Indigenous Youth Mentoring: Evaluating the journey of aspirational development

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ABSTRACT
This discussion paper raises the issue of evaluating the aspirational development of Indigenous young people within mentoring programs. Aspiration setting is a crucial vehicle for building self-esteem and identity for young people, yet it remains a subjective indicator to evaluate in relation to building education and career pathways. Providing realistic options in the most part allows the young person to dream beyond their schooling, beyond their tertiary education and having a prospective career. In this paper evaluative techniques are examined based on the experiences and reflections of three women - two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and one non-Aboriginal woman. These women work with Indigenous young people and use various evaluative techniques to assess and track progress against specific and general indicators. This discussion paper highlights the challenging situations facing Indigenous youth in the Northern Territory where thirty per cent of the population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Mentoring is a practical strategy that enables aspirational development and instils self-worth and belief. The evaluation strategies that underlie youth mentoring programs are critical to gauging specific aspects in understanding what really is responsible for certain behaviours.

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring appears to be viewed by many as the “knight in shining armour” coming to the rescue however care must be taken that the purported rescue is needed and wanted and that the rescuer knows what to do and how to do it. Moreover, to be effective the knight may need to get off his horse often - take off his armour and be prepared to learn from those he is ‘rescuing’. (Nasir, 2008, p.9)

The situation for young Indigenous people is more challenging than that of other young people and this is reflected in the suicide rate for young Indigenous people aged 15 to 24 in the Northern Territory (NT) is around five times the national rate of suicide (Legislative Assembly NT, 2012). Social justice issues continue to hamper the development of young Indigenous people even with the significant investment by governments under the Closing the Gap initiative. This paper will focus on two key target areas of the Closing the Gap initiative, namely education and employment being critical areas that directly impact young Indigenous people who are finishing school, considering study options or seeking employment outcomes.

This discussion paper also raises the issue of how aspirational development of Indigenous young people through mentoring programs can reduce the challenges and barriers that Indigenous youth in the NT face. Many young Indigenous people find it difficult to aspire to conventional career paths resulting from a range of issues including lack of awareness, self-belief or encouragement. This paper attempts to contribute an understanding about what aspirational development really achieves and explores the difficulties concerning evaluation.

Reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is used interchangeably in this paper as Indigenous and Aboriginal. We tend to use the term ‘Aboriginal’ when referring to Indigenous people in the Northern Territory (NT) and ‘Indigenous’ when speaking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

RELEVANT LITERATURE
It is important to note that there is a dearth of literature that covers aspirational development and even less literature on evaluating it. The literature review is presented in two sections, firstly the literature...
relating to the setting of aspirations for Indigenous students and secondly the literature pertaining to evaluating aspirational development.

**Benefit, Impact and Hardships of Setting aspirations**

Aspirational development encompasses more than just setting a vision. It involves creating a vision based on a number of areas such as learning about self, learning about education and career planning and choice of pathways and the skill required to work towards that vision (Lowe and Tassone, 2001).

There are many career education programs that are run in schools and industry to support Indigenous learning, education and skill enhancement to increase employment prospects. Statistically the numbers of Indigenous students completing year twelve or completing higher education award programs are very low compared to non-Indigenous people. The same can be said about Indigenous employment programs. It would appear that the programs are not effective in closing the gaps in relation to disadvantage and do not achieve the desired impact that they are intended to. There are a number of reasons for this lack of positive impact according to Parente et al. (2003) including:

- Inappropriate structure of programs;
- Programs relying on career advisers only, and
- Racism and systemic bias.

Aboriginal people face a multiple disadvantage in education and employment whereby race, disability, gender, location and economic status all contribute to the disadvantage (Lester, 2000). Lester contends that it is not possible for any one single program to make a difference to the imbalances of disadvantage that exist. From findings arising from Lester’s evaluation of the Aboriginal Careers Aspiration Program for Aboriginal Students it was found that Aboriginal communities see racial barriers as blockages to achieving career aspirations whereas students tend not to see their Aboriginality as the major barrier. Lester also found that non-Aboriginal students have a broader sense of career pathways compared to Aboriginal students based on their links to their parents working background. A further finding was that Aboriginal role models, Aboriginal parental and community involvement in the schools and their ability to influence decision making provided a degree of inspiration, encouragement and likelihood of a higher achievement for Aboriginals students.

