Roots and Relations: Celebrating Good Medicine in Indigenous Evaluation

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Wuliit Wchapikal (wool-leet which-ah-pee-kul): Good Medicine! That is what the new “Roots and Relations” (R&R) permanent section in *CJPE* intends to be. The purpose of the R&R journey is to honour our lineage, grow our kinship, and sustain our intergenerational legacies of Indigenous wisdom and practices in evaluation. R&R will sacredly hold and protect traditional knowledge, respect and assert sovereignty, provide a nurturing space for Indigenous voices, and celebrate Indigenous innovations in evaluation.

The R&R logo was conceptualized by Larry Bremner CE, FCES (he/him, Métis) and Dr. Nicole Bowman (Lunaape/Mohican) with traditional Knowledge Keepers and a graphic artist who is a traditional Longhouse participant and a citizen of the Oneida Nation. The Oneida digital artist says, “The Roots and Relations image is symbolic of our creation coming together. I added celestial trees, earthly flowers, and medicine plants. I’ve added the sun, moon, water, and stars. The face at the bottom is representative of our ancestors. The angular designs are representative of everything that grows here on earth.”

The R&R logo also represents our human relationship to the elements, plants, animals, and all other non-human relatives, including relatives of the spirit world. As humans we must walk in humility and balance with rooted relationships no matter where our lives take us. This is a foundational and timeless concept of R&R for those reading or publishing in it now and for the next seven generations. The R&R will be co-created through the cultural lens of the four Medicine Wheel directions:

- **Eastern Door—Be a Good Relative.** The Eastern Door represents being in good relations within ourselves and with each other. We come rested and ready to do the work and have co-created information from a place of rest and in relation with all things that affect the work we put forward: physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. The Eastern Door represents community context and diverse ways of thinking and being, and it honours the many Indigenous pathways and experiences of the contributors. It reflects traditional, cultural, and spiritual ways of knowing as a process where we respectfully listen and seek to understand first, and then decide on best pathways together. This may be in the form of origin stories, traditional knowledge, oral history, language, culture, songs, and/or nonverbal examples (e.g., regalia, wampum belts, artwork).

Figure 1. The Roots and Relations logo

- Southern Door—Be of Good Mind.** The Southern Door is the awakening, rooting, and centring of pre-contact and post-contact Indigenous and community-centred and -created knowledge and practices that are restorative, regenerative, and strength based. They protect the privacy and respect the sovereignty of Indigenous nations related to data, as well as cultural, intellectual, human, and non-human influences on scholarship. This may be in the form of oral agreements, treaty rights, Indigenous theories and frameworks or ethics, nation-to-nation agreements, pre-contact practices, and so on.

- **Western Door—Do Good Work.** The Western Door supports the development of culturally specific responsive and regenerative strategies, studies, policies, processes, and work products that align with the need for healthy, reciprocal, respectful, and relevant Indigenous approaches to evaluation. This may be in the form of contemporary applications of traditional knowledge, such as culture and treaties from the Southern and Eastern Doors. It also may include the ways in which western theories, knowledge, or processes have been adapted as successful examples with First Nations, Indigenous peoples, and/or within program and policy contexts of practice that have impact on Indigenous communities. The Western Door also provides a place to share developmental and impactful innovative theories, models, policies, and other strategies being tested and/or utilized by culturally grounded Indigenous scholars, practitioners, and warriors.
- **Northern Door—Be on a Good Journey.** In the Northern Door, we use the wisdom of our Ancestors and Elders to be grounded in traditional knowledge as a way to celebrate traditional knowledge and/or to reflect and unpack the learnings we receive from challenges, restarts, and letting go of things not working. These are the Indigenous-evidence-informed and grounded pathways that will help the future generations to walk on sacred pathways for innovative and sustainable Indigenous evaluation that inspires and grounds the next seven generations. This may include traditional ways of sense making, analysis, differentiating what “wisdom” is (our Elders) versus simply the production of more knowledge (Western ways). It may also consider how to come full circle to address the other doors, so that the authors and readers make these important connections as part of something bigger than themselves.

R&R calls us all to *alohkaakan* (aw-low-caw-kin) or to be in service to the higher calling and rooted focus that this new and permanent section in *CJPE* will offer us. Larry Bremner CE, FCES (he/him, Métis) and Dr. Nicole Bowman (Lunaape/Mohican) will facilitate the processes of developing and upholding these foundational elements of R&R. Our commitment is to a traditionally grounded process for creating R&R. Therefore, our work must always be done with sacred intentions and time necessary to do this work in a good way, traditionally speaking. In the new year we will continue the work of developing the necessary structures, content, and processes for R&R to come alive. We will continue the work to develop R&R's Indigenous-centred review and submission processes, create anti-colonial agreements and policies so that community and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights are protected and owned by the authors, and establish appropriate protocols. Collectively, we are taking responsibility for developing and upholding a safe learning space as part of the R&R section in *CJPE*. We intend to engage in outreach for traditional and academic guidance so that R&R can be refined, understood in contexts of practice, and developed with community input as it is created and evolves over time. This development process embraces a model

of kinship as part of an authentic, engaged, sustainable, and culturally centred practice for editing, reviewing, and publishing.

In summary, our hope is that Roots and Relations is a welcoming place for Indigenous graduate students, curious and passionate Indigenous community members, Indigenous practitioners, First Nations and other Indigenous policy makers, leaders, and scholars on *Kukuna Ahkuy* (Mother Earth) to share their important work. As R&R development gets completed, the editors (Bremner and Bowman) expect a call for papers to be out in early 2022, with the future contributing authors publishing in *CJPE* by December 2022. If you have questions or wish to be a voluntary part of R&R, please e-mail rr@evaluationcanada.ca. *Marci, Xwat Anushiik* (thank you) to *CJPE* and the trusted relatives who are helping make this vision a reality!