

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS): Applying It By, With, For, and Through Indigenous Evaluators and Evaluations

We All Count: Talking Data Equity

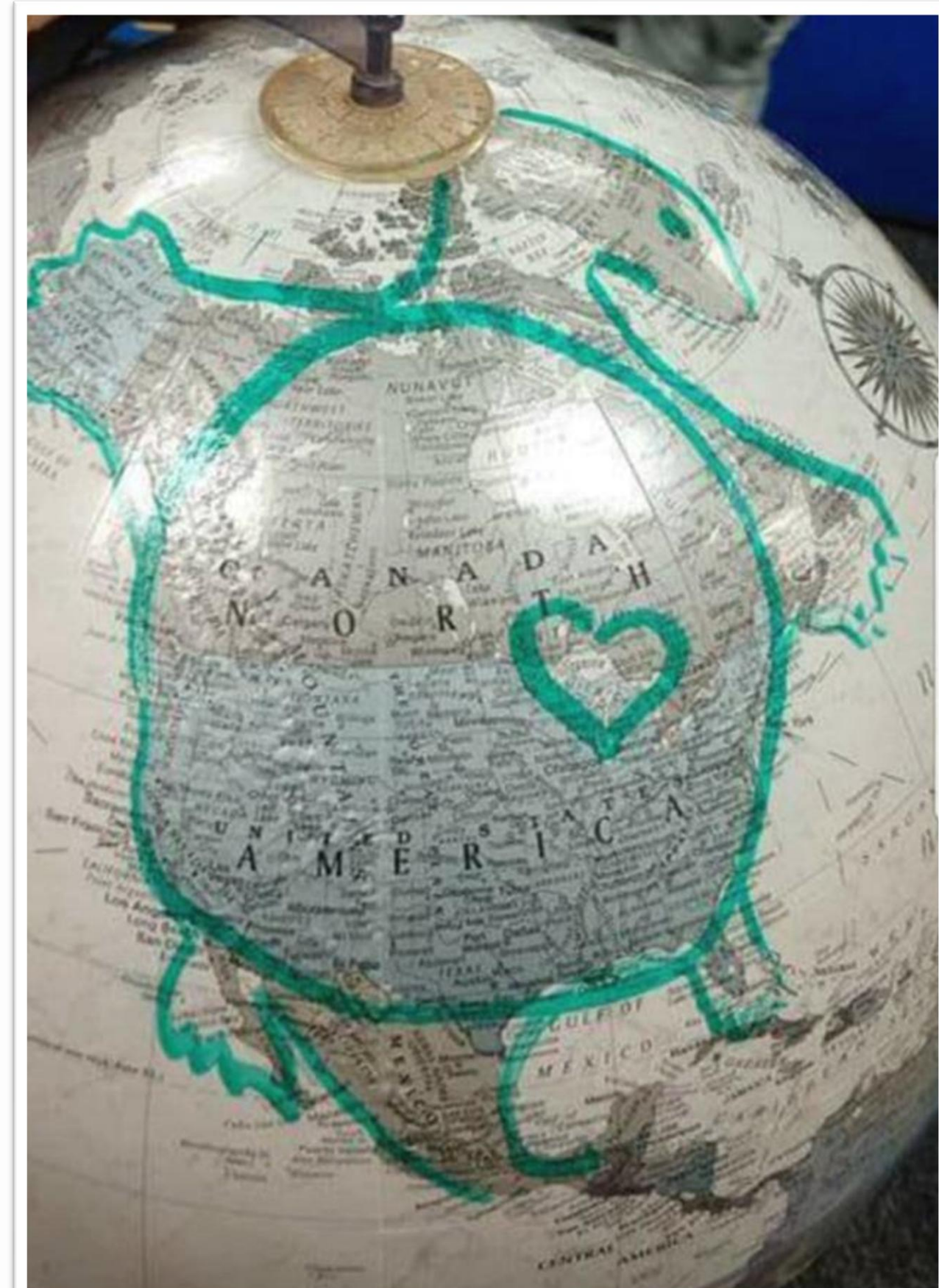
11:00 AM CT, July 18, 2025

Presenters:

Larry K. Bremner (Métis), CE FCES. and
Dr. Nicole Bowman (Lunaape/Mohican)



Prayer & Land Acknowledgment



Presenters Info



Larry Bremner

- Former Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) President, Award Winner, and Fellow
- Founder of Proactive Information Services Inc. (1984)
- First chair and driving force and behind the creation of the global network EvalIndigenous
- Co-editor of the permanent section in CJPE *Roots and Relations: Celebrating Good Medicine in Indigenous Evaluation*



Presenters Info



Dr. Nicole Bowman

- Lunaape Kwe, Daughter, Sister, Wife, (Vigil) Auntie, and Friend
- President, Bowman Performance Consulting
- Associate Scientist / Evaluator, University of Wisconsin
- International Evaluation Academy Trustee
- EvalIndigenous Founding Member
- Policy Chair, Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation, and Member, Evaluation Policy Task Force, American Evaluation Association



Overview

1. Global Representation: Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) is represented by organizations from various regions, including the Maïam nayri Wingara Collective (Australia), Te Mana Raraunga (New Zealand), and the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network.
2. Foundational Principles: IDS is grounded in Indigenous knowledge, Tribal treaties, Tribal constitutions, and frameworks like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
3. 2024 IDS Conference: Insights from the 2024 IDS Conference in Tucson, Arizona, including applications of IDS in evaluation, editorial work, and policy development.
4. Future Considerations: Concluding with reflections on how the field of evaluation should incorporate IDS in its theories, policies, funding, and practices.



Key Terms

1. Indigenous data refers to information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which is about and may affect Indigenous peoples both collectively and individually.
2. Indigenous data sovereignty (IDS) refers to the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise ownership over Indigenous data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination, and reuse of Indigenous data.
3. Indigenous data governance refers to the right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously decide what, how, and why Indigenous data are collected, accessed, and used. It ensures that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects our priorities, values, cultures, worldviews, and diversity.

Global Indigenous Population & Identity

[United Nations.\(n.d.\).](#)

1. 500M+ Indigenous people in 90 countries (~6.2% of global population).
2. Represent 5,000+ groups, speaking 7,000+ languages.
3. Maintain distinct social, economic, and political systems.
4. Commonalities: historical ties to land, unique languages, cultures, and knowledge systems.





Recognition & Rights

[Government of Canada, 2024](#); [UN, 2024](#); [US Department of Interior, n.d.](#); [Statistics Canada, 2022](#)

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) upholds Indigenous rights.
2. Indigenous sovereignty: legal recognition of Indigenous Nations as self-governing entities.
3. U.S.: 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations.
4. Canada: 630+ First Nations communities, 50+ Nations and languages.
5. Indigenous self-government recognized in Canada's Constitution Act (1982).



Global IDS Movement

[International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2021, 2022](#); [Oguamanam, 2019](#); [US Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network, 2024](#).

1. Global movement started in 2015 by the Global Indigenous Data Alliance.
2. Represented in North & South America, Australia, New Zealand, the Arctic, Pacific Islands.
3. Driven by Indigenous knowledge, laws, culture, and governance.
4. Response to misuse and exclusion from mainstream data practices.
5. Focus areas:
 - Nation-building & self-governance.
 - Protecting cultural & environmental data (e.g., Land Back movement).
 - Addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/Girls (MMIW/MMIWG) crisis.
 - Mitigating risks of artificial intelligence & data breaches affecting Indigenous communities.

IDS Principles: CARE & FAIR

[Carroll et al., 2020.](#)

1. CARE Principles (Indigenous-led framework):
 - Collective Benefit
 - Authority to Control
 - Responsibility
 - Ethical Use
2. FAIR Principles (Western framework):
 - Findability
 - Accessibility
 - Interoperability
 - Reusability





Decolonizing Evaluation & Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS)

[Fricker, 2007; Waapalaneexk-weew & Dodge-Francis, 2018.](#)

1. Indigenous peoples must retain ownership, governance, and ethical use of their data.
2. Evaluation frameworks must be led by, with, for, and through Indigenous communities.
3. Journals and institutions must recognize Indigenous intellectual property and data ethics.
4. Policies and reports, such as UNDRIP, emphasize Indigenous sovereignty in evaluation.
5. IDS extends to land, water, and ecosystems, reinforcing Indigenous environmental governance.

IDS in Policy & Legal Frameworks

[Hunter, 2023](#); [Roberts & Montoya, 2022](#); [Tsosie, 2019](#); [2024 Wolastoq Declaration, Evalindigenous](#).

1. Governments and institutions incorporate IDS into environmental policies (e.g., U.S. Forestry Department, Canadian Research Agencies).
2. IDS strengthens Indigenous sovereignty in legal and environmental justice cases (e.g., 2024 Wolastoq Declaration on Indigenous Evaluation).
3. IDS aims to reclaim control over Indigenous research and evaluation.



From Knowledge to Action: Bridging the Gap for Justice

Research and/or evaluation often claims to fill the knowledge gap, when in reality, there is an action gap. Despite drowning in data, we are starving for justice.

-Unknown Author





Artificial Intelligence (AI):

“The Enormous Wheels of Extraction Grind On”

[Hao, 2025.](#)

1. AI is a simulation of human intelligence processes by computer systems. These systems are designed to perform tasks that typically humans do such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, decision making, etc.
2. Birth of AI 1950–1960 and some credit John McCarthy (who coined AI term) during a 1956 Dartmouth workshop that brought together researchers to explore the possibility of creating machines that could simulate human intelligence.
3. Sam Altman, cofounder of Open AI (2015), wanted to do good as a nonprofit, and as of 2019 it is a for-profit company worth nearly \$500 billion with a handful of investors (4) that can “play” in the AI sandbox.
4. As a result, as the Empire of AI (Karen Hao, 2025) shares, “The truth is that we have entered a new and ominous age of empire: only a small handful of globally scaled companies can even enter the field of play. At the head of the pack with its ChatGPT breakthrough, how would OpenAI resist such temptations?”



Artificial Intelligence (AI): What can the research and evaluation community do?

1. Get baseline information that provides pros, cons, and unknowns for AI. For evaluators, see what is out there and who is critically and constructively considering AI. Brad Rose, a Chicago-based evaluator, gave a wonderful class in June 2025 on “Using AI Responsibly in the Social Sector.”
2. Be a critical and informed user (or non-user) of AI. At CREA 2025 there was a pre-conference workshop sponsored by MERL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning) that “looked at” AI and CRE. This experience was informational in some ways about what AI is, shared how it works, and gave the CRE concerns about erasure, inaccuracies, extraction and other concerning aspects.
3. Learn how to spot bias in AI. AI tools are trained on content that overrepresents and underrepresents and includes many data quality issues.



Artificial Intelligence (AI): What can the research and evaluation community do? (Continued)

4. Fast information doesn't mean it is right, comprehensive, just, ethical, valid, reliable or trustworthy.
5. Consider privilege in AI. Just because it is published and on the internet doesn't make it the best or only source. Oral history and other Indigenous knowledge is not for public consumption and extraction.
6. Consider the short- and long-term consequences. Does AI include policies and governance protections that align with First Nations Governments or Indigenous peoples' policies, values, ethics, and practices? How might AI harm or erase other racial/ethnic and LGBTQ2S communities and people?

Moving IDS Forward



1. IDS integrates legal, social, and cultural disciplines to support Indigenous-led evaluations.
2. IDS ensures ethical, sustainable research practices and equitable decision-making.
3. Cross-sector collaboration is essential for ethical, data-driven governance and policy.
4. Expanding IDS in evaluation promotes fairness, accountability, and Indigenous sovereignty.
5. Partnerships with non-Indigenous allies must be intentional, reciprocal, and respect Indigenous leadership, including AI and other threats.



Actionable Steps for Allies & Researchers

1. Learn Indigenous sovereignty basics (e.g., Truth & Reconciliation courses; First Nations Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP)).
2. Educate yourself on IDS (e.g., U.S. Indigenous data sovereignty courses, First Nations Information Governance Centre).
3. Reframe research funding & policy to support Indigenous leadership and decision-making.
4. Align publication practices with IDS principles (e.g., reassess journal policies, support Indigenous authors).
5. Highlight IDS at major conferences and ensure Indigenous evaluators have financial and logistical support.

Community Discussion and Questions



Anushik,
Thank You!



Contact Information

Nicole Bowman
(Lunaape/Mohican), PhD
President, BPC
Nicky@bpcwi.com

b Bowman
PERFORMANCE CONSULTING
www.bpcwi.com



Larry Bremner
(Métis),
President, Proactive
Information Services Inc.
Larry@proactive.mb.ca

proactive
INFORMATION SERVICES INC.
www.proactive.mb.ca