Parente et al. (2003) states that adolescents have the capability to develop their prospective self through exploration and commitment incorporating how they see their own contexts in the future. Furthermore, that during adolescence the role of parenting strongly impacts educational goal setting and career paths. These authors further add that adolescence is the optimal time for facing the challenges and visioning potential to develop their own academic self-concept with encouragement that helps build the concept to being something achievable.

For young Indigenous people Nasir (1996) brings to light the importance of having the freedom to choose different study or career paths without having to abandon their cultural heritage or forsaking their identity. The role of family is critical in supporting young Indigenous people to be proud of themselves whilst aspiring to be part of the mainstream workforce. The literature supports that where parents understand and value the educational pathways the more likely young people will continue school and pursue university (Rossingh and Dunbar, 2012; Shah and Widin, 2010; DEEWR, 2010; Rahman, 2009; James et al., 2008). Furthermore a recommendation in the Behrendt report stated that there is a need to build Indigenous peer and family networks to encourage higher education as a shared goal (Behrendt et. al., 2012, p.xviii).

The findings from the Parente et al. study highlighted that whilst Indigenous students generally understood university requirements they had difficulty connecting their school subjects with the university and career choices. Also it was found that Indigenous students did not know how to navigate towards their goals. In this study it was also found that career education programs were not structured appropriately and remained fairly weak in relation to inspiring, understanding or guiding students. A key perception of Indigenous students was that careers programs were ‘mainly for white fellas’ (Parente et al., 2003, p.17).
Evaluating Aspirational Development

Qualitative measurement of school attendance and retention of Indigenous students is a common assessment tool used by governments and schools. We often hear how attendance for Indigenous students has improved but we do not see the equivalent impact concerning Indigenous students completing year twelve or university courses. Purdie and Buckley (2010) convey recommendations relating to engagement and participation of Indigenous Australians towards attainment of higher levels of education. Their report assesses a number of government and independent programs designed to retain students in the schools system. An interesting warning in the report points to the ABS data collections that are purported to contain inaccuracies and should not be used for comparative purposes due to a number of factors including timing and changes in scope that render the data unreliable in some instances. This highlights some of the evaluative issues relating to understanding the contextual aspects of the data which is often not disclosed with the data. For example non-attendance of school students could relate to flooding in Aboriginal communities where people are cut off from services including schools, travelling to and attending funerals and sorry business, other cultural obligations and conflicts between families. It is therefore paramount to have other evaluative methods to appropriately and reliably tell the real story.

The report by the Purdie and Buckley (2010, p. 7) explains that importance of school focus, community focus and interagency focus are the basis for increasing engagement in learning and therefore retaining students over the longer term. It is suggested that the school focussed components ensure that the students’ voices are heard and that development of school practices, access to resources, availability of quality career advice and quality alternative learning opportunities enable young Indigenous people to have goals and dreams and access the network of support to remain engaged in learning. The community focused components are about community involvement and activities that connect young people with their communities to bring about community-based learning. The interagency components relate to improving cross-agency linkages and practices to provide support to families. This level of engagement seeks to bring about a whole of government approach but invariably fails as a result of the different priorities across the agencies. Herein lies a problem that it seems there can never be a fluid and effective flow on effect from government through to young Indigenous students. This creates a fragmented and non-synergised effect and does not allow the complete story to emerge.

The Purdie and Buckley report highlights the fact that in the twenty programs that they assessed, evaluation was either not embedded in the programs indicating the difficulty in establishing evaluative systems in school-based activities and also signifies the lack of connection that the programs have with understanding the outcomes. Purdie and Buckley (2010, p. 17) state that there are serious challenges when trying to find credible evidence concerning Indigenous participation and engagement and what works in closing the gap. They further add that there is a greater role for evaluation but it will need to utilise mixed methods in combining qualitative and quantitative approaches of assessment and transferable to different contexts.

In the development of evaluative processes concerning programs targeting Indigenous people care must be taken to ensure that ‘what’ is being evaluated is not drawn from the value judgements of government or other people who are not connected to, immersed in or informed in relation to the real contexts of the recipients of the programs. Indigenous peoples’ aspirations must be first and foremost and must underlie the process based on proper engagement (Malezer, 2012).

