

Cultural Adaptation and Implementation Fidelity: Accountability, Engagement and Meaning Making

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THE WAY FORWARD II: CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY
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Recognition of Piscataway Indian Nation



Outline

- *What* are we talking about?
- *Why* are we talking about it?
- *How* should we talk about it?
 - Foregrounding CULTURE or COMMUNITY? Or both?
- Partnership Processes: Negotiating within ethical space
- Being part of a community of learners
- 2 examples from Canada
- A few learnings so far



What are we talking about?

- **Community:** If a program doesn't achieve the communities' **self-identified goals**, why would we do it?

And to achieve our own goals, we may have to deliver the program **our way**; that is, set a new, community-informed standard for program delivery.

- **Agency:** Cultural adaptations of standard programs are welcomed

AND

Must be accountable to funders to ensure that communities are delivering culturally-based adaptations of programs the way they say they are delivering. (Fidelity)

How can we tell? What indicators for monitoring?

Turning the world upside down

In Canada, those at the bottom of the totem pole are the ancestors, leaders, and governing council, supporting communities, families, children, and the next generation up at the top of the totem pole.

- We need to reach *up* to communities.



Community-led process for setting indicators of fidelity

- Why do it? Communities are the intended beneficiaries of program investments.
 - Community self-determination: Community-identified goals should inform program fidelity and performance measurement
 - What are you doing? *How* are you adapting the standard program to achieve *your* goals?
 - What are meaningful indicators that the adapted program is being delivered as described by community (or community-agency deliberation)?
- Community-informed fidelity monitoring indicators.

What is the 'base'? Community or Culture?

- Community-informed vs. culturally-informed.
- Community-based vs. culturally-based.

Communities are more identifiable as a group of people who a program hopes to support.

Cultures are less boundaried, more amorphous and getting to cultural indicators can be hard.

Communities are usually culturally mixed or hybrid, so that making 'culture' the driver of adaptation can lead endless debate or conflict.

- ✓ Community-informed adaptation or community-customization.

Setting the groundwork: Partnerships

- Negotiation of the terms for program funding, delivery, monitoring and evaluation depends on a partnership.
- If either the agency or the community does not want to negotiate, there is no partnership.
- Example: First Nations Partnerships Program: A ‘best of both worlds’ approach (www.fnpp.org)





It's a process.

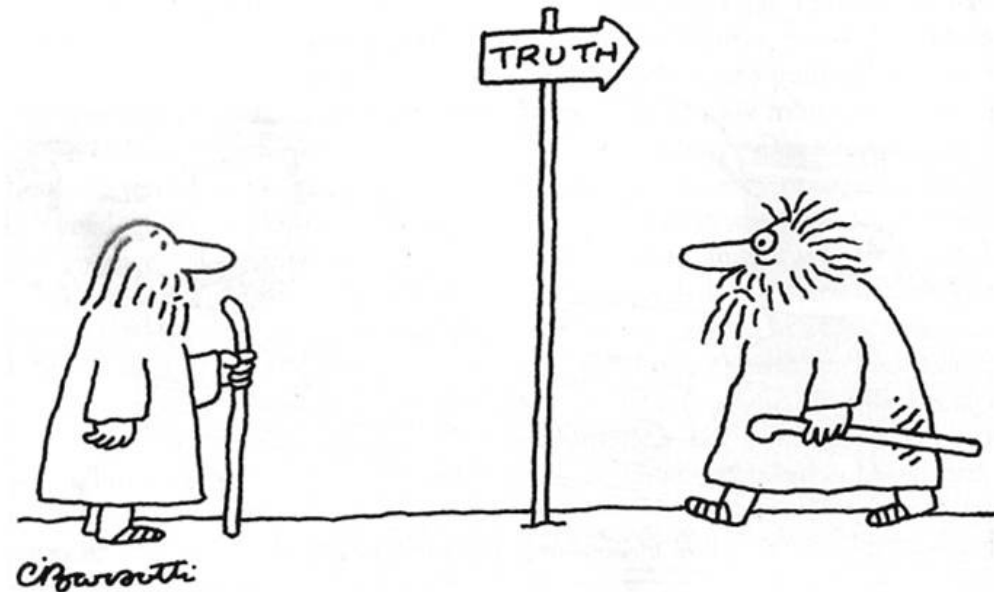
- *Agency-community* negotiations can yield new insights and reciprocal learning.
- *Internal* community engagements to set goals and find promising pathways for program delivery can strengthen community interest, support, and take-up of the program.



