

# AN INVITATION TO INDIGENOUS EVALUATION

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Jeremy Braithwaite, PhD

June 30, 2023



# Inviting Everyone Into Our Shared Space

- ❖ A shared prayerful thought about our Tribal families and relatives
- ❖ The blessing of our work together
- ❖ The purposeful thought that brought our work together



# Thought Partners

Jeremy Braithwaite, PhD  
Lake Arrowhead, CA

"Journeying Toward Wellness"  
Oneida Nation

Linda Sue Warner, PhD  
(Comanche)  
Miami, OK



*America is portrayed as 'Turtle Island' in 'Singuistics.' Elizabeth LaPensée, CC BY-ND*



# Day in the Life Activity







**Evaluation is all around us!**



**LAKE  
ARROWHEAD**

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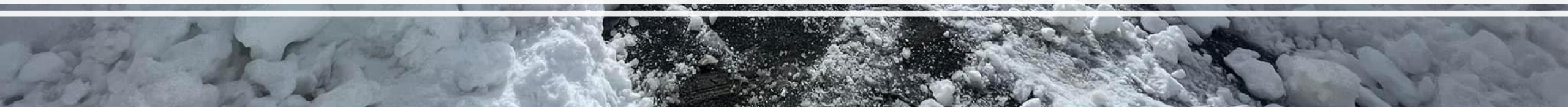
**2023  
BLIZZARD**







10 feet in 10 days!!!





















No one  
saw this  
coming...





...except  
these guys.



# EVALUATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN INDIGENOUS PRACTICE

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# Evaluation has always been an Indigenous practice

“

If our ancestors did not assess or evaluate a situation, length of season, food supply, and so on, it could literally mean life or death.

”

-Bowman & Dodge Francis



# Evaluation has always been an Indigenous practice

“

Old Indians were interested in finding the proper moral and ethical road upon which human beings should walk.

”

-Deloria, 1993



<https://www.colorado.edu/law/2023/02/06/vine-deloria-jr-70>



# What Happened with Colonization

Colonialism Manifested By	Political Colonialism	Scientific Colonialism
<b>1. Removal of Wealth</b>	Exportation of raw materials and wealth from colonies for the purpose of 'processing' it into manufactured wealth and/or goods.	Exporting raw data from a community for the purpose of 'processing' it into manufactured goods (i.e., books, articles, wealth, etc.)
<b>2. Right of Access and Claim</b>	Colonial power believes it has the right of access and use for its own benefit anything belonging to the colonized people.	Scientist believes s/he has unlimited right of access to any data source and any information belonging to the subject population.
<b>3. External Power Base</b>	The center of power and control over the colonized is located outside the colony itself.	The center of knowledge and information about a people or community located outside of the community or people themselves.



# Today's Sharing

- ❖ Reclaim evaluation as a learning practice
  - We hope today's session feels more familiar than "new"
- ❖ Describe best practices for good evaluation in Indigenous communities





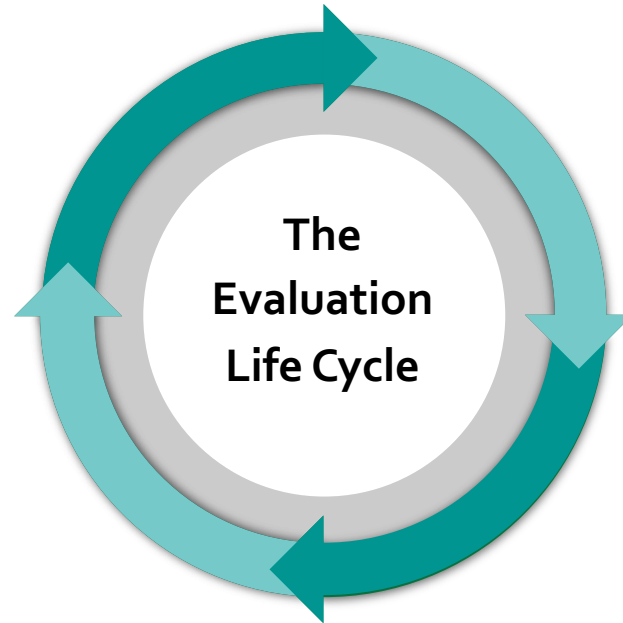
# EVALUATION 101

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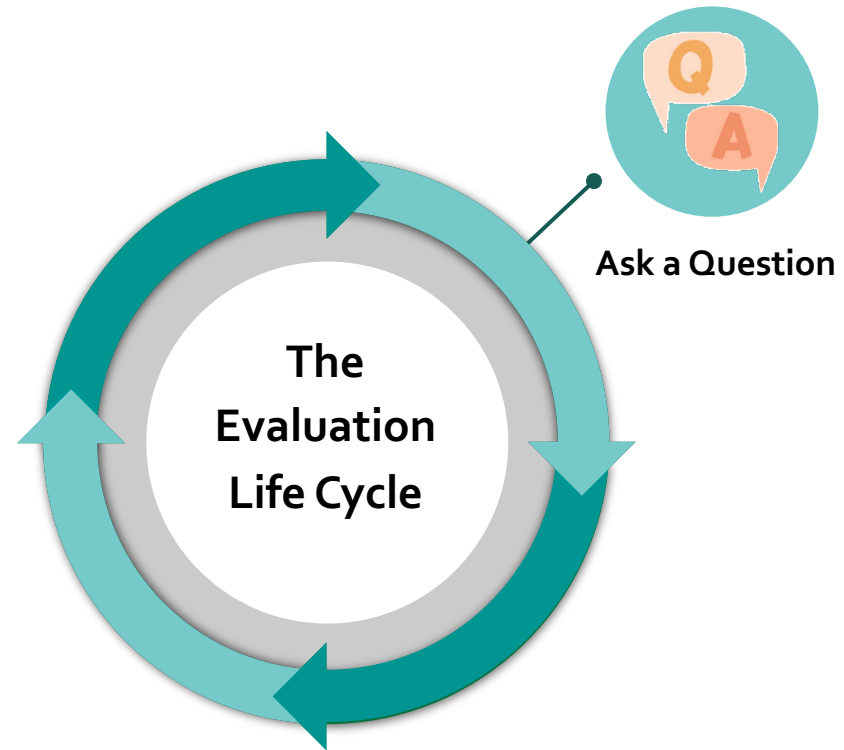
A Quick Refresher



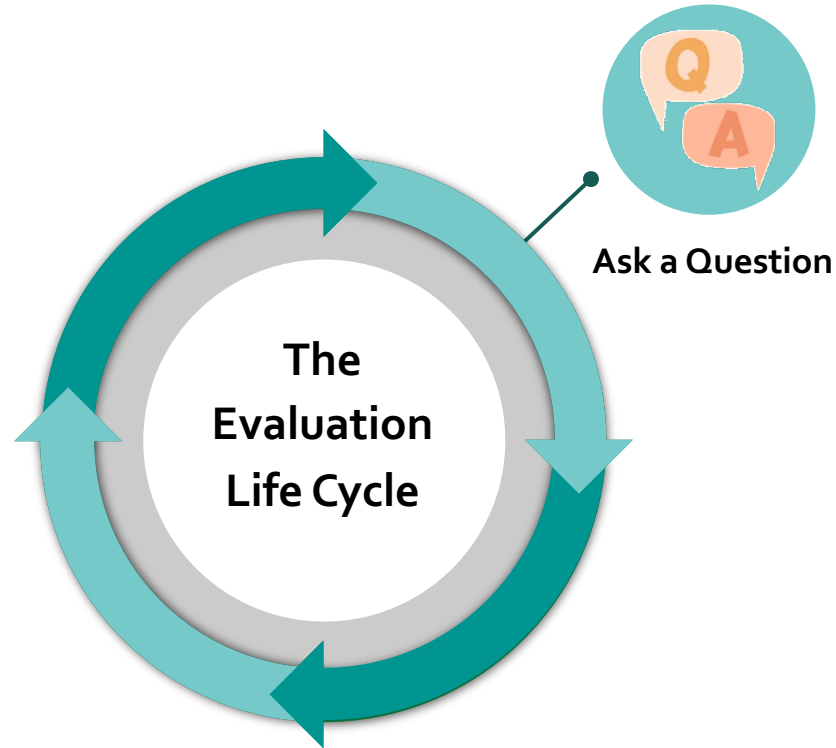
# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



## Common Evaluation Questions We Ask:

Is the target population adequately reached by and involved in activities?

How does the target population interact with the program?