It is not advisable to evaluate a program at the end but given that many government programs are structured this way does not prevent monitoring the program throughout its life, a less intensive process that provides small parcels of data rather than intensive data collection (James, 2012). Evaluation is not always a straight forward process and requires understanding, familiarity and contextual learning to embed and implement evaluative processes within programs. The next section of this paper examines evaluative techniques based on the experiences and reflections of three women who are involved directly and indirectly in mentoring young Indigenous people. All three women have teenage children and work with young Indigenous people, their stories and experiences provide insight to the different approaches of evaluation.
REFLECTIONS ON EVALUATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MY REFLECTIONS – BY TANYAH NASIR

Tanyah Nasir is an Aboriginal woman born and raised in Darwin in the NT. She is a descendant of the Stolen Generation with traditional clan connections to the Garrwa, Djugun and Tiwi language groups and runs her own consultancy firm working with businesses, agencies and organisations across the Northern Territory to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

I would like to share some of my experiences and learning from working within the Aboriginal education, employment and training contexts over the past 25 years. I experienced an illuminating moment in 2010 when working for a training organisation where I was not convinced that a newly developed national program was the way forward and felt that it lacked the connection and legitimacy that was clearly needed for Indigenous people. I had seen many training programs being offered previously with little relevance, impact or benefit for Indigenous Australians who continued to struggle on many fronts. I decided to develop something different, predicated on my own knowledge, learnings and experiences with young Aboriginal people. I developed the ‘Rise Up Program, Be Your Best, Own Your Future’ program based on a ‘two-way’ learning and mentoring system.

The Rise Up program is a three day non accredited empowerment initiative enabling young people to reflect on their aspirations in balance with the challenges and issues they face daily within their distinctive lived social and cultural reality. The program facilitates the critical thinking and self-reflection necessary for individuals to consider the personal change to move forward to redefine and reclaim their personal and cultural identity and to create the life they deserve and desire. The program seeks to awaken Indigenous people from their hypnotic state to see themselves differently, often for the first time in the lives. It is about reclaiming their self-belief and self-worth, to see themselves as capable, intelligent and confident people who have dreams and aspirations and have it within them to create a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

My passion is to work with but transform the reality whereby Indigenous Australians have learnt and internalised; lacking numeracy and literacy, and employability skills, feeling they don’t matter or that they cannot do things and will never amount to anything, perceiving that they are not smart and they are not worthy. Indigenous Australians learn this intentionally and unintentionally from their families, peers, schools, teachers, the media and from society in general. They are surrounded by and immersed in the quagmire of negativity, despair, low expectations and hopelessness. And the greatest tragedy of all is that many Indigenous people have bought in to those ideas and this terminology is used to define who they are and how they are.

Two-Way Evaluation

Aboriginal people know that they are one of the most researched collective cultural groups and openly articulate their disdain for continual investigations for little outcome. Therefore, evaluation is still met with suspicion and mistrust. To overcome this evaluation needs to ensure that it is interactive, two-way, fun and participatory, not clinical, too structured or intimidating. Time needs to be invested in ensuring the evaluation tools are relevant, creative and engaging for young Aboriginal people.

Two-Way evaluations are happening constantly. As trainers we are constantly assessing if we are on track, if participants understand the key concepts, is the learning relevant and meaningful to their lived reality? For example; one of the first tiers of the evaluation process is the informal cultural assessment of identity that is Indigenous identity. Have we really understood their reality as well as their concerns, issues, priorities and aspirations?

As facilitators we are always mindful of the privileges that this relationship building ensues and are conscious of the level of professional and personal responsibility and duty of care to the Indigenous young people. Indigenous young people have dreams and aspirations for their future however it

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1 Two-way mentoring is being identified and interpreted as a collaborative, developmental and ongoing social learning process where the relationship is based on the foundation of respect, shared responsibility and commitment to achieving positive outcomes (Nasir, 2008)
takes high levels of emotional intelligence, heartfelt and genuine care and trust to unearth them as well as give them the tools to overcome their challenges.

Aspirational development needs to be discussed from a community’s perspective as well as from an individual’s perspective. The development of a critical mass of positive, intelligent, caring, hopeful and happy local role models who understand and can articulate their own aspirations is crucial and well overdue.