*"I still don't have all the answers,
but I'm beginning to ask the right questions."*

Openness, nimbleness, perspective

- Program fidelity tools are blunt instruments and not the whole world.
- Endless machinations about indicators avail us nothing. Like a knife, it's not the tool itself that matters as much as how you use it.
- Don't put too sharp an edge on it.
- Keep it simple.
- Tolerate ambiguity.
- Become part of communities of learners.



Eagles Nest:

Provincially funded Child Care Program for 2-4 year olds

- **Funding agency goal:** Promote young children's safe care, optimal development and readiness for school. Program must have components addressing: Early learning, health, safety, and nutrition.
- **Community goal:** Holistic child care and development involving Elders and informed by traditional culture, land-based lifestyle, and local First Nations values.
- **Community was culturally relatively homogeneous**



Learning

- Listening
- Respect
- Curiosity
- English
- Indigenous games
- Story-telling – using locally made dolls
- Text-orientation – using stories written &/or illustrated by Indigenous people
- Numeracy – using locally made learning materials



Spirituality

- Positive caregiver relationship
- Indigenous name
- Ceremonies
- Elders
- Drumming
- Guided time on the land
- Mother tongue

Healthy Choices

- First Nations Food Guide: name, choose, and eat in correct proportions from each food group
- Traditional Foods – gathering, preparing, sharing, consuming locally available country food (from berries to bear hunt)
- Five Poisons: White sugar, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, cleaning fluids
- Dental care: storage, hygiene, and holding a tooth brush, application of tooth paste, teeth brushing, tooth talk, check your smile
- Outdoor play options

