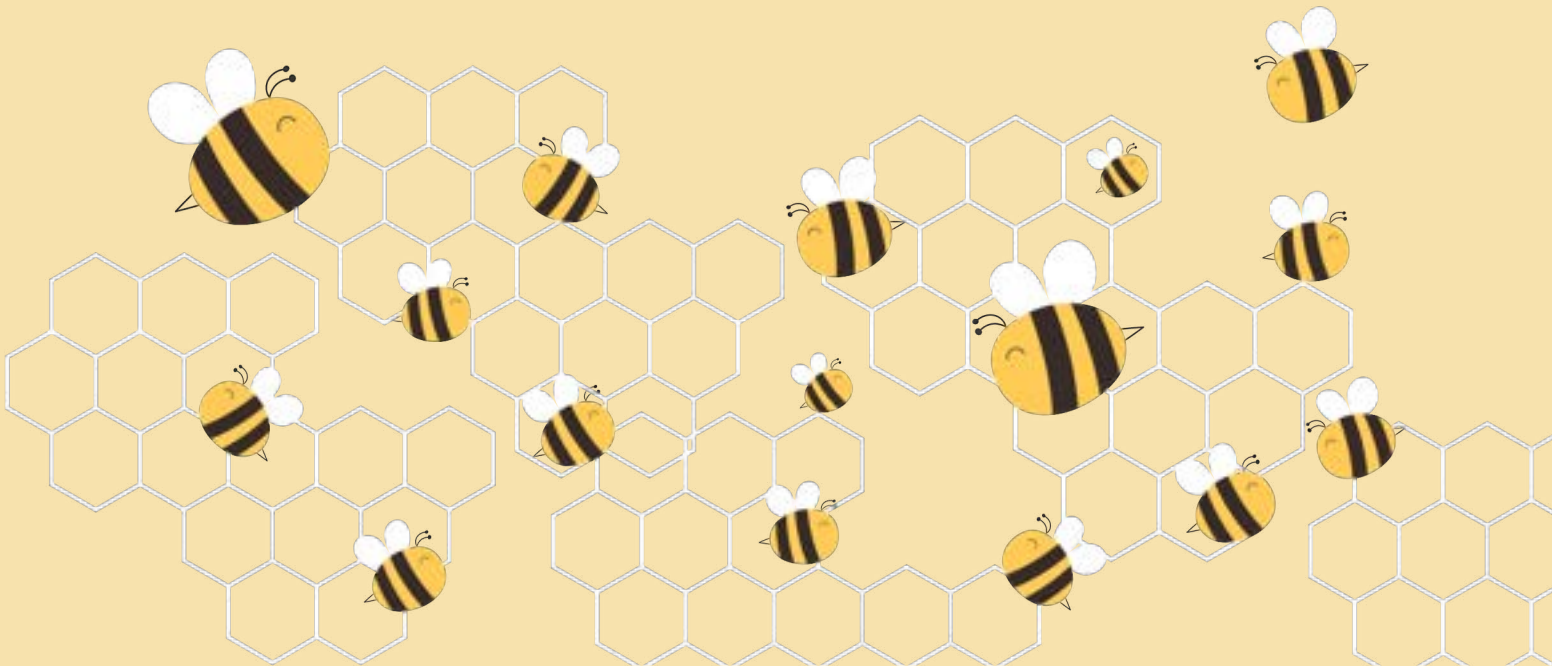
Before we buzz away to continue reflecting until the next session, we would like to extend a special thank you to our facilitators, **Shelby Corley, Alecia Kallos, and Eyerusalem Tessera** for taking the time to join us, answer our questions, and leave us with so much to think about. We would also like to thank **Cheryl Lee-Yow and Abi Gallimore** for hosting the session and helping create such a thoughtful and engaging space for discussion. A recording of this session is now available on our YouTube channel, please click [this link](#). We hope you found the webinar both inspiring and informative.

We have also created a stylized guide with resources suggested by facilitators and members of the ECN for those interested in exploring these ideas further, please click this [link](#).

Our next webinar session, “Indigenous-Informed Approaches,” will take place on March 13 at 10 a.m. MST / 12 p.m. EST / 9 a.m. PST. This session will be facilitated by **Dr. Melissa Tremblay, Associate Professor at the University of Alberta**, and we would love for you to join us. To learn more and register for this webinar, please click this [link](#)._____

Our final session, “Informed Approaches to Evaluation,” will be facilitated by Dr. Ayesha Boyce, a member of the AEA Board of Directors, and will be held on **May 14 at 11 a.m. MST / 1 p.m. EST / 10 a.m. PST.** To learn more and register, please click this [link](#). _____

Until next time!

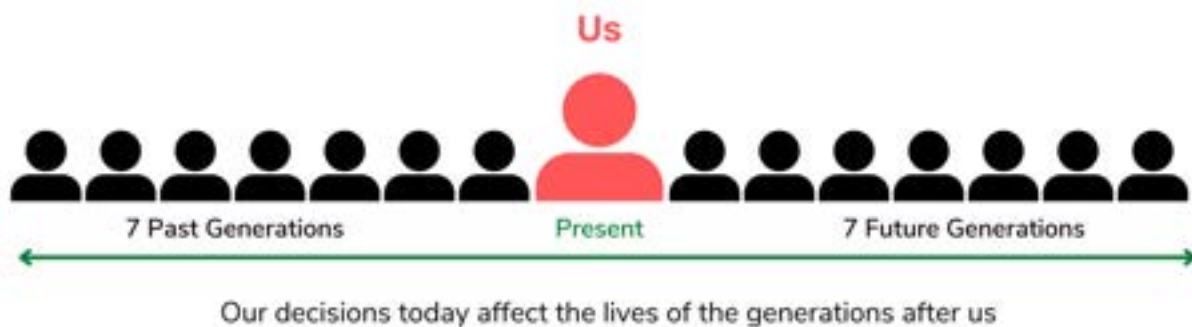


Reflection on Arts-Based / Hands-On Learning Session with Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack

By Janet Onyango

The arts-based and hands-on learning session facilitated by Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack offered a profound and transformative entry point into decolonial evaluation practices. Her approach, grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, reminded me that evaluation is not merely a technical exercise but a relational, embodied, and deeply human process. What stood out most was her emphasis on the power of naming, the seven-generation principle, and the importance of knowing who we are before attempting to understand or evaluate the experiences of others.

Dr. Whiskeyjack's teaching on the power of naming resonated with me in unexpected ways. Naming, in her framing, is not simply labeling; it is an act of recognition, identity, and accountability. It shapes how we see ourselves and how we show up in community. In Western evaluation, naming often becomes a categorizing tool defining populations, outcomes, or indicators. In contrast, Dr. Whiskeyjack invited us to consider naming as a spiritual and relational act, one that connects us to lineage, land, and responsibility. This shift challenged me to reflect on how I name the communities I work with, and whether those names honour their identities or simply serve institutional convenience.



The seven generations teaching expanded this reflection even further. Thinking seven generations back and seven generations forward reframed evaluation as a long-term relational commitment rather than a short-term project deliverable. It reminded me that the work I do today is part of a much larger continuum, one that includes ancestors who shaped the path and future generations who will inherit the consequences of our decisions. This teaching encouraged me to think about evaluation not only as a tool for accountability but as a practice of stewardship, care, and intergenerational responsibility.

The embodied exercises we engaged in were equally powerful. The breathing exercise grounded me in the present moment and reminded me that evaluation requires presence not just intellectual engagement. Drawing spirals with both my dominant and non-dominant hands, in clockwise and counterclockwise directions, was surprisingly revealing. Using my non-dominant hand forced me to slow down, release control, and embrace imperfection. It mirrored the discomfort that often arises when stepping outside Western, linear, and rigid evaluation frameworks.

The word cloud activity was another moment of introspection. Choosing a word that stood out to me and then surrounding it with related concepts helped me visualize and reflect the interconnectedness of my values, experiences, and intentions. It reminded me that meaning making is not isolated; it is relational and layered. This exercise also highlighted how arts-based methods can surface insights that traditional evaluation tools often overlook.



Overall, this session deepened my understanding of decolonial evaluation as a practice that must be embodied, relational, and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing. It challenged me to reflect on my own identity, my responsibilities, and the ways I engage with communities. I left the session with a renewed commitment to slowing down, listening deeply, and approaching evaluation with humility and relational accountability. Dr. Whiskeyjack's teachings affirmed that decolonial evaluation is not simply about changing methods, it is about transforming the evaluator.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Learning

→ Future Webinars

Focusing on practicing Decolonial Approaches in Evaluation to bridge theory, action and reflection.

Networking

→ Drop-In Sessions

Furthering ongoing virtual sessions where ECN community, scholars, evaluators, students and staff can connect.

Growing

→ Resource Guide & Newsletter

Continue to promote our stylized resource guide and support the ECN newsletter.





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