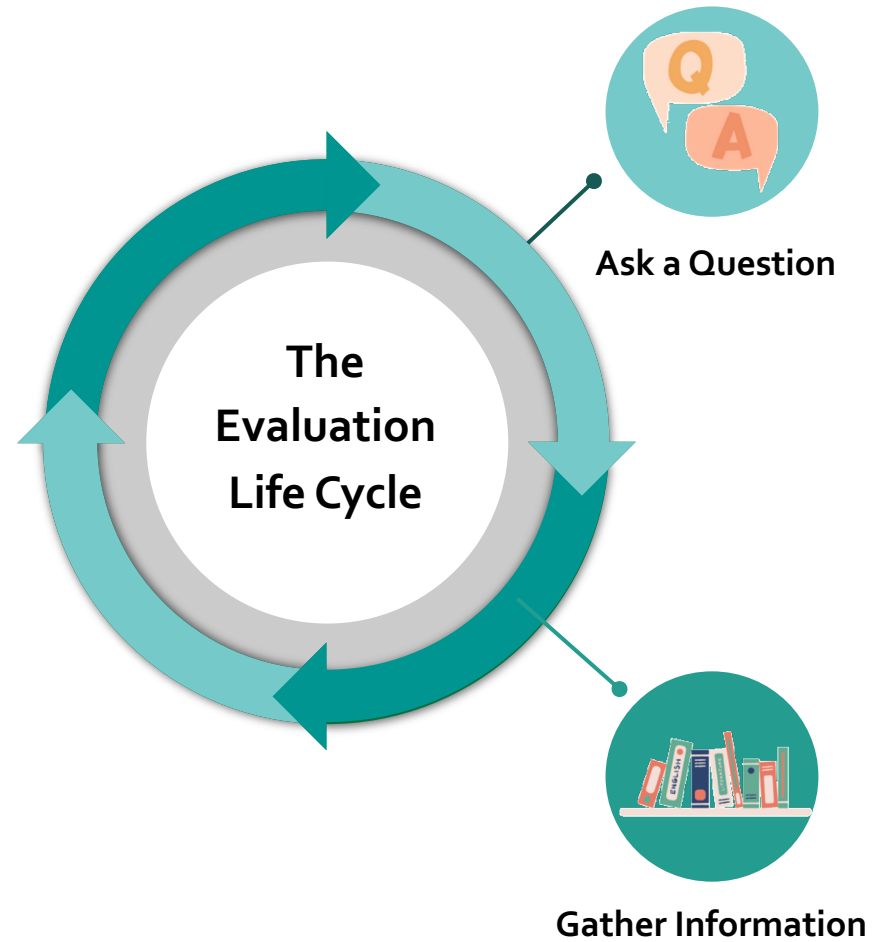
What does the target population think of the services? Are they satisfied?

Have the outcomes, objectives, and goals been achieved?

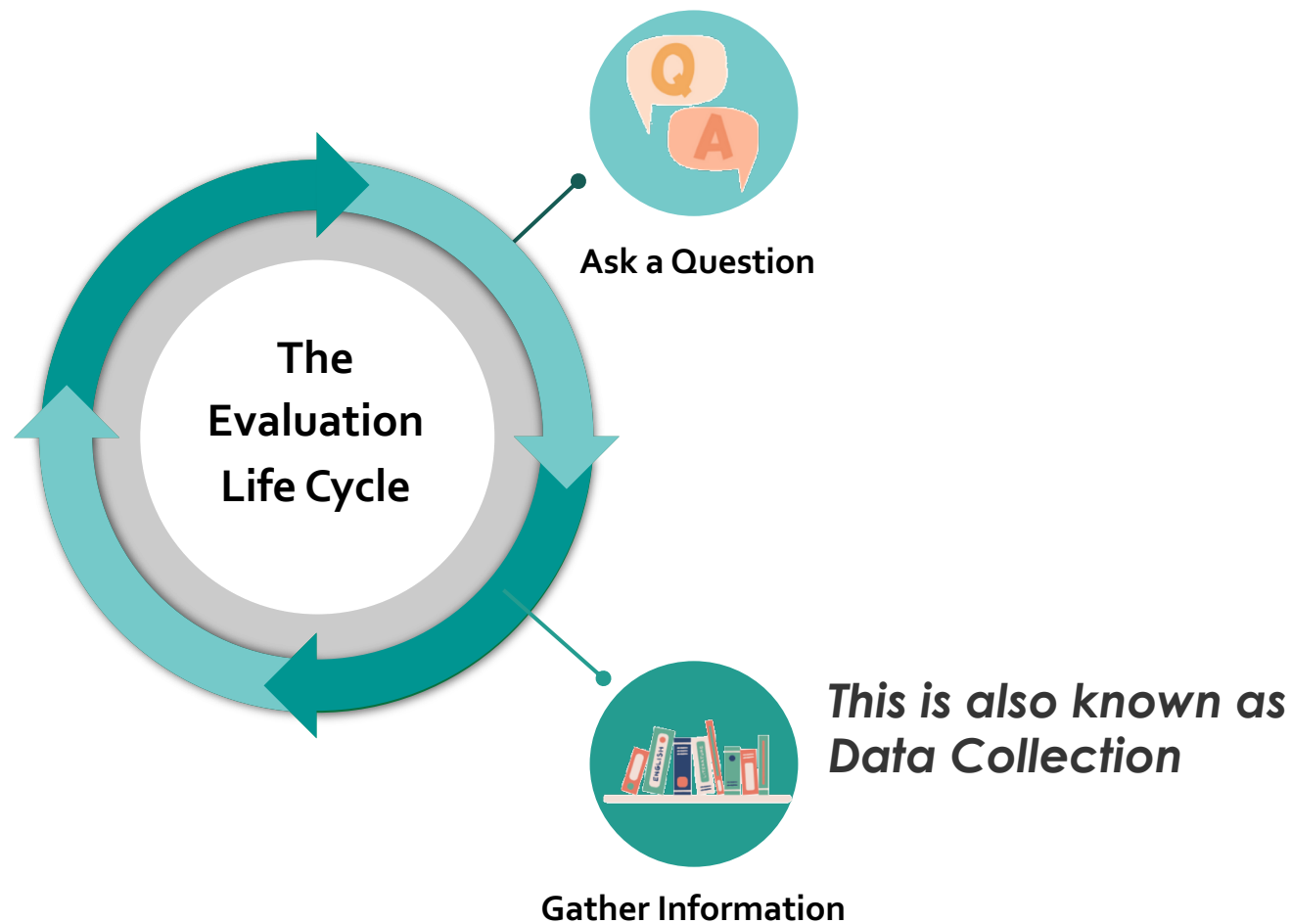
Is the target population affected by the project/ program equitably or according to the evaluation plan?



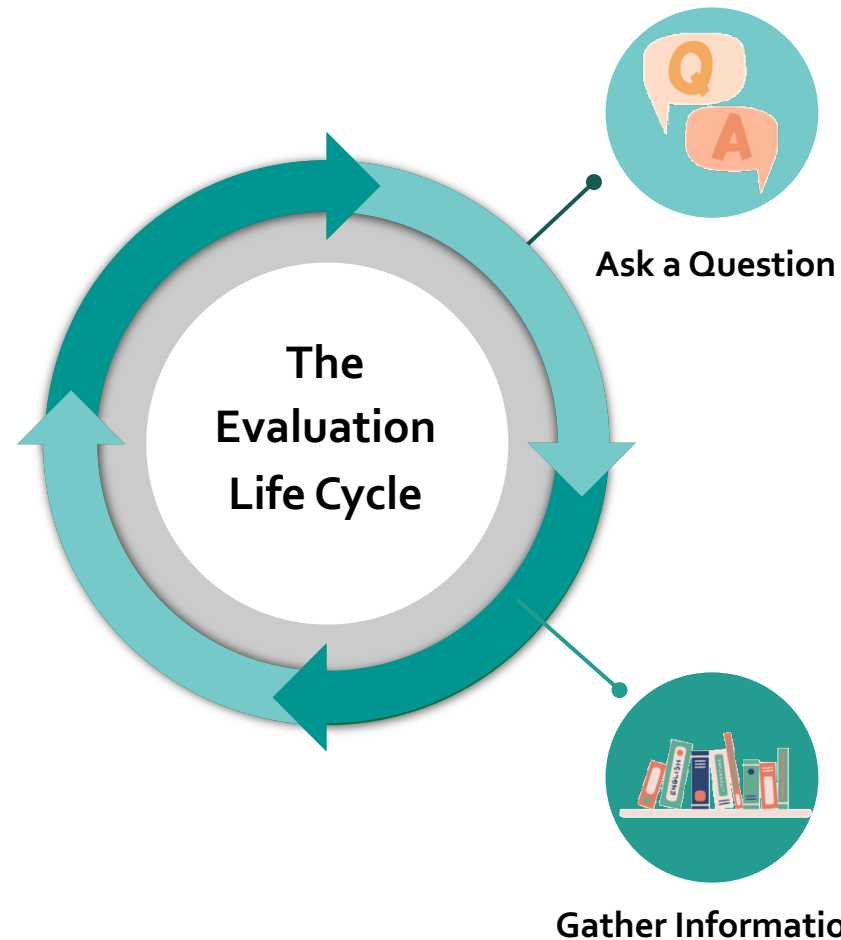
# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



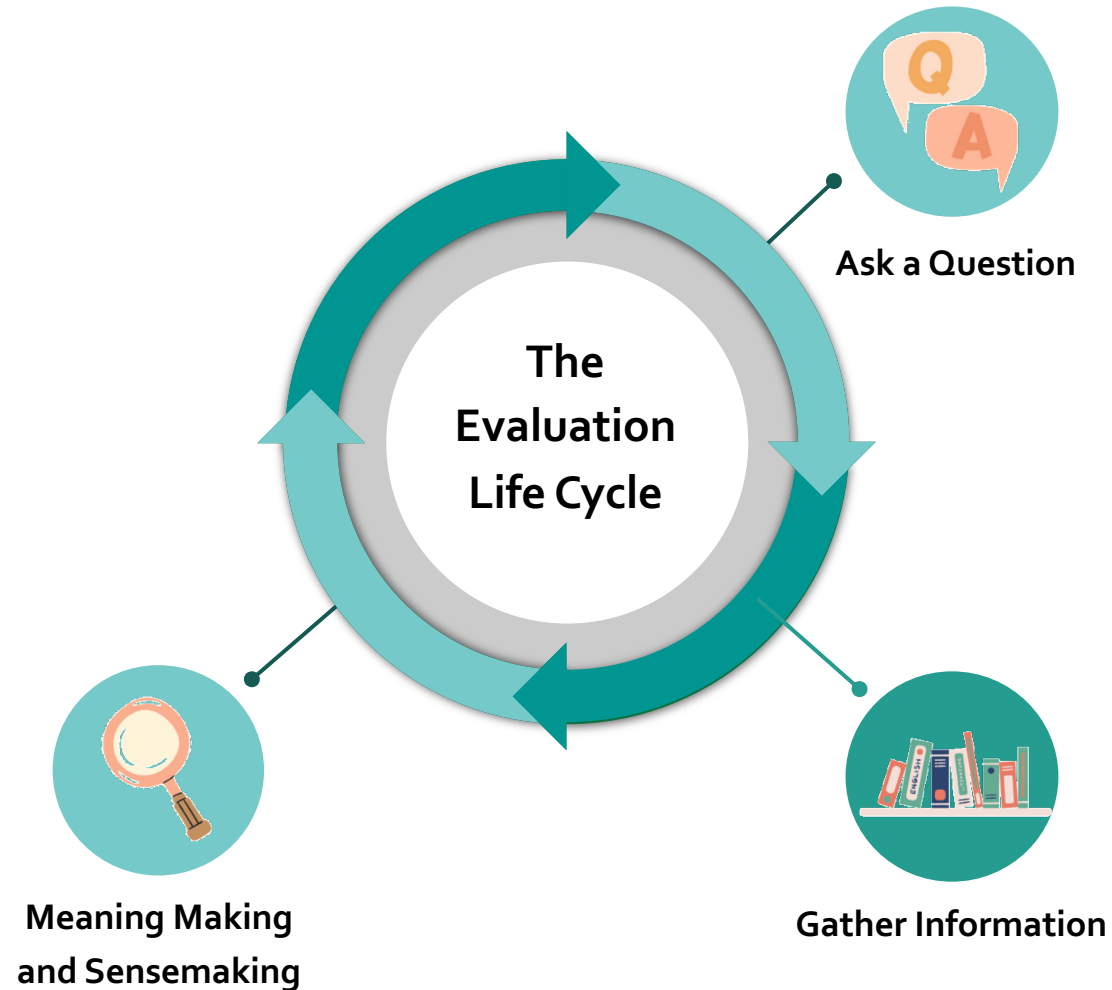
# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



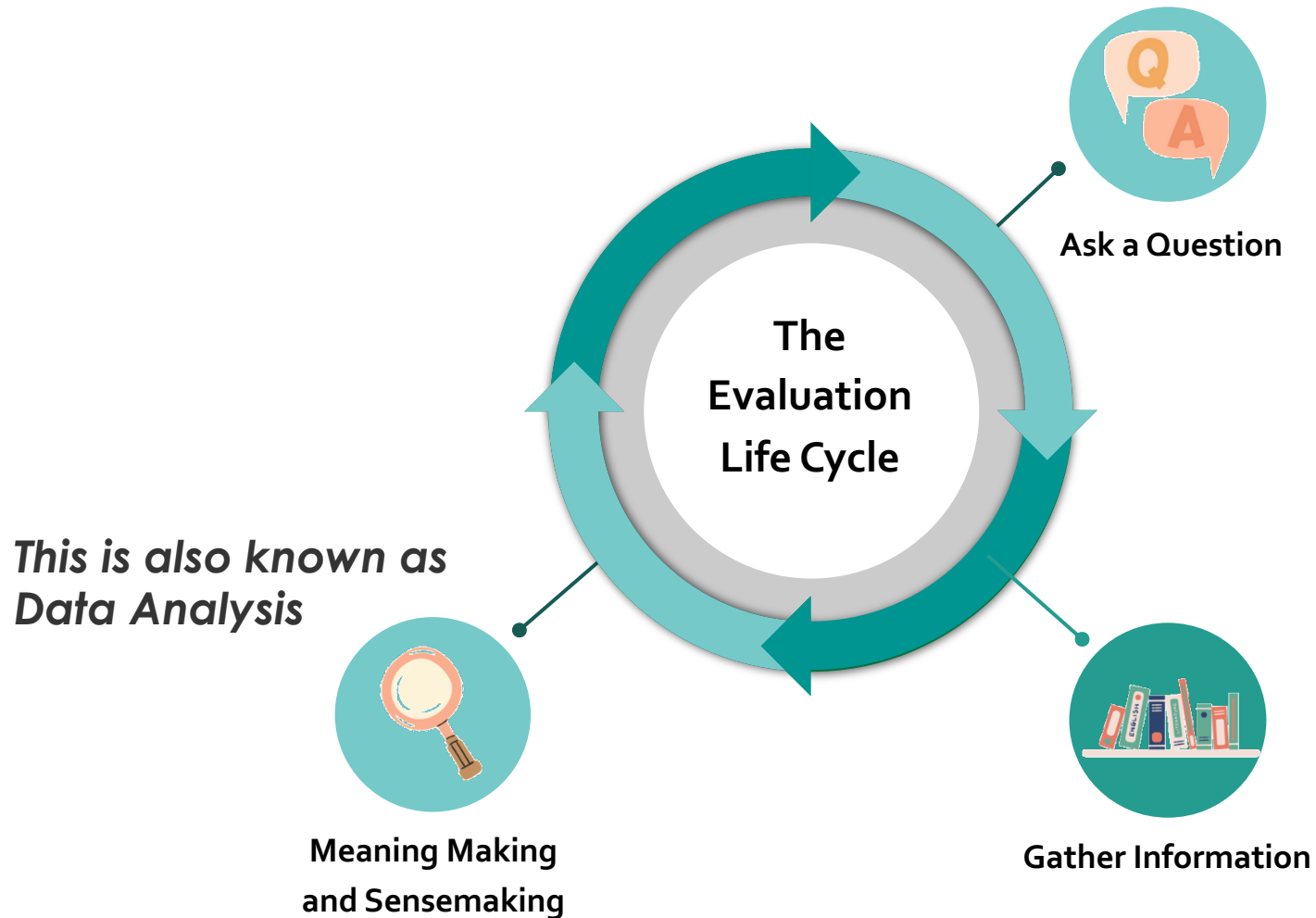
The type of information/data we gather always depends on the questions we ask. For each evaluation question, ask yourself “Who/what will give me answers to this question?” Answers may come from:

- Conversation Circles
- Storytelling
- Surveys
- Field Observations
- Art-making
- Interviews
- Secondary Data
- And much more!