Throughout the Rise Up program the rigorous learning framework and fluid structure allows for ongoing evaluative techniques for multiple purposes in a formal and informal manner. Formal tools include an enrolment form, a written evaluation at the end of three days, group work with a specific focus and video testimonials. Informal evaluation is conducted throughout the program with the young people in a quick, fun, flexible and engaging manner to assess the following:

- Comprehension: Understanding of the content
- Attentiveness: The degree of attention and engagement
- Emotional Check-Up: Informal assessment of how the young people are travelling emotionally and physical throughout the duration of the training
- A debriefing and planning session after each day to allow further customisation to ensure the young people’s learning needs are prioritised and addressed before the end of the training.

The program ensures that Indigenous people’s concerns and voices are valued and privileged and they have a shared ownership in the learning. To be able to ascertain open and honest feedback and information from the young people they need to feel valued, trusted and safe. Therefore, it is imperative that time is invested in creating a culturally safe space for everyone. The facilitator must remain intuitive and understand the signs, indicators and body language which underlie the embedded evaluative process. There is a need to take advantage of the learning and the sharing of knowledge which is imparted throughout the ‘Rise Up’ program. The participants are continuously invited to share their stories and their knowledge throughout the three days and thereafter.

There are explicit workshop expectations and boundaries with regard to participation, conduct and interaction with each other. Very early on in the program participants are doing their own personal assessment and making choices about their participation and interaction. The young people know from the start that this workshop is for them and we expect and welcome their feedback and opinions as well as ideas to improve and therefore an ongoing evaluative technique operates in a fluid manner throughout the workshops.

MY REFLECTIONS – BY LORNA MURAKAMI-GOLD

Lorna Murakami-Gold is a local Darwin woman of Torres Strait Islander, Malay, English and Japanese descent with an extensive background in nursing and health in the NT and now works with a mentoring program that seeks to assist Indigenous students to complete year twelve and transition to university. Murakami-Gold worked initially as a nurse and adult educator and became interested in Indigenous health research.

From my recent experience of working with schools and Indigenous families I have identified a number of issues concerning the development of aspirations for young Indigenous people and the use of generic evaluative methods used to measure student success. Existing evaluative techniques and performance indicators are not sensitive to important factors like aspirational development and self-esteem. Students and their families, teachers and mentors indicate that Indigenous students do have aspirations; perhaps not the same as non-Indigenous students, nevertheless Indigenous students do have dreams and aspirations and want a different life from their families.

Indigenous students have a different lived experience from those that they go to school with yet they are expected to behave exactly the same as all other school children. Indigenous and non-Indigenous students go to the same schools in Alice Springs and spend six hours a day together. On the surface it may appear as a multicultural school community but Indigenous and non-Indigenous students have different values and beliefs and may not interact with their peers sufficiently to learn and understand
each other’s stories. Quite often Indigenous students are in different classes or under different programs so this prevents a sharing and learning culture.

Programs that are designed to address equity and participation barriers often fail to bring socially disadvantaged youth to the same level as the other students. An inclusive school culture must be led by the principal and supported by teachers working within that school. The principal needs to set the vision for the school and the teachers need to continuously promote that message with genuine belief relating to valuing diversity otherwise there is a risk that Indigenous students will continue to be disadvantage and drop out of school. Addressing equity means we must be mindful that Indigenous students can be exposed to negative attitudes and stereo-typic beliefs while at school. The education system is premised on Western teaching and learning pedagogies that do not value Indigenous pedagogies. If these minority and marginalised students feel vulnerable within the school where do they go to get support and reassurance?

Geographical distances and getting exposure to different career or study experiences is a challenge when living regionally and remotely and impacts many Indigenous students. Indigenous students living in Alice Springs are exposed to factors such as: drugs, alcohol, petrol sniffing and family violence that the students contend with in addition to the pressure of going to school every day and achieving good grades. For some their family situation can potentially distract them from gaining control over their lives and their future goals and aspirations.

Reactions arising from discussions with students about what they would like to do once they finish school can be an exercise in monosyllabic answers. During a recent higher education promotional week some students had not thought about their future because their experience had been limited and they could not conceive what was possible. Engaging face to face with enthusiastic and passionate individuals is critical to getting students out of a cycle of despondency and hopelessness for the future. I observed the reactions of students during a promotional talk on engineering where the lecturer was engaging, approachable and passionate about engineering and this rubbed off on the students who responded with interest and inquiry. It was obvious that the students were inspired, enriched and became aware of the possibilities.

