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**What are current Indigenous approaches to education research and evaluation, and what are some examples of them in use?**



## Background

An Indigenous methodology involves undertaking, practicing, and valuing the worldview, perspectives, values, and lived experiences of an Indigenous community when conducting research or evaluation with and for its members to honor Indigenous sovereignty. This FAQ<sup>1</sup> includes Indigenous methodologies from the past 10 years (2011–2021) that have been applied in research or evaluation, with a focus on education. Many scholars have written about how Indigenous methodologies “[situat\[e\] the research within the context of the data source\(s\)](#)” and therefore no Indigenous method “[would be universal and applicable for all.](#)” With this in mind, this FAQ groups approaches by Indigenous cultures served by the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). It also includes approaches from Oceania, broadly speaking, for greatest relevancy to the REL Pacific region, though other Indigenous communities across the globe have methodologies to share. The following approaches<sup>2</sup> therefore serve less as a comprehensive list and more as an invitation for continued exploration of how Indigenous communities conceptualize and practice their research and evaluation.

### Methodologies Grounded in the Indigenous Cultures of the Region Served by REL Pacific

#### Hawai‘i

- The Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment – Hawai‘i developed the [Evaluation with Aloha Framework](#) to guide stakeholders in evaluations conducted in Native Hawaiian contexts.
- [Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Methodologies: Mo‘olelo and Metaphor](#)\* compiles methodologies conducted by Native Hawaiian scholars across academic disciplines.
- [Mā‘awe Pono](#)\*, developed by Drs. Kū Kahakalau and Manulani Meyer, is an eight-stage research methodology [grounded in Hawaiian cultural values and beliefs](#) such as bringing one’s *mana* (personal power) to projects and allowing for ideas to evolve and emerge with time.

#### Republic of the Marshall Islands

- Scholars have shared the [Kanne Lobal](#) approach, which uses “[Marshallse] language, and cultural practices and values by sourcing from the concepts of *jouj* (kindness, love), *kautiej* (respect), and *jouj eo mour eo* (reciprocity)” (p. 141).

### Methodologies Grounded in the Indigenous Cultures of Regions Served by Other RELs

- Native American communities often practice [talking circles](#)\* to gather data. The approach centers on promoting respect through protocols and valuing, sharing, and learning about lived experiences.
- [Culturally responsive Indigenous evaluation](#) (CRIE) uses both traditional knowledge and contemporary Indigenous theory to design and implement evaluations within Tribal Nations. See [CRIE in practice](#) in a health promotion program.
- LaFrance and colleagues present an [Indigenous Evaluation Model](#) that frames the process of conducting evaluations within tribal communities’ core cultural values and knowledge. The framework’s manual is available on the [American Indian Higher Education Consortium website](#).

- Several resources and examples on data collection and conducting research and evaluation are available from the [Indigenous Research Toolkit](#), the [Indigenous Wellness Research Institute](#), and the [United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network](#).
- Literature on [Indigenous statistical data and quantitative methodologies](#) emphasize the need to promote the collection and use of data based in Indigenous worldviews. Expanding this topic further are [examples of Indigenous data collection](#)\* within two Native American tribes' creation stories that can address some limitations found in larger, non-Indigenous datasets.

## Methodologies Grounded in Other Indigenous Cultures of Oceania

### Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga

- Pasifika researchers have increasingly used the [talanoa or faafaletui](#) methods, which describe free-flowing conversations and framing knowledge within specific phenomena, respectively. [See here](#) for talanoa protocols adapted for clinical interviewing with Pasifika youth.
- The University of Canterbury dedicates a [resource page to Pasifika research guidelines, issues, and models](#).

### Aotearoa (New Zealand)

- Scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes [Kaupapa Māori](#) as a research process by and for Māori. Further information on this research's principles, support for Māori researchers, and articles using the Kaupapa Māori method can be found on the [Kaupapa Māori and Rangahau website](#).

### Australia

- [Dadirri](#), also a language of the Ngangikurungkurr people, is a cyclical process of “listening, reflecting, observing the feelings and actions, reflecting and learning, and ... relistening at deeper and deeper levels of understanding and knowledge-building” (p. 1584).
- [Yarning](#) is an informal and relational discussion to share knowledge, often involving specific protocols with community elders. See an example of yarning in use for a [health and education needs analysis project](#).
- [A place-based Indigenous methodology from five environmental learning projects](#) “incorporates cycles of experience, creative reflection, critical-conceptual development and practical knowledge, to illuminate a process for acquiring a cultural-ecological sense of place as family” (p. 930).

## Inter-Contextual Considerations

- [Comparative Indigenous education research](#) (CIER)\* discusses how conducting comparative research with Indigenous approaches provides both “multiple understandings of education ... and local and global interfacing (tensions, resistances, challenges, triumphs)” (p. 178).
- Indigenous researchers and evaluators have written about [connecting](#)\* Western and Indigenous approaches to [conduct responsible research](#) with and for Indigenous communities.
- Additional resources on evaluation within and across international contexts can be found via the [Eval Indigenous group](#) and [Bowman Performance Consulting](#). The American Evaluation Association also has an [Indigenous Peoples in Evaluation interest group](#).

<sup>1</sup> REL Pacific kindly thanks the following individuals for their support in reviewing the content of this FAQ: Dr. Dorothy Aguilera-Black Bear and Dr. Walter Kahumoku III.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, some resources may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding them through university or public library systems. The references marked with an \* are those that can be found through these library systems or other available databases.