# Evaluation's Circular Relationship

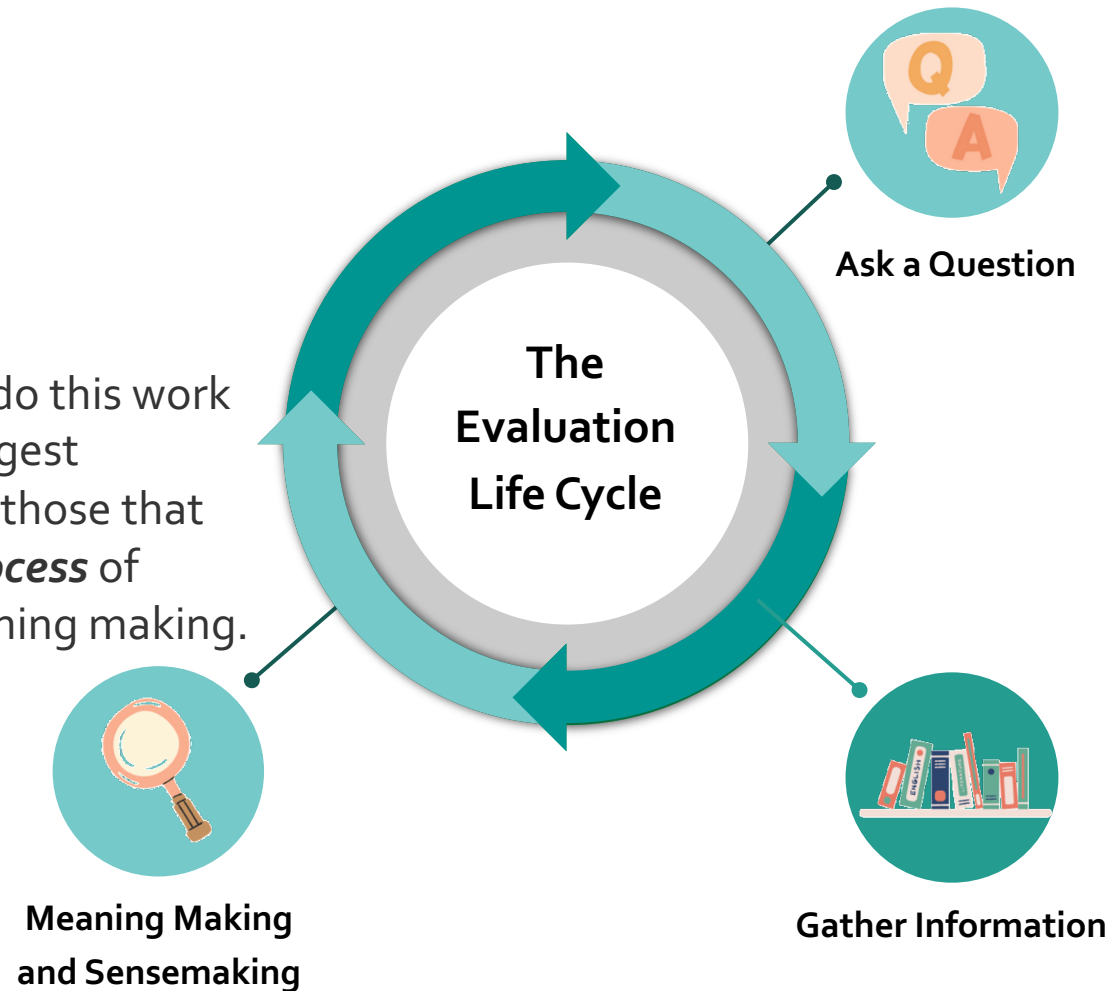


# Evaluation's Circular Relationship



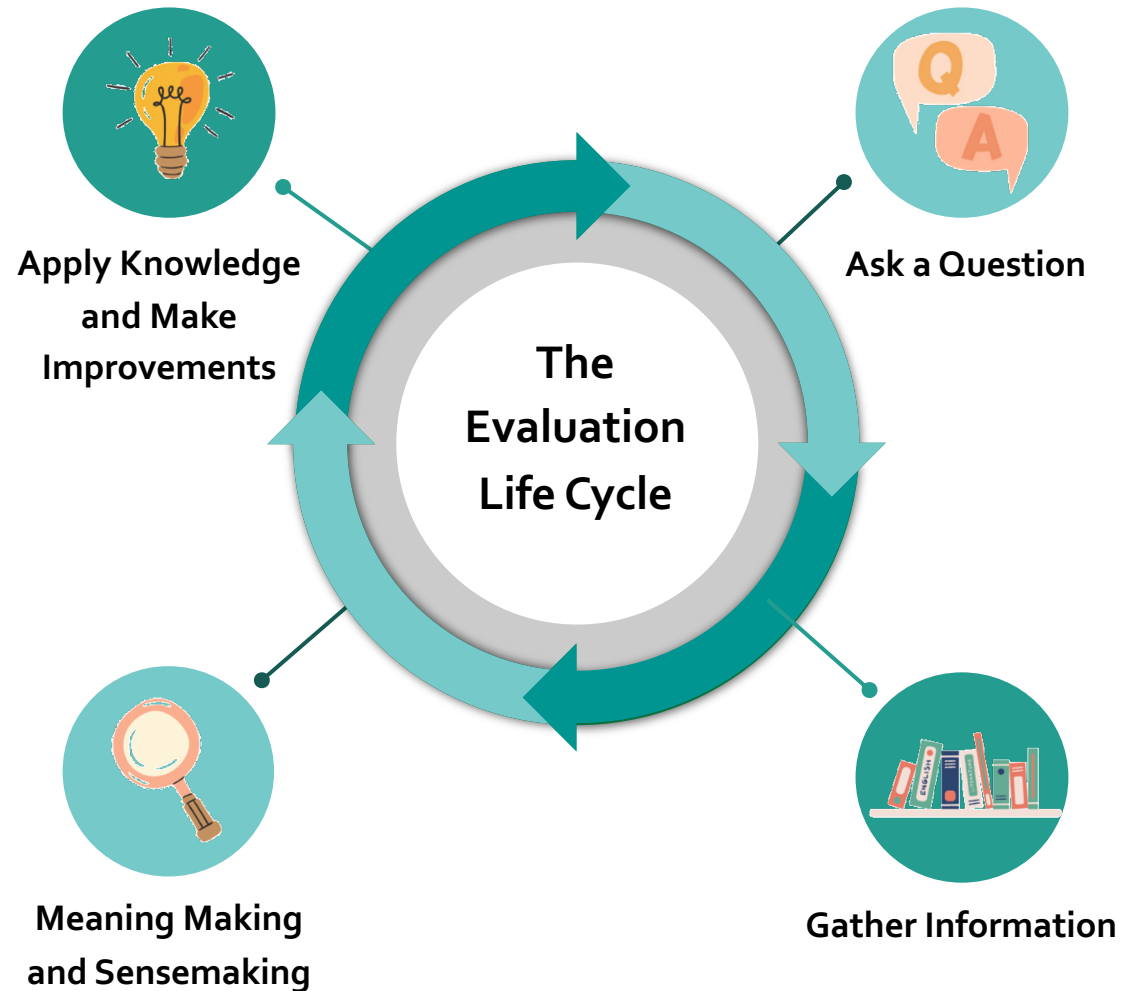
# Evaluation's Circular Relationship

Evaluators should not do this work in a vacuum. The strongest evaluation designs are those that use a **collaborative process** of sensemaking and meaning making.



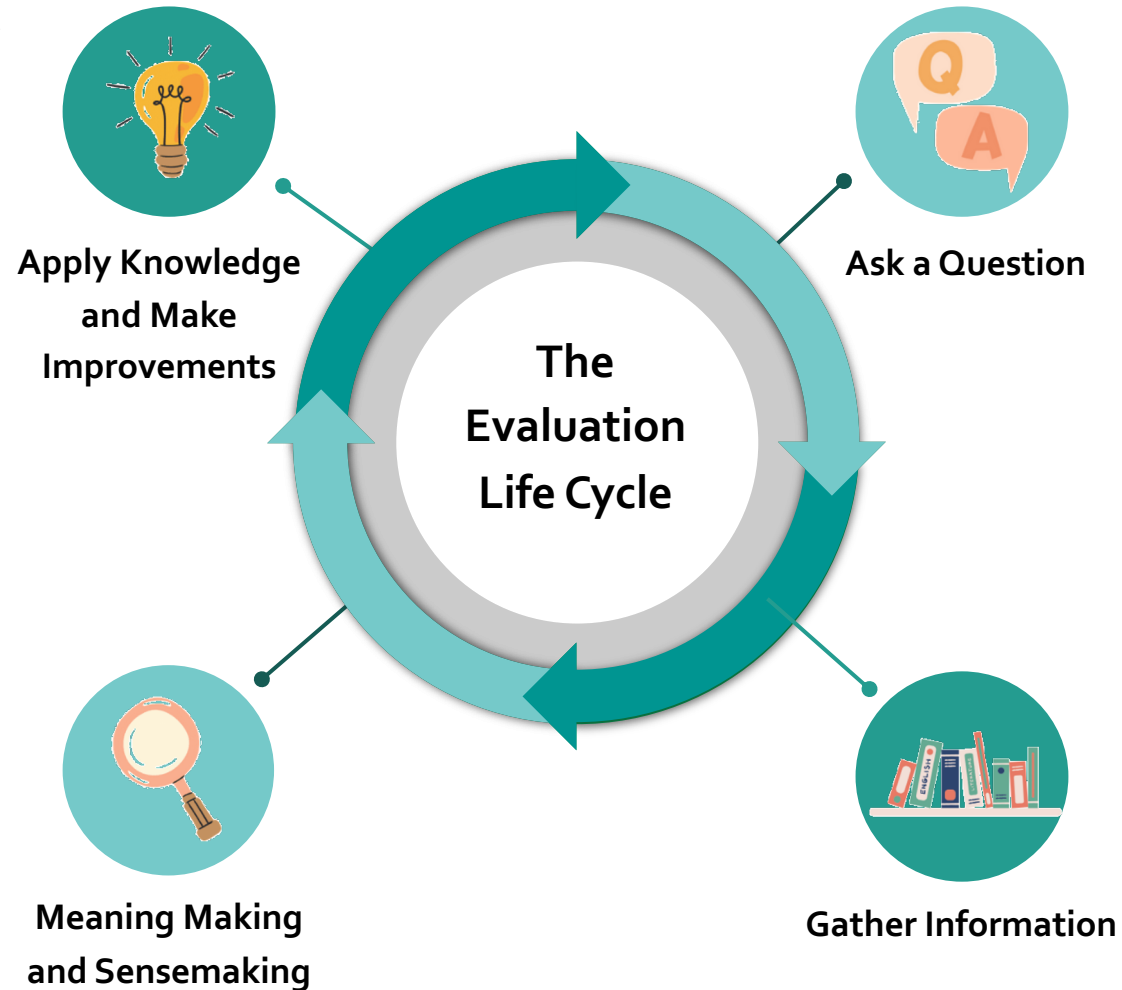


# Evaluation's Circular Relationship

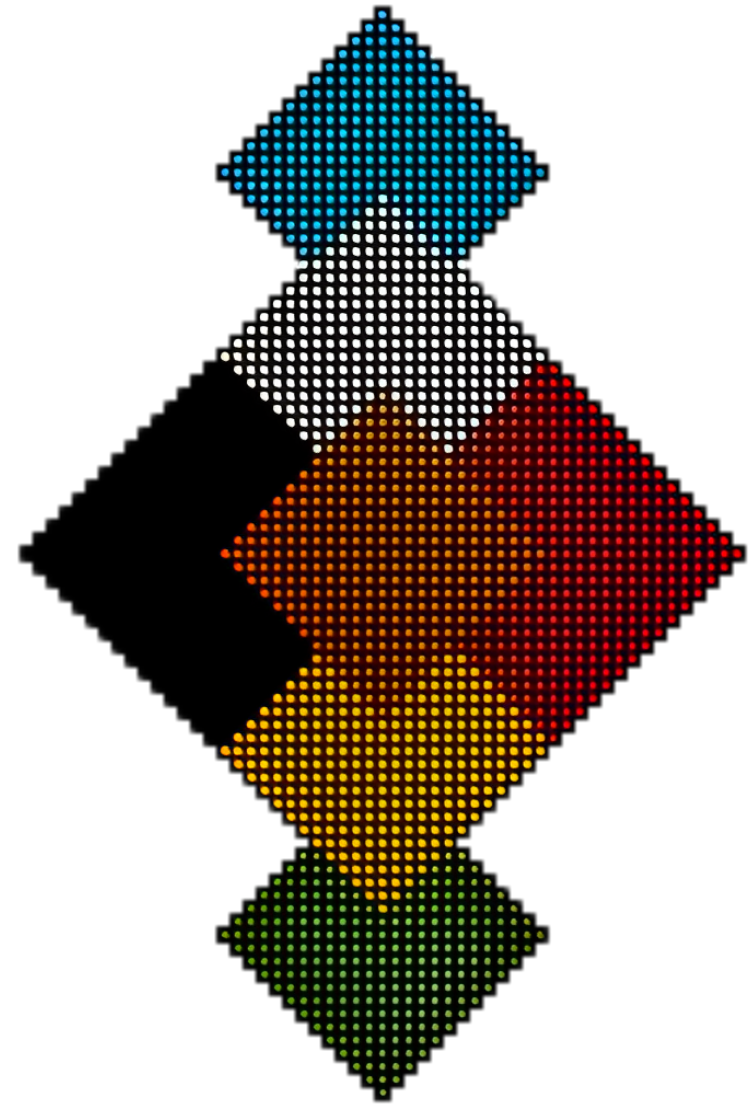


# Evaluation's Circular Relationship

*This is also known as  
Data Utilization*



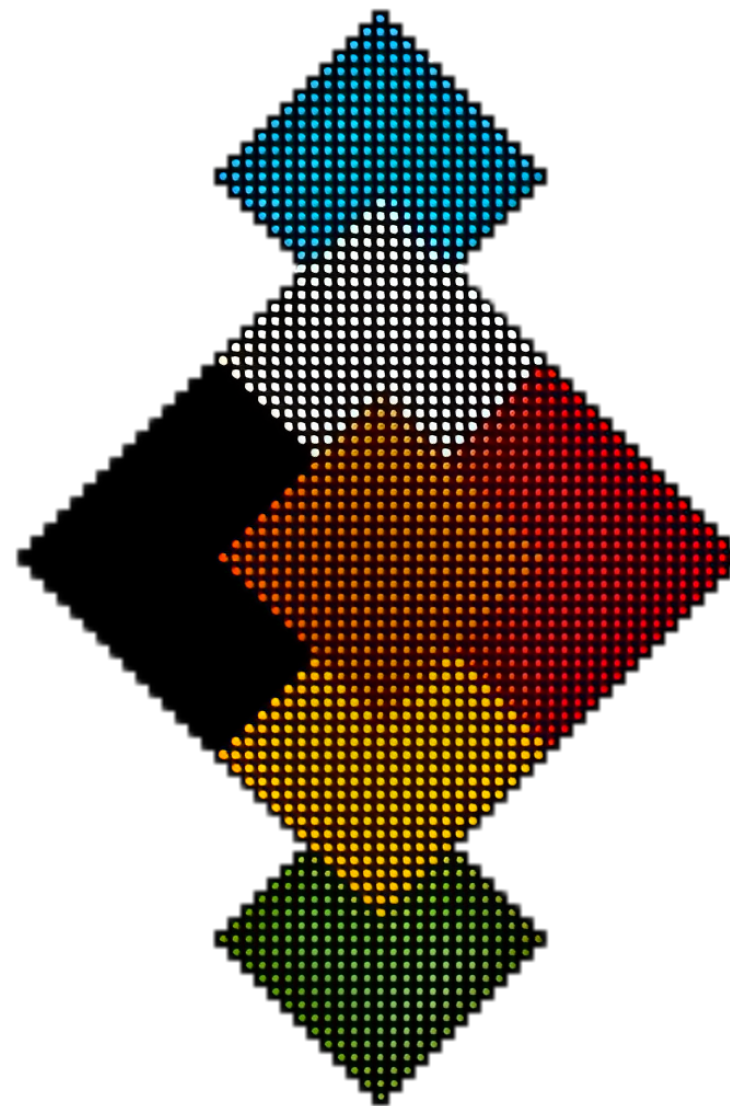
# Seven Directions of Indigenous Evaluation



Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



## EASTERN DIRECTION: Beginnings

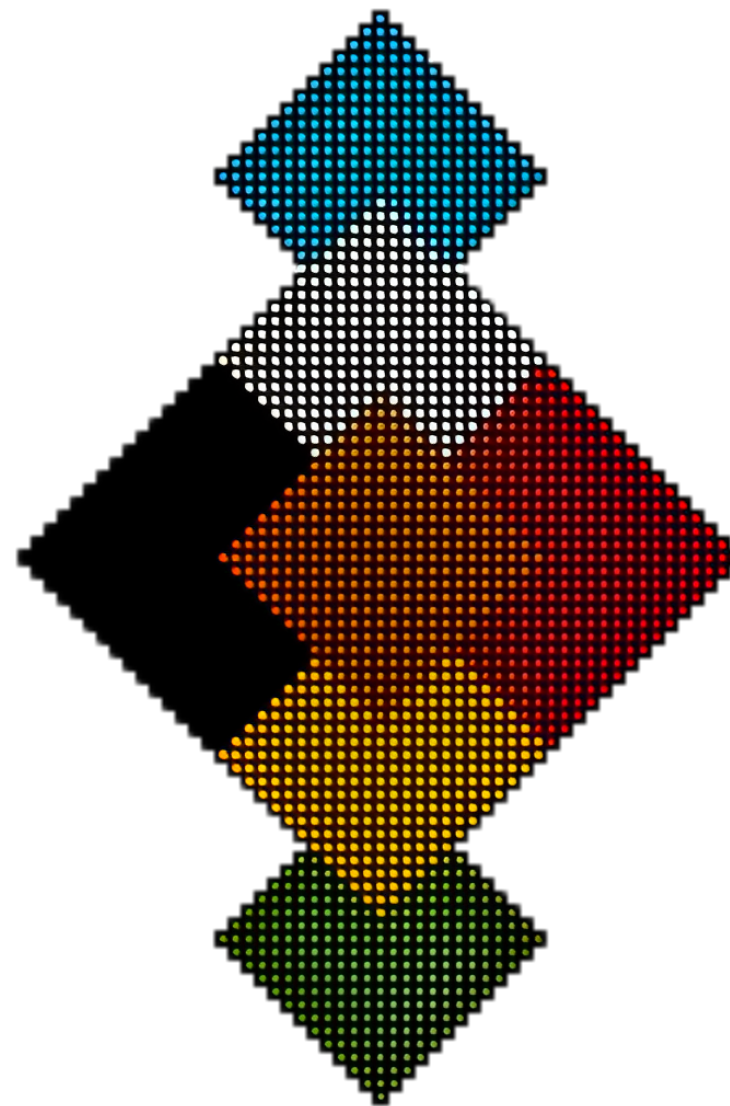


Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning



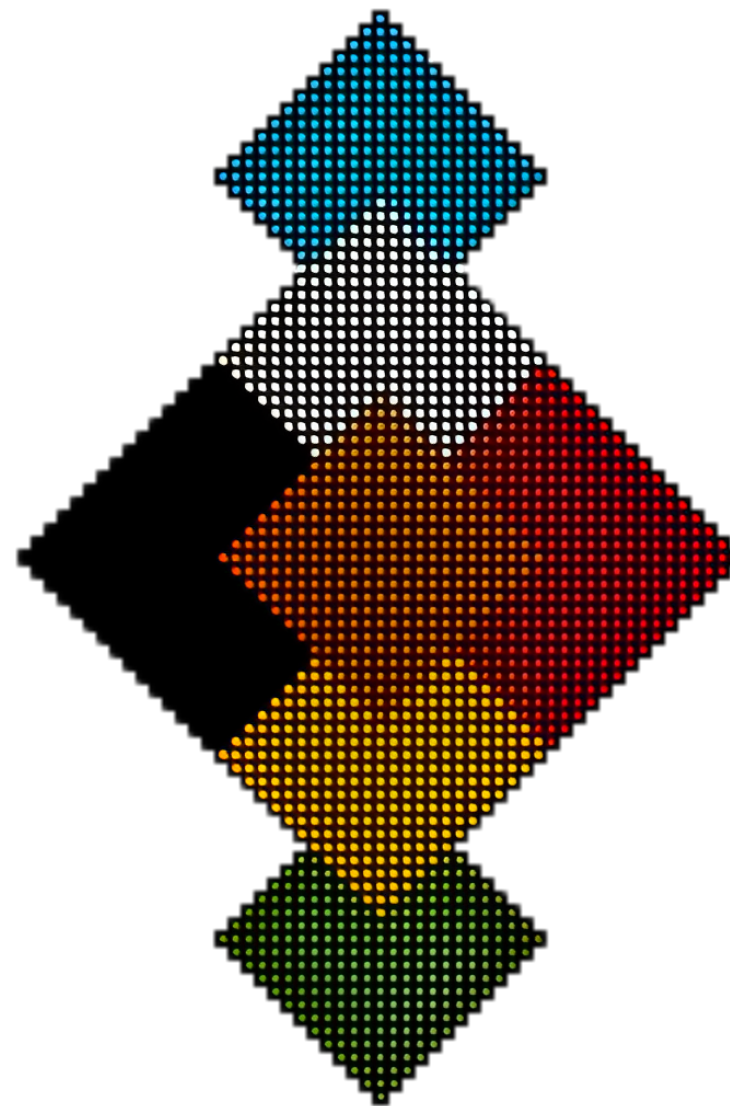
Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning

**WESTERN DIRECTION:** Actions



Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



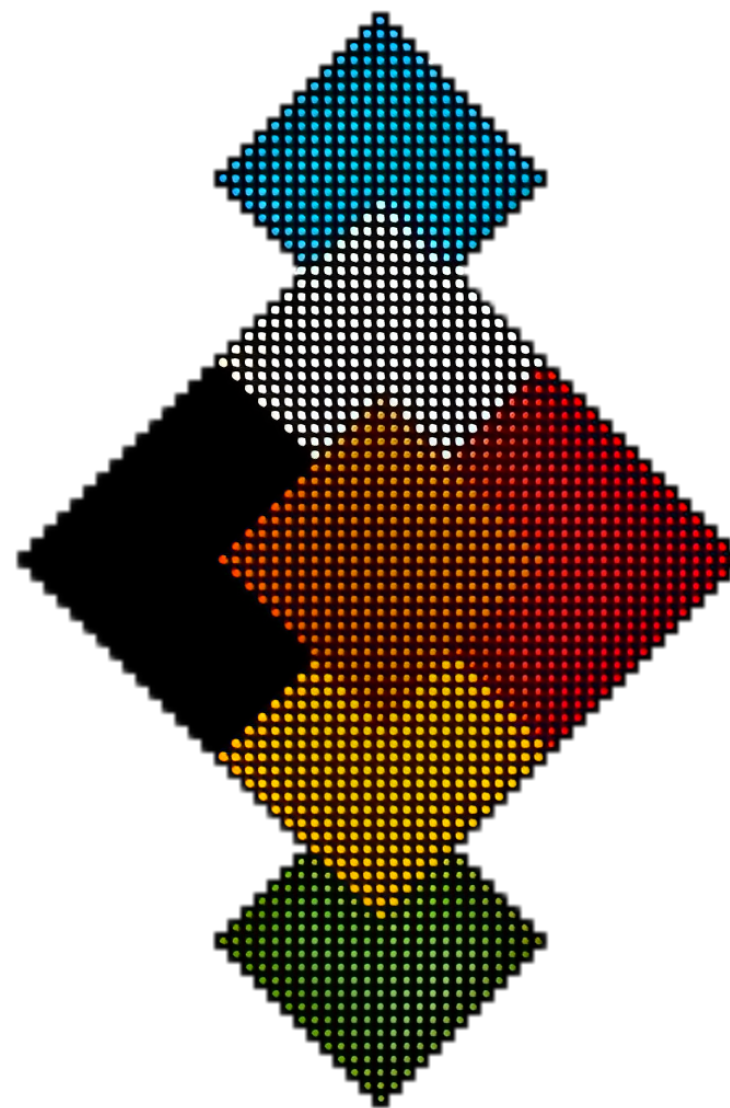


**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning

**WESTERN DIRECTION:** Actions

**NORTHERN DIRECTION:** Wisdom



Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



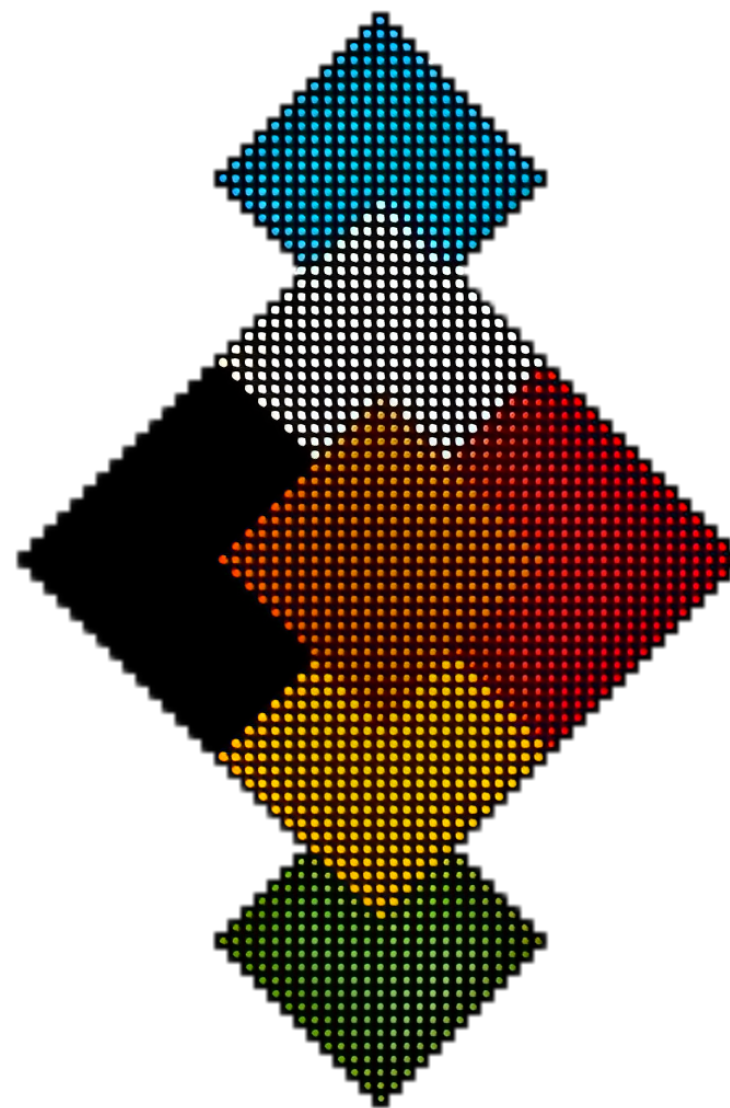
**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning

**WESTERN DIRECTION:** Actions

**NORTHERN DIRECTION:** Wisdom

**EARTHWARD DIRECTION:** Place



Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
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**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

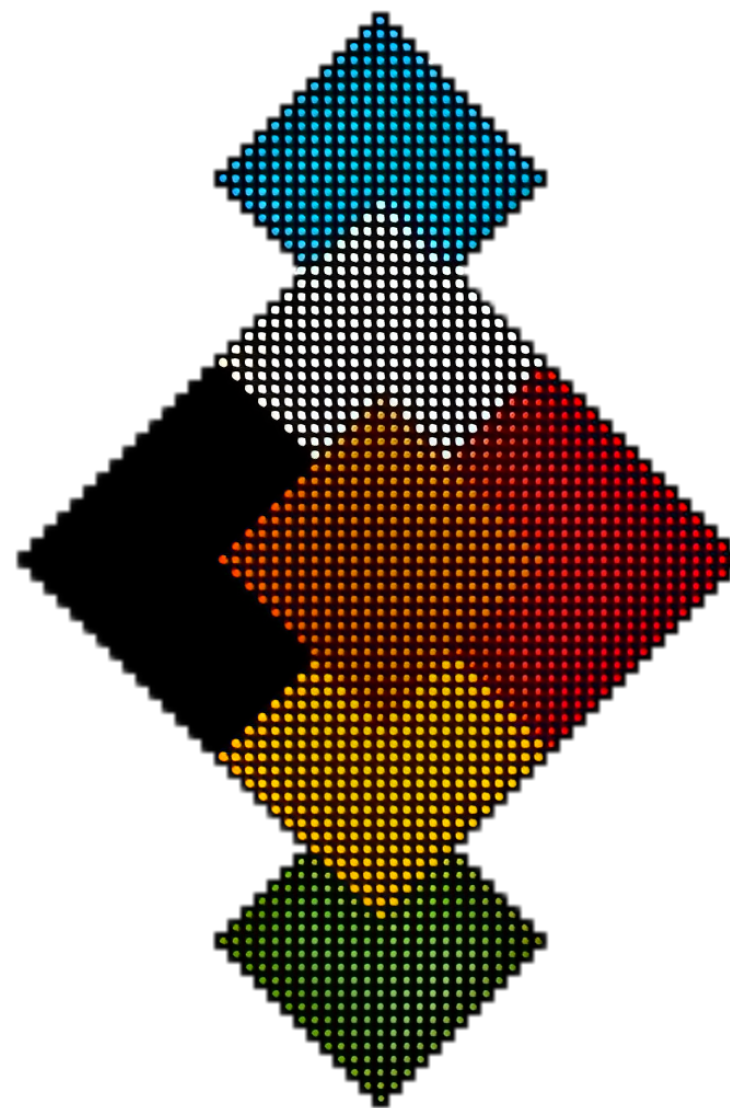
**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning

**WESTERN DIRECTION:** Actions

**NORTHERN DIRECTION:** Wisdom

**EARTHWARD DIRECTION:** Place

**SKYWARD DIRECTION:** Time



Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



**EASTERN DIRECTION:** Beginnings

**SOUTHERN DIRECTION:** Learning

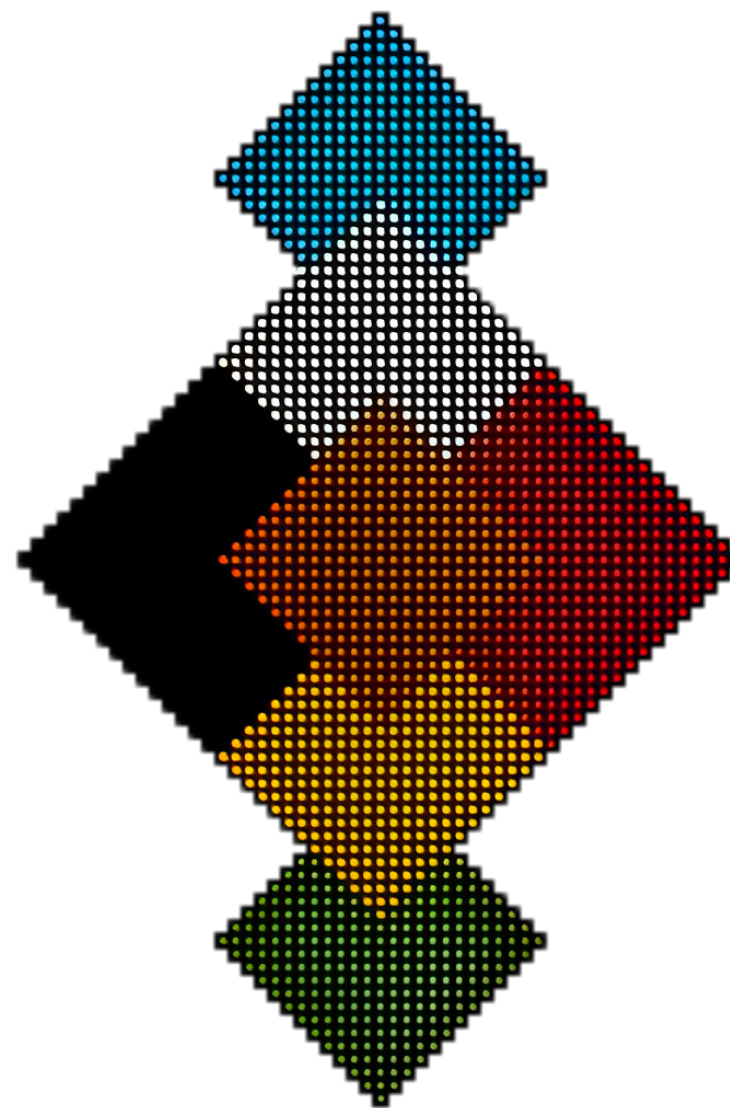
**WESTERN DIRECTION:** Actions

**NORTHERN DIRECTION:** Wisdom

**EARTHWARD DIRECTION:** Place

**SKYWARD DIRECTION:** Time

**INWARD DIRECTION:** Balance

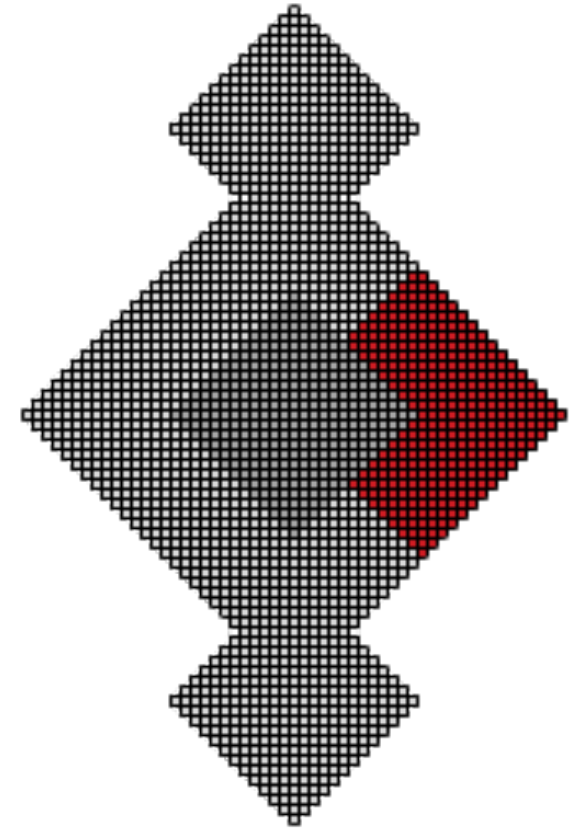


Original art inspired by the Keetowah (Cherokee/Aniyunwiya)  
Seven Sacred Directions



# Eastern Direction: Relationships are central to Indigenous approaches to evaluation

- ❖ Without relationships, evaluation is not possible
- ❖ Building authentic, respectful, and trusting with Indigenous communities is a process that takes time
- ❖ Relationality is central to Indigenous evaluation

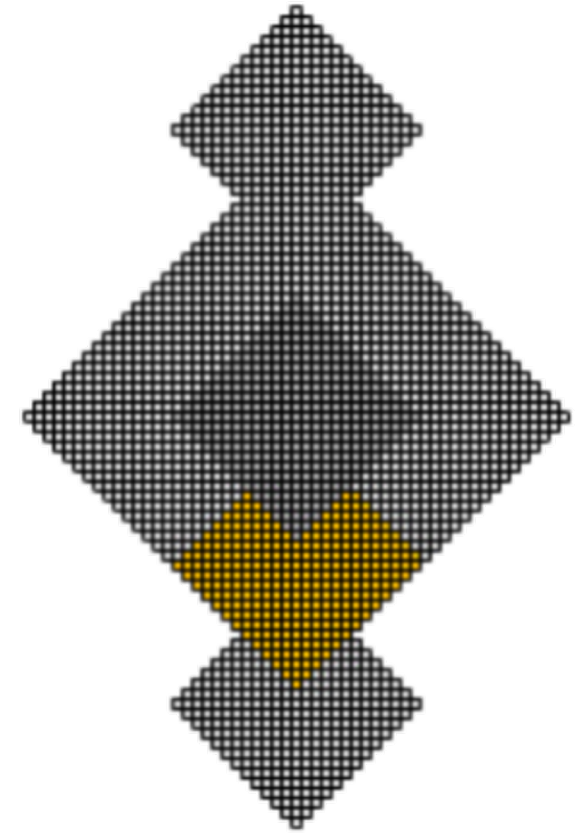


# Southern Direction: Indigenous knowledge systems shape the entire evaluation process

Indigenous communities have their own unique ways of understanding and making sense of the world around them.