The majority of Indigenous students do not have anyone from their family that has a higher education degree that understands the academic journey required to become an engineer or health professional. It is critical for students to have a teacher or support person at the school who believes in their potential and takes the time to invest in the students by offering them guidance and support to realise their aspirations. The support required is enormous and fraught with many distractions and therefore reliant on the wrap around support from family, extended family, teachers and principals. This makes the realising of their potential a multi-dimensional and holistic support process and the actualising of their aspirations a great achievement.

Evaluating the Hard to Measure Elements of Success

In the education domain evaluation and assessment is based on how many students are enrolled in courses and complete the courses and not inclusive of capturing the positive experiences mentioned above. The link between attendance at school and the acquisition of core skills has not been emphasised enough whereas the deficit measures have.

The challenge is to understand the issue regarding the raising of Indigenous youth aspirations. If we are successful in changing the realities of those being challenged how do we know what precisely has created this change given the plethora of programs within the school system and the resilience that many young Indigenous students have developed because of who they are. How can these attributes be captured to inspire others to push against these barriers?

There are tensions for program evaluators to select suitable evaluation techniques that support and validate the impact on program recipients given that it takes time to develop meaningful and trusting relationships with students. Usual methods in adult evaluation studies have involved completing an
evaluation survey. Even if students agree to participate in an evaluation survey this does not guarantee that they will give you their honest opinion. If students consent to a survey it is unlikely they would feel comfortable and this method may actually intimidate them. Focus groups have had some degree of success if led by trusted and respected teachers but sometimes students are embarrassed which limits the success of this method.

The wide usage of social media has meant that more and more students are familiar with conversing using technology. Phones and social media have become highly valued for many students irrespective of where they live - urban, rural or remote. These mediums can be used to help students overcome the feeling of physical, social and emotional isolation and have been used to express these feelings and share with their families. They may also be used to encourage more students to participate in enriching activities but it can be used to uplift the school culture. With the growing culture of posting video clips on YouTube it makes sense to utilise these options as evaluation methods.

MY REFLECTIONS – BRONWYN ROSSINGH

Bronwyn Rossingh is a fourth generation Australian and is married to a Kamilaroi man from New South Wales. She was born in Melbourne, lived in Perth, the Pilbara and Kimberley regions and has lived in the NT for the last 16 years. Bronwyn has worked with Indigenous communities for over twenty years incorporating governance, accountability and leadership and mentoring programs.

In the 1990s I worked in a small township comprising predominantly Aboriginal people from coastal regions through to the desert regions. The thing that used to strike me the most was the happy smiling faces of the young children in Aboriginal communities then feeling the sadness from the parents and grandparents when their young ones remained unemployed without prospects, being charged with criminal offences or in some cases had taken their own lives. I used to say to myself ‘how do we keep the smiles on young faces when they grow up?’ Over twenty years later I still ask the same question.

Back then I had been working mostly with the senior leaders from a number of remote Aboriginal communities and had listened to so many interesting stories from the past that educated me about culture and the way people used to live – healthy and happy, but in stories based on more present times there was a recurring theme that told of sadness and desperation to help the young people. I still work with senior leaders of communities and hear the same issues concerning young people only it seems that now there is even more exposure to alcohol, drugs, petrol sniffing and a new issue - electronic media. All of which still present great challenges for senior leaders to find future leaders.

There remains a disconnect between governments’ expectations and the collective community’s’ desires concerning government funding programs. Programs and projects are about peoples’ lives and the community people need to inform the project structure and the performance measures that are meaningful for their purposes. Evaluation also needs to be developed and embedded based on inclusive constructs that should remain flexible and adaptable to allow Aboriginal people to guide and direct in accordance with their needs and visions.

When visiting Aboriginal communities I spend more time listening to people and their stories then spending time doing conventional work, ironically, this is evaluating. The best way to understand if a program is working is by listening to those who are impacted by the program and gauge whether or not things are improving. I hear about the issues in the schools, shire councils, land councils, health centres and in relation to fighting and violence. I do not dig and delve these stories are naturally arising. It is difficult to get this type data using a formal and structured evaluation process.

Recently I have been working with a group of senior Aboriginal leaders on a project about strengthening culture for young people who the senior leaders feel are losing their way. The project has little structure in a Western sense but is highly rigorous in a cultural sense. Monitoring and evaluation is done by the senior leaders who keep me on track and ensure that I have sufficient
knowledge to research and write up the areas that they feel are important concerning culture and the young people.

Many programs are well meaning it is just that they lack relevance for those they are intended for and are expected to make gains immediately. The true measure of the impact of our mentoring work is in the years to come when the students can reflect on what made them study or what convinced them otherwise. It is difficult to know when a student experienced their illuminating moment to decide that finishing year twelve and studying a higher education degree is the way to go. That moment may have occurred during a number of activities and experiences. It may have been influenced by role models, teachers or their family.

What we can do is equip the students with knowledge, information and understanding about the choices that are available. It is the support foundations that are critical in providing the momentum to keep challenging oneself and raise one’s own expectations. Different pathways that young people take do not mean failure. Having performance indicators that measure how many students from a mentoring and enrichment program have enrolled in a university course may be important to government but what is more important is feeling proud of oneself for any achievement. So if a student’s grades improve but not enough to be eligible for university why is that not measured within the program? Building young peoples’ confidence and self-esteem in any context or level is important.

The role that aspirational development plays creates challenges to evaluate given that it is intangible and does not register as being a measure in programs. Program rhetoric is often inclusive of ‘building aspirations’ but not how to measure it or its role as part of the scaffolding for a student’s future development. The students might talk about what they want to be when they are older or may have already started structuring their life to achieve their aspirational milestones. We need to ensure that evaluation is sufficiently flexible to capture these real changes. It may not always provide relevant statistics but it can provide a general idea about how Indigenous students have benefited.

Evaluation ideas
Linking the development of young people’s aspirations with program outcomes is a highly contestable process -we cannot gauge the degree of success. The following points offer ideas that can help breakdown the formality of future evaluations and provide some guidance.

• Culture is not part of the curriculum in schools and it is not measured under programs but it remains one of the most dominating themes arising from programs conducted in Indigenous communities. Program evaluations must harness culture as a key factor of the real context and not ignore the critical role it plays.

• It is important for evaluators to remain cognisant that a program being evaluated is part of matrix of support to communities in a much bigger sense and should not to be treated in isolation of the ‘community’ as a collective.

• Self-reflection is a valuable tool - ask yourself about your contribution to the community and if the evaluation depicts the contextual thread – the reality. Reflect and refine, listen and grow. Communities nee to advance their well-being and give hope for the young people – think about your role in this big picture.

• Listen to people and hear what they are really saying. You might be talking about one thing but they may be telling you a lot more. If you only listen to half of what they say then you only get half of the story which may impact upon the program greatly for the future.

• Be prepared to utilise numerous evaluative methods and work with the knowers of the knowledge in partnership.
SUMMARISING KEY POINTS

The stories of the three women above convey a message about the positive role that aspirational development can play and how the challenge remains in evaluating such an intangible notion.

When evaluating program’s concerning young Indigenous we need to be aware that often it is the small milestones that equate to success and provide the detail about what is making a difference. In the above stories Bronwyn discusses how evaluation is at the hearts of the people who are impacted by the programs and how the factors creating success or failure of programs often remain hidden under the structure and formality of program evaluation. She recommends a more holistic approach whereby understanding is in the collective rather than in isolation and she challenges evaluation to be more engaging and not gloss over the fundamental role of culture.

Lorna remains receptive about the mentoring and enrichment program and constantly observes where the issues lie. She sees the complex system before her eyes every day in the schools and asks who is responsible for developing these young Indigenous students. Lorna asserts that evaluation needs to home in on accountabilities including the leaders in society to ensure the future of young Indigenous people.

The monitoring techniques that Tanyah uses during the delivery of her empowering program provide her with a reassuring sense of program success. The testimonials that she uses to hear what people are saying and feeling about her program provide further confirmation. Her monitoring and evaluating processes gauge ‘on–the-job’ how she is being received and how participants are learning and developing.

These three women bring a deep sense of care and passion about the young people, families and communities that they work with. They have a clear picture of the complex world that young people contend with. The key message is that evaluation cannot be ‘too little too late’ it needs to have an underlying sense of context and connection and an overarching sense of reality with a continuous system of appraisal. We need to gently push the boundaries concerning evaluation methods to ensure that evaluation evolves into a powerful tool to legitimate the lives of Indigenous people.
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