

Building New Fires: Developing a Realist Evaluation Survey Using Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Doing

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The Making it Work team gratefully and respectfully works and partners with Indigenous Peoples in what is often referred to as British Columbia.

The team has no conflicts of interest to disclose



Making it Work
Community-based research study



Background

Making It Work is an Indigenous-focused, community-based research project that utilizes an Indigenous 'realist evaluation' approach. The study aims to understand why, when, how, and for whom, community-based services work well for people living with HIV, hepatitis C, and/or challenges with mental health and/or substance use, with a particular focus on case management and community development programs/services using Indigenous service delivery models. The study has used qualitative methods (interviews and virtual focus groups with service users and providers, and team discussions) to develop a program theory. The purpose of this component was to develop a survey to build and confirm our program theory.

Method

The realist evaluation approach recommends using multi-method data collection. Thus, our study team decided to develop and use a survey instrument to more systematically ask service users and providers about service provision, while being mindful of Indigenous research methodologies. We explored the literature to determine if there were examples of similar realist evaluation survey designs that engaged Indigenous methodologies and found there were not. Similarly, there were very limited examples demonstrating how to build realist evaluation surveys, so we worked as a team to develop the mixed methods Making it Work survey.



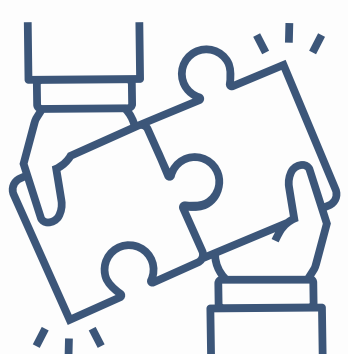
Research & Review

The team reviewed literature and spoke with experts to review examples of surveys using a realist evaluation approach and determined it was quite novel. It is complicated to utilize a survey while still framing context (C), mechanisms (M), and outcomes (O) (conceptualized as if (C)... then (O)... because (M) statements) following the realist evaluation approach..



Exploring Approaches

We incorporated a number of different approaches including community-based research, realist evaluation and Indigenous world views. These approaches naturally fit within the lens of two-eyed seeing, which involves 'seeing out of both eyes' by honouring both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in research (Iwama et al, 2009). From this perspective, our Study Team developed a survey that utilized two tools for participants to engage with when thinking about the materials - a story and an image. All represented the key C, M, O's from our program theory that we wanted to test in the survey, while allowing for the collection of quantitative data, aligned with two-eyed seeing.



Collaborative Design

Our Study Team developed and adapted our program theory spirals into simplified versions which were visually accessible and easier to interpret (see note below). Next, stories were developed collaboratively with study staff, team members and significant input from Elder Lucy on the project - they were designed to be composites of how the program theory works in organizations- highlighting particular experiences.



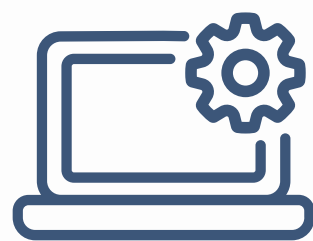
Pilot Testing the Survey

Piloting the survey was critical to development to see how people understood and engaged with it. This phase informed important revisions before starting data collection including reducing the number of participants and increasing the amount of honoraria we gave participants to properly respect the time it would take to complete.



In-Person Data Collection

We successfully completed data collection in-person with service users at our case study sites throughout what is colonially called British Columbia - Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George and Smithers from January to March 2023.



Data Analysis

We anticipate data analysis from the survey will be completed by the Summer 2023. Results will be published after revisiting case study sites to share our findings in accordance with research protocols under our research sharing guidelines. Read more on our study site!

How the survey was received

Many participants indicated support for the survey stories and the emotion the stories conveyed. It was common for participants to prefer listening to stories rather than reading the image. Offering the two choices was also viewed as taking a trauma informed approach. A minority of participants stated that the survey was too long and a smaller minority stated that they could not relate to the characters depicted. The challenges relating to the length of the survey were reflected in the 30% drop off rate with 78 consenting participants and 60 completing all five sections. The mixed methods approach may have increased the length of the survey for participants who thought they needed to review both the story and the image. An alternative may have been to offer either the story or the image at the start of the survey to decrease the drop off rate. Engaging and surveying in-person allowed for higher response rates, a lesson that became clear with the lower response and completion rates by participants who engaged via email. In-person surveying was the most engaging and appropriate aligning with the approaches of CBR, mixed methods realist evaluation & two-eyed seeing.

Lessons Learned (So far)

- Using a two-eyed seeing approach meant exploring new ways of developing a survey, which came with mixed responses. Further work should be done to build on innovative survey approaches.
- We know why there are very few examples of Realist Evaluation surveys, they are complex and not always easy to develop. It is important to continue to share learnings and further work should be done with this form of survey development.
- Important methods pieces included: It is important to pay attention to the length of the survey; along with surveying in person, will increase data quality and completion rates; some participants required more assistance or time than others so it was important that we adequately compensated this time by providing honoraria, a variety of snacks, and beverages.
- Upon completion of the survey, the team noted that participant reflections and commentary often offered supportive direction around knowledge sharing in community.

HARM REDUCTION AND CULTURE

IF an organization...	THEN we will see...	BECAUSE...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Links harm reduction and culture together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An increase in the amount of services people are accessingImproved health and wellness of people coming to the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Culture is a way of healing for people for people who use substancesA sense of community and respect between people at an organization is createdPeople feel better about themselvesPeople can feel re-connected to their culture and community

Each survey topic included a picture outlining our program theory and a narrated story illustrating the points in the program theory. then participants were asked a series of Likert scale and open-ended questions about how these resonated with their experience -- visit this website to learn more -- URL: **ADD IN HERE ONCE READY**

Watch these videos of stories from our survey



Martha's Story



River's story