Indigenous knowledge systems encompass:

- ❖ Cultural content
- ❖ Language
- ❖ History
- ❖ Kinship
- ❖ Sovereign status of peoples/Tribes who are involved

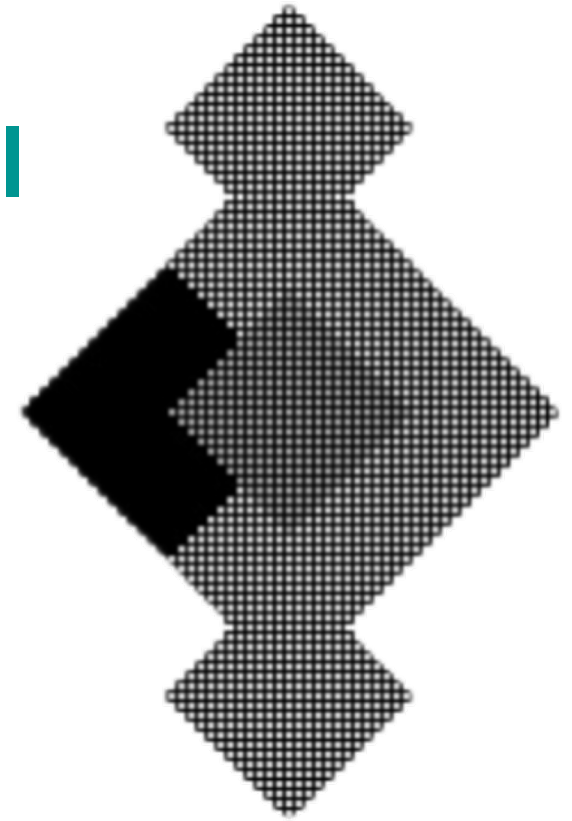


# Western Direction: Active community participation is crucial

Community Participatory Research and Tribally Driven Participatory Research are terms used to describe processes for engaging the community in evaluation.

Community should be involved in one or all of the following:

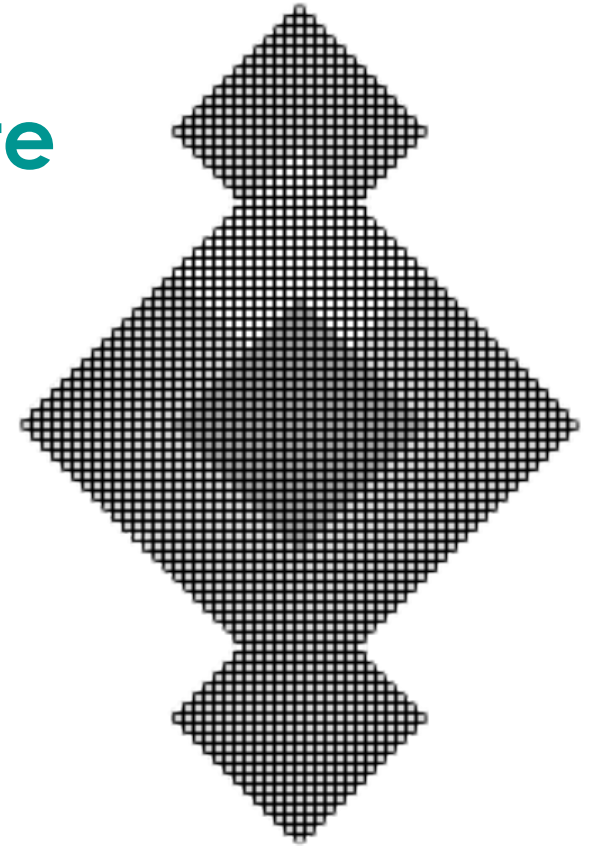
- ❖ Evaluation Design
- ❖ Information Gathering
- ❖ Sense Making
- ❖ Attention to Data Sovereignty
- ❖ Data Utilization





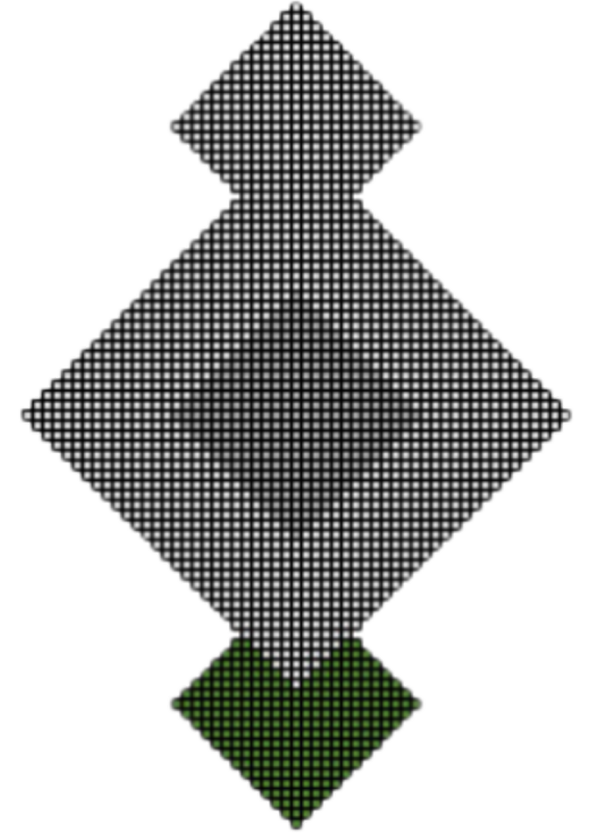
# Northern Direction: Holistic and strengths-based perspectives generate wisdom

- ❖ Indigenous evaluation must acknowledge the interplay of social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of what is being evaluated
- ❖ As well, must also pay attention to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components
- ❖ Focus on resiliency (“what’s strong with us, not what’s wrong with us”)



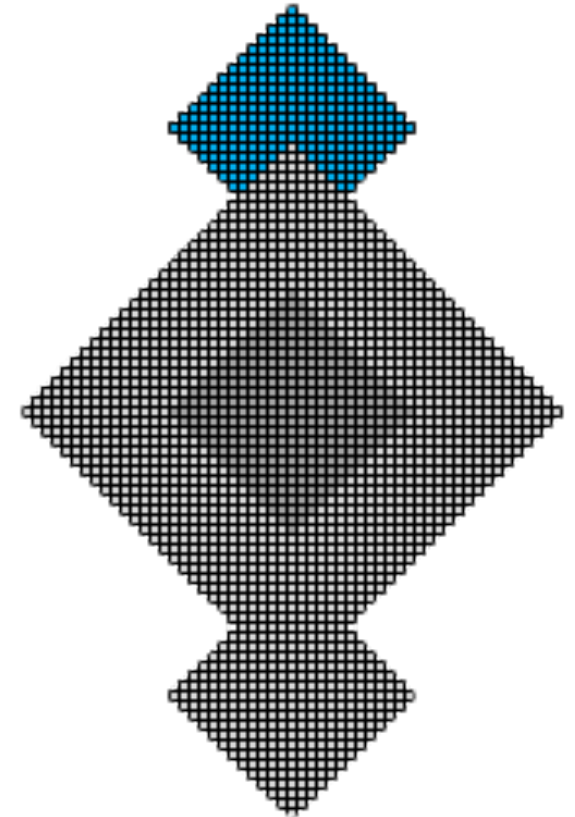
# Earthward Direction: Indigenous evaluation is linked to the land

- ❖ Indigenous pedagogies often connect learning to a specific place
- ❖ Knowledge, therefore, is situated in relationship to place



# Skyward Direction: Indigenous evaluation methods are transformative and future-making

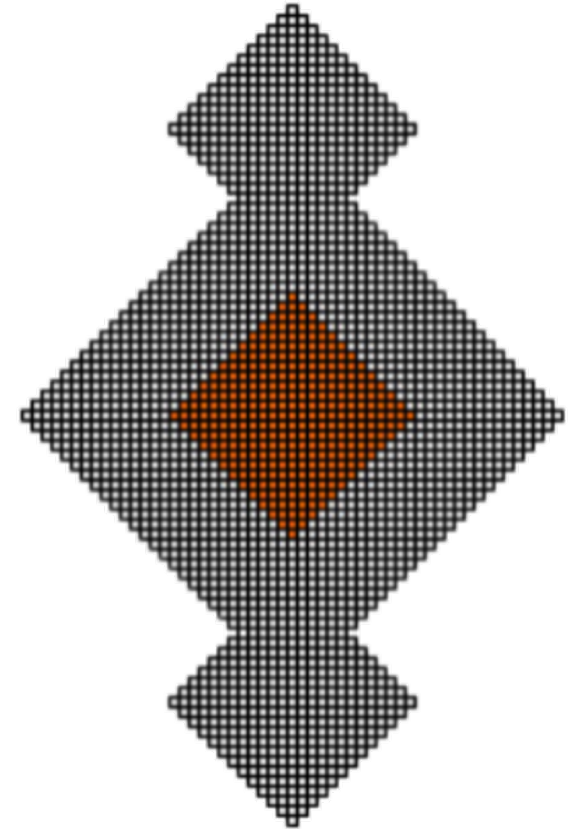
- ❖ “Neutral” or “objective” evaluation practices are problematic in Indigenous contexts
- ❖ Indigenous evaluation practices challenge the status quo and honor future generations
- ❖ Intergenerationality is privileged



# Inward Direction: Indigenous evaluation encourages reflexivity and truth-telling

Important questions to always ask yourself:

- ❖ What is my own “evaluation identity?”
- ❖ What is my role as an evaluator in this project?
- ❖ How does my role as an evaluator impact the dynamics of the community I’m working in?
- ❖ How does my role shift over time?
- ❖ How can I use my own unique privilege to uplift others?





# WRAPPING UP

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# CASE STUDY ACTIVITY







# THANK YOU!

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*We are always learning from our relatives. Please consider completing a session evaluation using the QR code provided.*