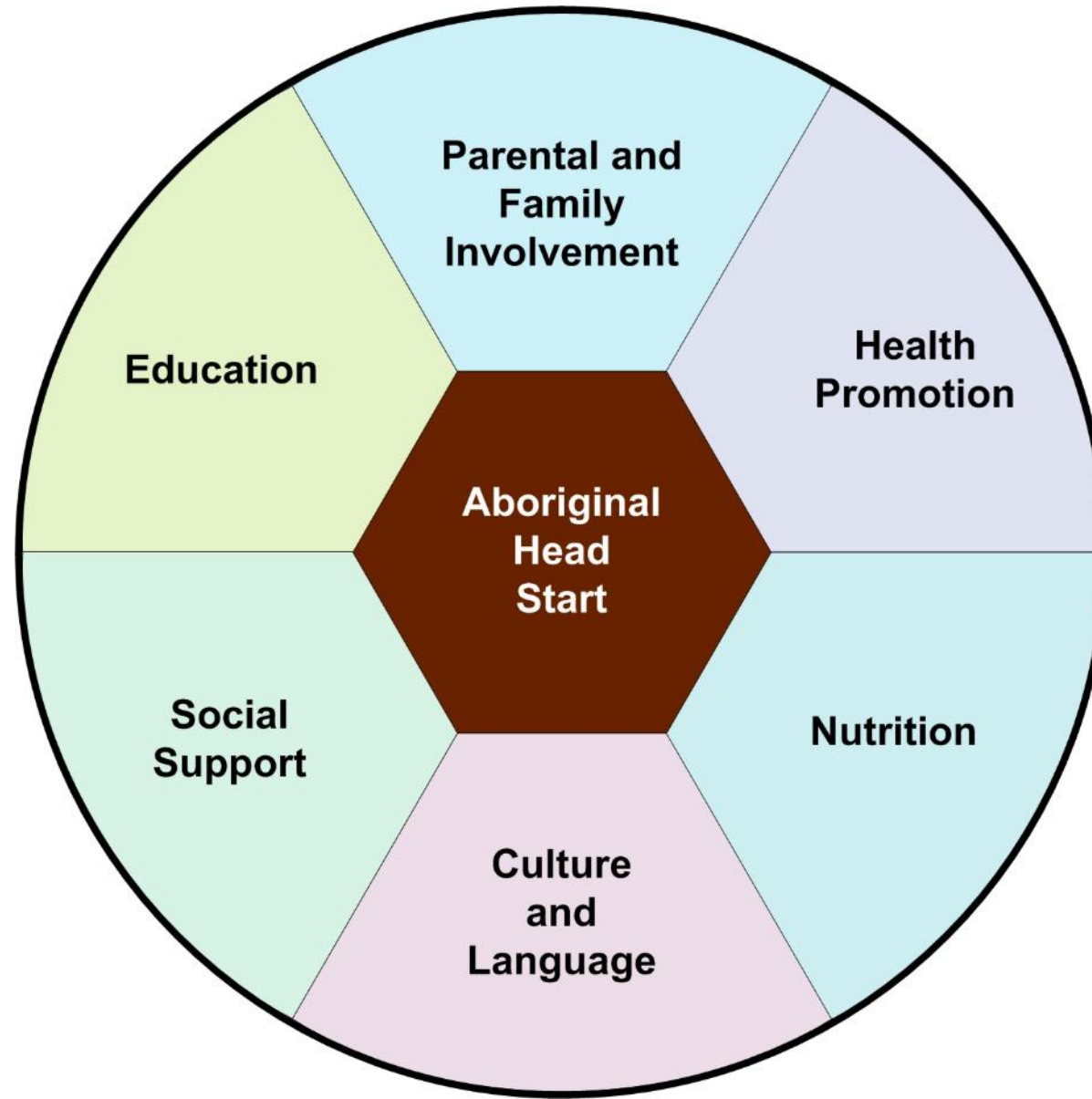
Aboriginal Head Start, Canada

Federally funded program primarily serving Indigenous children 3-5 year olds

- On-Reserve: \$59M from Health Canada for 300+ AHSOR programs serving 9000+ children
 - Operated by a land-based First Nation, Metis Settlement or Inuit community
- Northern and Urban Communities: \$41.3M from Public Health Agency of Canada for 133 AHSUNC programs serving 4800 children
 - Hosted by an Aboriginal-family serving agency off reserve.



6 federally mandated program components



Community-driven program design

- Each program applies for funding with a proposed program that revolves around the 6 mandated components.
- The way each component is delivered is determined by each community.
- The community undertakes its own process of stakeholder consultations to design the program and identify the indicators to which it will be accountable for monitoring and evaluation.
- Each community undertakes a different process, from 1 or 2 years of multi-community, multi-stakeholder meetings, dinners, deliberations..... To hiring a professional grant writer to hammer out a program with some input from ECE staff or director.

Fidelity monitoring is guided by community-defined indicators

Indicators address, for example:

Hard and soft infrastructure (facilities, human resources, professional development, etc.)

Numbers of children, eligibility, etc.

and

Community-informed six program elements:

- Nutrition: From Health Canada (mainstream) food guide - Traditional foods (negotiations)
- Parental and family involvement: Volunteering one day a week, sending food, repairs on weekends, make learning materials, learn the Indigenous language, pay fee.
- Culture and language: Spirituality through prayer, dance, masks, dreams, martial arts, belonging to a clan and animal totems. Language ranges from Mother-tongue, multiple Indigenous languages, English, French
- Education: From school readiness activities (early literacy, numeracy, problem solving games.....) to literacy of the land/ice, learning to live with nature, traditional crafts & music...
- Health promotion: All start with food, dental care, and hearing screening, many including speech-language facilitation involving Hanen and bootstrapped preventive interventions, some include ethnobotanical literacy, understanding the Medicine Wheel
- Social support: Friendship circles, talking circles, belonging to a clan, genealogical literacy, forging relationships with Elders....

Take-aways

1. *Community-identified* goals for children and families are priorities.
2. Mutual engagement in an ethical space where knowledge, goals and methods can be shared and program components can be negotiated is prerequisite and must be expected of the agency and community.
3. Without partnership there is no possibility of accountable adaptation.
4. Communities vary in capacity, interest and processes for adapting standard programs.
5. Agencies have a role in encouraging adaptation because it will probably affect program success (refer to genuine vs manifest adoption literature)
6. Adaptation means flexibility and often a *moving target*.
7. The trouble with 'best practices' is that each community, agency and time point is unique in some ways. There are many pathways. No one way will go where every agency or community wants to go.
8. One PROMISING pathway is to have a rudimentary framework provided by the agency (like poles of a tipi) and strong support for community deliberations about the shape, purpose, meaning and elaboration of the structure and its contents.







more: www.ecdip.org



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INTERCULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS