



# GETTING TO THE HEART OF COMMUNITY

CREATING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE  
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation is a national, award-winning Native-led nonprofit organization dedicated to Native American children's health. Its mission is to ensure Native children achieve their full potential by advancing cultures of Native American community health. The NB3 Foundation invests in community-driven and culturally-rooted programs that promote healthy nutrition, physical activity, youth development and cultural connections.

In November of 2018, the NB3 Foundation received funding to collaborate with the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project in the Pueblo of Zuni. The goal of this project was to design and implement an evaluation plan which aligns to the Indigenous Health Model and, more importantly, to Zuni core values.

## THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH MODEL

The NB3 Foundation evaluation methodology is guided by the Indigenous Health Model presented in the report titled, *Exploring Native Strong: First Two Years* ("Exploring Native Strong: First Two Years," 2016). This model is a framework for understanding how NB3 Foundation work is situated in an interconnected web of health paradigms. Significantly, the model presents what it means to be healthy from a Native American perspective. Diverse Native American communities can use the model to apply the shared ideas of Indigenous health within their specific cultural values, language and geography.

Evaluating the processes of community partners' work is essential to understanding what works, in what context, and why. The NB3 Foundation evaluation staff has found that traditional Western frameworks for evaluation

may not be relevant to evaluation in Indigenous communities. Though the NB3 Foundation is guided by the Indigenous Health Model, the framework is in development. This collaborative pilot study produced a culturally relevant evaluation process.

## THE NB3 FOUNDATION AND THE ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROJECT

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) seeks to provide youth with "empowering and enriching activities that encourage them to grow into strong and healthy adults who are connected with Zuni tradition." Over the course of eight months, through a series of gatherings and virtual meetings, the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP teams used the Indigenous Health Model to: 1) develop outcome statements at the community level with indicators for cultural connections; and 2) examine ways to define and measure success.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE PARTNERSHIP

ZYEP benefited from the opportunity to receive intensive support for program planning and evaluation with a partner they trust. NB3 Foundation understands the necessity to root all work, including evaluation, in the context of value to the community and response to local needs. Through the efforts of this grant, ZYEP renewed their engagement with community stakeholders-including Zuni elders, parents/guardians, and coaches-in learning how to support cultural connections for the youth

they serve. ZYEP enhanced their programming by including Zuni phrases of support, encouragement, and gratitude in their work. ZYEP customized their evaluation tools to better understand how well they had met their goal of improving Zuni cultural connections with community youth.

To apply this method in other Native American communities, teams highlighted the need for an organization and community to be open to learning about evaluation. Participants need to be willing to think deeply about how evaluation can resonate with the organization and the community. The Healthy Native Communities Partnership, Inc. (HNCP) reframed evaluation as keeping track of the process and the information generated (Healthy Native Communities Partnership, 2012). Results are more meaningful to the community when methods are rooted in the ways they have always done things, i.e., evaluation efforts are culturally relevant and embedded in what is important to people.

The NB3 Foundation team learned valuable lessons with ZYEP to improve their community partner relationships. Understanding the contexts of the community in which the program is situated, building trust and relationships in the work and valuing the knowledge and traditions held by the community members are all ways to strengthen the connections between Indigenous health and program evaluation.

## ZYEP EVALUATION FINDINGS

ZYEP promotes self-confidence, skill development and sportspersonship. The team models positive cultural values in a safe environment and supports children to play and develop at their own pace. Through analyses of

survey and interview data, five themes emerged: (1) I value you, (2) we are one people, (3) clear mind, strong mind, (4) time and (5) utility. The data indicates that this inherently Indigenous-centered program promoted the core values of the community. The children who participated showed positive personal growth and sense of achievement.

ZYEP straddles many difficult demands including managing diverse expectations of parents/guardians, children, funders and the community. Although critical comments from parents/guardians occasionally surface, when one is able to use the wide-angle lens to view the full picture there is a clear and cohesive image that delivers rich cultural content for their community. ZYEP manages the practical elements of coaching children to be better athletes. The team also teaches youth to care for themselves and for each other while helping them build on their inherent understanding of community core values.

## INTENDED USE OF REPORT

The intent of this report is to present a process for communities or organizations wanting to design an evaluation framework that prioritizes their own values and objectives.

Throughout the process, the *Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide* is utilized to provide a brief outline for a wellness planning model, to help engage Native communities to work toward their own mission, goals and objectives ("*Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide*," 2020). This Guide is a direct response to the NB3 Foundation's community partners' (grantees') requests for resources that initiate projects, align meaningful



Figure 1:  
ZYEP Coach talking to the Zuni youth before the start of a game of flag football.



assessments, accomplish comprehensive planning initiatives and best engage their stakeholders. The Guide is referenced throughout this report to organize the process that uses facilitated conversations and activities.

**PHASE 1:**

Preparation and Getting Ready, key deliverables are to set intentions, share resources and bring in people;

**PHASE 2:**

Community Listening to harvest ideas and knowledge;

**PHASE 3:**

Creating and Setting Priorities and Designing Strategies for Change;

**PHASE 4:**

Action Planning and Implementation; and

**PHASE 5:**

Community Reflection.

Since communities are not homogenous, differing in culture, governance, geography and priorities, the Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide is meant to spark ideas so communities begin where it makes sense. The same is true with this report.

**KEY OFFERINGS TO RECLAIM EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES**

**1.** Engage community about keeping track as a way to create/continue sustainable communities. Be inclusive of those not routinely consulted such as the administrative staff, coaches, youth, parents/guardians/caregivers, artists and elders. Remind community they have always been evaluators and researchers as evident in art, stories, language and geography.

- 2.** Change the perspective of evaluation as a tool community can use, not arbitrary measures from “externalities”, but something they direct, adapt and see the use.
- 3.** Consider how Indigenous and Western evaluation methodologies can intertwine in a way that matters to community
- 4.** Facilitate Indigenous communities to use models (and re-create their own) specific to their nation, culture, language and geography.
- 5.** Be appropriate and intentional about bringing in Indigenous perspective and histories into conversation to be less intimidating by starting with story sharing. For example, ask thoughtful questions throughout the gatherings to elevate what is known inherently. They know the answers and often need the space, time and good listening. The collective wisdom guides the work and answers become revealed in a story and holds healing qualities.
- 6.** Focus on positivity and success, acknowledging deficit narratives as primarily a way to inspire change.
- 7.** Obtain permission from decision makers when sharing information both internally and externally (when needed).
- 8.** For funders, trust community partners’ (grantees’) to do work that uplifts their community priorities and maintain that trust by learning from each other.
- 9.** Use models and evaluation processes as opportunities for multi-generational feedback, re-prioritizing of community/ organization/program goals, or reconnection of contemporary issue to culture in order to reassert what is most important
- 10.** Close the loop by sharing what is learned with community in understandable ways.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Notah Begay III (NB3) Foundation is a Native-led nonprofit organization dedicated to Native American children's health. Through direct programming, grantmaking, research and strengthening community knowledge (technical assistance), the NB3 Foundation promotes healthy nutrition and physical activity, supports connections to culture and fosters positive youth development.

In November of 2018, the NB3 Foundation received funding to undertake a process of working with a community partner to design and implement an evaluation plan that aligns to the Indigenous Health Model ("Exploring Native Strong: First Two Years," 2016). The NB3 Foundation outlined the following goals in this project:

1

**Understand community partner's opportunities, challenges and resource needs in designing, implementing, and evaluating a sustainable, native-led policy, system or environmental (PSE) change in their community;**

2

**Evaluate and strengthen community partner's capacity to implement a sustainable PSE change using the Indigenous Health Model and evaluation outcome indicators; and**

3

**Share the successes, opportunities/challenges and lessons learned through design, implementation and evaluation of the project.**

## NB3 FOUNDATION MISSION

**To ensure Native children achieve their full potential by advancing cultures of Native American community health.**

### **Four Core areas:**

- **Physical Activity**
- **Healthy Nutrition**
- **Youth Development**
- **Cultural Connections**



Figure 3:  
NB3 Foundation logo.

## ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROJECT MISSION



**To promote resilience among Zuni youth, so they will grow into strong and healthy adults who are connected with Zuni traditions.**

Figure 4:  
ZYEP logo.



NB3 Foundation chose to partner with the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) for this one-year evaluation journey. ZYEP previously received funding and support from the NB3 Foundation through the Water First! Grant, a multi-year project to reduce sugar-sweetened beverage use, increase safe drinking water consumption, and/or promote breastfeeding for young children. The overall goal was to support long-term change through planning, implementation of policy and/or systems change among families with young children. Through various NB3 Foundation funding cycles and close ties across New Mexico Native communities, NB3 Foundation and ZYEP had established a productive working relationship. This preexisting relationship made them desirable partners for the current project. Each step of the evaluation reinforced ownership of the process and story harvesting.

## THE ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROJECT

Located in northwestern New Mexico, Zuni Pueblo is one of the oldest continually inhabited places in North America and has been the home of the A:shiwi for more than 800 years. In Zuni Pueblo, Zuni language, religion, traditions and art are integral parts of daily life

Founded by Dr. Tom Faber in 2008, the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) seeks to provide youth with “empowering and enriching activities that encourage them to grow into strong and healthy adults who are connected with Zuni tradition.” (“Mission,” 2020). Through a grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Faber began a summer camp for youth that grew over the years into the fully developed ZYEP.

In 2018, ZYEP dedicated its Ho’n A:wan Community Park, a 2.5-acre complex with office and meeting space, athletic fields, walking trails, a community garden, and large performance spaces. ZYEP offers year-round activities at the park for Zuni youth including basketball, baseball, soccer and flag football. Summer

camps include activities such as gardening and learning about healthy nutrition, hiking, Zuni arts and Zuni cultural excursions. Youth have the opportunity to interact with Zuni elders and artists to learn about Zuni history and the Zuni way of life. Activities like gardening reinforce important local traditions for the community and foster that knowledge for future generations. During the school year, ZYEP partners with the local grade schools for afterschool programs to continue the activities from the summer. In addition to direct work with youth, ZYEP has constructed ten hiking trails used by youth and community members for recreation.

## INTENDED USE OF REPORT

Evaluation is about documenting a legacy that perpetuates generations from now and the intent of this report is to present a process for communities or organizations wanting to design an evaluation framework that prioritizes their own values and objectives. The steps within this report are not intended to fit all communities or organizations, but to illustrate how one community did it (and are still doing it). Ultimately, this is both a celebration of how the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project reclaims evaluation methodologies and a specific case to share knowledge. The third part of this report presents qualitative and quantitative analysis on data, as an integration of Western methodology. This [section](#) takes the work to a technical level and requires some proficiency in statistics and epidemiology for those who have their hearts in data analysis. We know you are out there.

For those who want to see the [process steps](#) visually, go to Appendix A, page 48 for an infographic. Appendix B is an [infographic](#) to show the key findings from the outcome evaluation. Throughout the process, the Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide was utilized to help engage Native communities to work toward their own mission, goals, and objectives (“Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide,” 2020). This Guide was developed

as a direct response to the NB3 Foundation’s community partners’ requests for resources that initiate projects, align meaningful assessments, accomplish comprehensive planning initiatives and best engage their stakeholders. The Guide is referenced throughout this report to organize the process using methodologies that are designed and implemented by Indigenous Peoples. Since communities are not homogenous, differing in culture, governance, geography and priorities, the Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide is meant to spark ideas so communities begin where it makes sense for them. The same is true with this report. Lastly, the terms “children”, “kids”, and “youth” are used interchangeably to align with how ZYEP and NB3 Foundation used the terms. In all instances, they refer to young people under the age of 18.

Figure 5:  
Video: Getting to the Heart of Community:  
An Evaluation Journey with the Zuni Youth  
Enrichment Project.

## VIEWING EVALUATION THROUGH A CULTURAL LENS

Evaluating the processes and products generated by NB3 Foundation community partners is essential to understanding what works, in what context and why. NB3 Foundation has found traditional Western frameworks for evaluation may not be relevant to evaluation in Indigenous communities. This is especially true because Indigenous and Western conceptions of “health” and “evaluation” have fundamental differences. LaFrance, Nichols and Kirkhart (2012, p. 60) posit, “One cannot step outside cultural context in practicing evaluation.” For evaluation to be meaningful in Native communities, it must be done in ways that reflect the values of the community and respect traditions and culture (LaFrance & Nichols, 2009).





While there is no single Indigenous way of knowing, Indigenous knowledge across cultures has common characteristics. Indigenous knowledge values holistic thinking rather than linear or hierarchical thinking, which is often the focus of Western evaluation practice (LaFrance et al., 2012). Brant-Castellano, M. (2000) describes the three Indigenous Domains of Knowledge as:

- Traditional Knowledge (critical learning and teachings that emerge from stories and cultural engagements passed through multiple generations),
- Empirical Knowledge (learnings that can be explained through observation and experimentation), and
- Revealed Knowledge (learnings gained from prophesy or spiritual revelations).

NB3 Foundation used these domains to frame three overarching evaluation questions about the programs they fund (Notah Begay III Foundation, 2016).

- Traditional Knowledge: What do you know?
- Empirical Knowledge: What do you see?
- Revealed Knowledge: What do you sense or feel?

The imbalance between Western evaluation approaches and the values and traditions of the communities is revealed in the disconnect from

their ways of knowing (knowledge cultivation) and meaning-making. To elevate community voice, it is necessary to develop Indigenous-rooted approaches to evaluation that empower Indigenous Peoples. Effective evaluation facilitates communities to determine their own paths and successes aligned to their cultural traditions and core values.

For evaluation in Native communities, context is everything. Indigenous evaluation is grounded in the community where it takes place because that is where it has integrity and meaning. Programs “can be accurately understood only within their relationship to place, setting, and community” (LaFrance et al., 2012, p. 61). Research and evaluation methods are dependent on respect for those who are involved and will ultimately feel the consequences of the inquiry (Kovach, 2010b). Ultimately, evaluation should empower individuals and communities by being responsive to community needs and respecting community ownership of the evaluation data (Bowman, 2007).

Indigenous evaluation uses many of the same tools as Western approaches, but often differs in their implementation. It is necessary to understand what counts as knowledge in a community and how that knowledge is gathered. This speaks to how Indigenous knowledge takes precedence when thinking about what matters to the community in what they want to document and track. Methods must make sense from an Indigenous knowledge perspective and may include storytelling as data gathering (Kovach,

2010a). For example, while questions from a logic model are used with Western and Indigenous evaluation, Indigenous evaluation presents and utilizes the questions in ways that utilize stories. Other Western tools applied may include software for both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. However, new knowledge from this data analysis must be understood through an Indigenous lens that incorporates traditional knowledge, core values and priorities of the community. In addition, health is understood in a cultural context that goes beyond Western measurements. For example, the imbalance of the interconnectedness of emotional, mental, physical, spiritual wellbeing may manifest in the body in ways that seem unrelated to traditional measures. A Western health provider might treat a physical symptom and fail to see there is a connection to the relationship with the land.

## A MODEL OF INDIGENOUS WELLNESS AND ITS APPLICATION TO EVALUATION

The NB3 Foundation’s evaluation is guided by the Indigenous Health Model (Figure 7) presented in their report, Exploring Native Strong: First Two Years (“Exploring Native Strong: First Two Years,” 2016). The web image is inclusive of both Indigenous and Western concepts, models and knowledge. It also shows the interconnections of wellness from a Native American perspective. Indigenous health is inclusive of relationships beyond biological factors. Nettleton et al. (2007) describe an Indigenous perspective of health as, “not individual, but one that encompasses the health of the whole community and the health of the ecosystem in which [Indigenous Peoples] live.” (Nettleton, Napolitano, & Stephens, 2007, p. 3). Wellness encompasses emotional, mental, physical and spiritual balance and goes beyond the individual to include family, community, and creation (Figure 7).

In this journey to empower Indigenous communities, NB3 Foundation is committed to constant reflection on practice and to understand “what works and why” with community partners. Through a process evaluation, the NB3 Foundation sought a more in-depth understanding of their strategy applying the Indigenous Health Model. This included using the model as a guide to evaluate a program and assess whether the efforts are producing the intended outputs. They also sought to identify strengths, opportunities and challenges in creating a joint evaluation plan with a community partner. Key takeaways are shared throughout.

NB3 Foundation integrated the Indigenous Health Model into a strategic process with ZYEP, looking at their program from a variety of perspectives and producing outcome statements. ZYEP recognizes that their program activity reverberates through their entire community and shared stories from the viewpoints of children, parents/guardians, coaches, staff and program advisors. By sharing stories, they recognized they have been doing evaluation all along. ZYEP developed outcome statements on the various levels by asking stakeholders what matters to them. This provided a vantage point to understand the program and outcomes from different lenses: the eyes and heart of young people and their caregivers. In addition, ZYEP was able to discern how they provide community-level benefits. The group was thoughtful about what they envisioned for the Zuni children and youth and, therefore, developing outcome statements was one of the key steps as it interconnected their priorities.

Developing an outcome statement can be daunting so a community may gain practice by looking through a [menu of outcome statements linked here](#). This list aligns to the NB3 Foundation mission and thus includes core areas for physical activity, healthy nutrition, youth development and cultural connections. Within each core area, the outcomes are categorized following a socio-ecological model of individual, family, community, and creation levels that collectively move beyond the individual youth and integrates the wide range of factors that influence a child’s health.

Figure 6:  
Ho’n A:wan Youth Center, Zuni Pueblo.





PART I:

THE PROCESS  
EVALUATION

The project began in spring 2019 with various types of conversations: three in-person team gatherings, multiple virtual meetings and community listening sessions organized by ZYEP. Over the course of the project, NB3 Foundation, Magnolia Consulting, LLC. (an external evaluation consultant) and ZYEP engaged in 25 hours of planning, 11 hours of data collection and 23 hours of in-person and virtual gatherings. Clearly, the investment in planning and relationship building equaled the actual time in gatherings.

FIRST GATHERING: COMMUNITY LISTENING

PHASE 1:  
PREPARATION AND  
GETTING READY

The process began well before the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP staff met in Zuni, NM for the first in-person gathering of the teams. The NB3 Foundation utilized the Community Listening for Healthy Children: An Action Planning Guide to plan facilitated conversations and activities. Key deliverables of the first phase (Preparation) were to set intentions, share resources and to connect people.

Prior to the initial gathering, ZYEP and NB3 Foundation set intentions for the purpose of the partnership, the shared resources, and the assets that included the people who would be involved. The group co-created general content for a series of in-person and virtual meetings focused on ZYEP’s Zuni values as they pertained to keeping track (Healthy Native Communities

Partnership, 2012). While the groups developed general topics for the gatherings, all participants understood that, since this process had not been done before, those topics would likely be updated as the work progressed.

THE FIRST GATHERING  
INCLUDED THE  
FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand evaluation in the cultural context of keeping track (Healthy Native Communities Partnership, 2012)
- Increase ZYEP staff understanding of the use of the Indigenous Health Model as a guide for evaluation
- Increase NB3 Foundation’s understanding of ZYEP programs, goals, and past evaluation efforts

- Discuss hopes, concerns, tasks and timeline for the work

LEARNING ABOUT ZYEP

Indigenous evaluation is relational so cultivating honor for each other and the work is key. In the initial meetings, ZYEP codirectors presented on the origin, mission and vision of ZYEP. Prior to this project, ZYEP collected multiple forms of data to evaluate their programs. These included testimonials and highlight videos of their programming; parent, youth and mentor surveys; attendance logs; and metrics including body mass index, minutes of activity, and changes in nutrition. The ZYEP team explained how funder-guided metrics (e.g. body mass index, minutes in activity) do not align with community values and measures of success. This influenced their main objective for a NB3 Foundation collaboration: develop culturally-meaningful measures of success which resonated for the ZYEP, their participants, and the Zuni community. They

wanted to go beyond participant satisfaction surveys to evaluate the connection between Zuni cultural practices and positive youth development.

EVALUATION AS “KEEPING TRACK”

Conversations began by framing evaluation in the context of how ancestors kept track of what was happening in communities (Healthy Native Communities Partnership, 2012). The group was asked, “Thinking back 500 years, how did your ancestors keep track of things?” Participants voiced how Indigenous Peoples have used oral history passed down through generations to impart traditions, wisdom and knowledge about social, environmental and cultural events. Indigenous Peoples have always been evaluators, as evidenced in rock art and lithic artifacts. Jason Nez, a Diné archaeologist stated, “These artifacts, these sites, they are some of the only

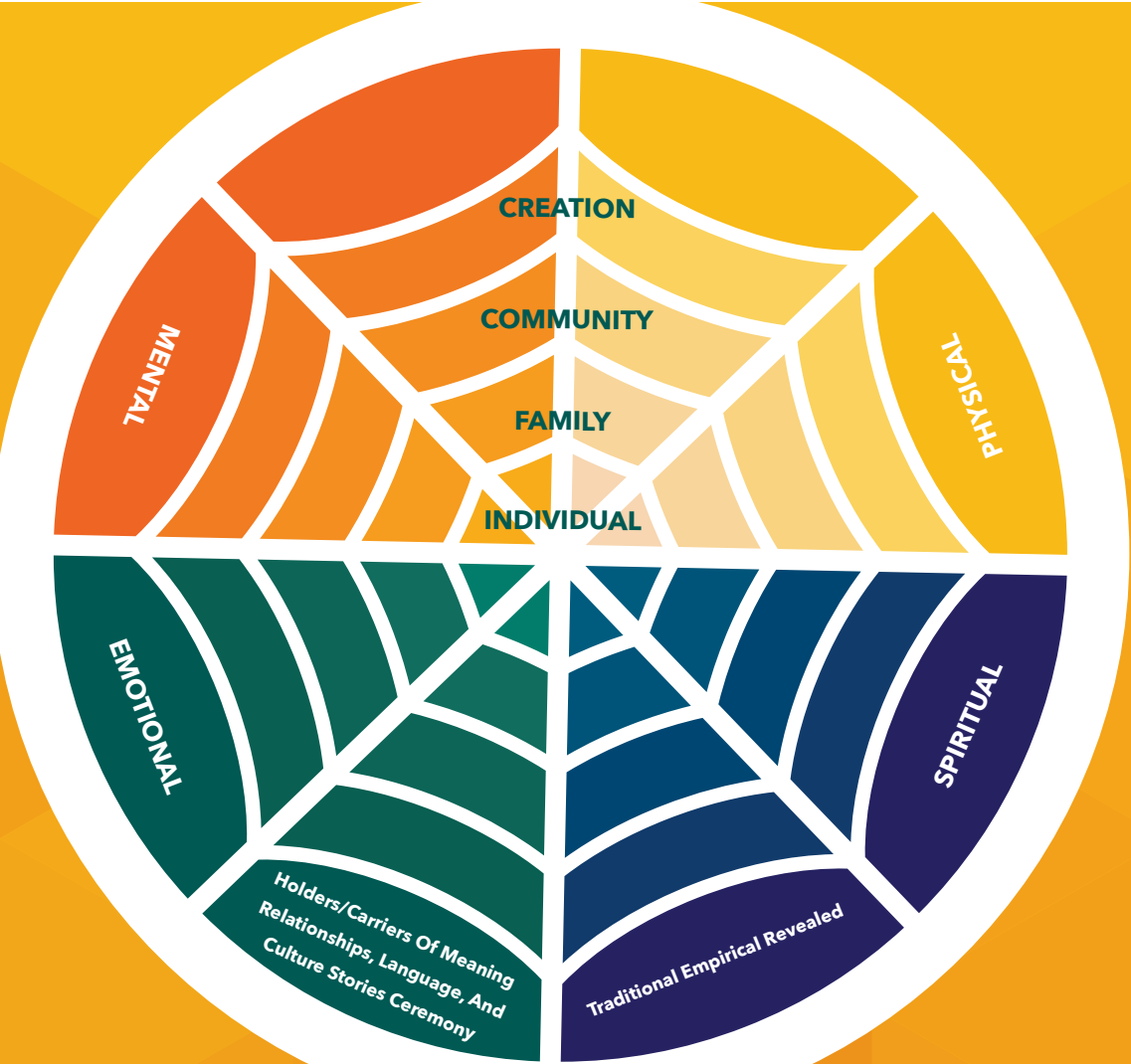


Figure 7:  
**INDIGENOUS  
HEALTH  
MODEL**  
("EXPLORING NATIVE  
STRONG: FIRST TWO  
YEARS," 2016)

TABLE 2

INDIVIDUAL

REFLECTION:

Share a story of one youth and how you are growing that youth into a strong, healthy adult who is connected with Zuni traditions.

STORY:

The reigning Miss Zuni, who emerged as a leader in ZYEP programming, incorporates Zuni language into all of her mentoring activities with youth, participates in an oral history project and models healthy behaviors for children.

OUTCOME STATEMENT:

- 4.1 a: Children feel increased connections to community and clan.
- 4.1 b: Children feel valued and confident contributing to something that gives them purpose.
- Note: ZYEP chose outcome 4.1, in the youth development core area.

FAMILY

REFLECTION:

Share a story about how the family is growing youth into strong, healthy adults who are connected with Zuni traditions.

STORY:

A youth who had participated in ZYEP was expelled from school. ZYEP staff recognized his strengths and put him in a leadership role that supports his own family while he also mentors other youth. Through ZYEP and family support, he is now in school and working while raising his own child who participates in ZYEP programs.

OUTCOME STATEMENT:

- 4.2 a. Parents/Caregivers support their children’s connections to community.
- 4.2 c. Parents/Caregivers support their children’s contributions to the community through health and fitness.
- Note: ZYEP chose outcome 4.1 and 4.2 both in the youth development core area.

REFLECTING ON THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH MODEL: SHARING STORIES OF CHANGE

COMMUNITY

REFLECTION:

How is the Zuni Pueblo contributing to growing youth into strong, healthy adults who are connected with Zuni traditions?

STORY:

Community involvement is like a pyramid. The base is culture and traditions like ceremonies, running, and community ovens for communal cooking. The second level is the land and helping youth connect the land to culture. The top of the pyramid is community organizations that support our youth. Each layer builds on the foundation of culture and traditions.

OUTCOME STATEMENT:

- 4.3 a. Communities provide increased opportunities for youth to participate in traditional activities. Note: ZYEP chose outcome 4.3, in the youth development core area.

CREATION

REFLECTION:

Share a story that highlights ZYEP’s mission and values for Zuni youth in relationship with the land, water and animals.

STORY:

During summer camps, we teach youth about the sacred nature of Zuni lands and the history of the Zuni River, which no longer runs. It is important to remember the river because it is part of where we came from—traditions are what make us Zuni.



evidence that we were here...” (Yaquinto, 2017). This rich tradition uplifts the delicate balance of documenting for future generations while also protecting culture and knowledge. Looking to the past, we learn and integrate the teachings to clear a path for reflections on progress and resilience for future generations. We may not ever see the success of long-term outcomes in our lifetime; however, future generations can look back to our work and integrate that knowledge. ZYEP staff reflected that keeping track is important, “So as not to lose cultural connections and generations of wisdom.”

The Indigenous Health Model (Figure 7) and potential outcomes provided a template for ZYEP staff to analyze their programming impacts. Facilitators asked the group to think of a story about a participant or community stakeholder who had been influenced by ZYEP. Then they examined the list of [outcome statements](#) and considered how the story of their stakeholder aligned to one of the outcome levels (individual, family, community, creation). In Table 2, the reflection prompt was asked and then ZYEP created graphical representations of a story of change, focusing on one level of the model as displayed on the left side of each box within the table. The activity served to ground evaluation as something that communities do naturally in the form of storytelling. One ZYEP staff noted, “If [storytelling] is part of evaluation, then that would be amazing—we do that all the time.” The activity helped the group understand that evaluation is inherent in the work they do with their stakeholders.

### HOPES FOR THE WORK AHEAD

To further solidify trust, the two organizations shared expectations for the work ahead. After reviewing the timeline for the project, the NB3 Foundation concluded the gathering with a discussion on hopes for the remainder of the project, and potential opportunities and challenges.

#### ZYEP hopes included the following:

- Find out what the community wants to know about ZYEP’s programs.
- Select measurable outcomes that align to ZYEP’s mission.
- Modify evaluation instruments and methods to align better with measuring cultural awareness for youth.
- Develop measures and methods that can be used consistently and adapted for different types of programming.
- Demystify evaluation so that the community feels that they are sharing stories in an empowering way.

#### NB3 Foundation hopes included the following:

- Understand how a program can use an Indigenous Health Model in a meaningful way.
- Support ZYEP to develop evaluation methods that are sustainable beyond the scope of the grant.

### FOLLOW-UP VIRTUAL CONVERSATION

At a follow-up virtual meeting, evaluators presented an evaluation matrix, titled, [ZYEP Outcomes, Evaluation Questions, and Evidence Matrix \(Table 3\)](#) for ZYEP to use to organize the process (Haden, 2019). The teams worked together to craft outcome statements at the individual, family, and community levels, then aligned their activities, data collection and evaluation questions to measure those outcomes.

During this virtual conversation, ZYEP shared how staff decided to focus their evaluation efforts on outcomes related to the core area of cultural connections. They shared how culture is their center and the other areas would ripple from that center. They developed questions they wanted to ask community leaders, program advisors, coaches, parents/guardians and youth.

Importantly, the program advisors are made up of community members who are artists, teachers, elders, and religious leaders. The questions included:

- Why do families and community members want their youth to participate in ZYEP programs?
- How can ZYEP help youth feel culturally supported?

After refining the evaluation questions, they began to craft and revise evaluation instruments. These instruments included advisory board focus group questions and parent and youth surveys to examine outcomes related to increasing Zuni youth cultural awareness.

TABLE 3:

#### ZYEP Outcomes, Evaluation Questions and Evidence Matrix

OUTCOME STATEMENT
ZYEP ACTIVITIES
WHAT IS OUR EVALUATION QUESTION?
WHAT EVIDENCE/DATA CAN WE COLLECT? WHAT MEASURES DO WE ALREADY HAVE?
WHAT DATA DO WE NEED?

## ZYEP ORGANIZED SESSIONS:

### COMMUNITY LISTENING

### PHASE 2:

## COMMUNITY LISTENING WITH PROGRAM ADVISORS, COACHES AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

The ZYEP team sought guidance from their program advisors about how to make their programs culturally informed and supportive. Advisors gave the team guidance on strategies they could immediately implement in their programming. The first of these was to incorporate the Zuni language into the upcoming youth basketball program, focusing on Zuni words and phrases that emphasized important Zuni values. From their perspective, focusing on single words and phrases would be easier for coaches and youth participants who were not fluent Zuni speakers.

Coaches and staff collaborated to develop a list of Zuni words and phrases to use during coaching and games. Phrases ranged from simple Zuni greetings to phrases of gratitude and encouragement. The ZYEP team expanded their efforts by providing 200 parents/guardians of youth participants with the list of words and phrases and asked them to select the most important words or phrases they wanted coaches to use throughout the season. Other strategies included emphasizing kinship ties at practices to build teamwork and cohesiveness and to emphasize the Zuni tradition of bringing a positive attitude to an activity to ensure success. The team began implementing these strategies with their youth basketball participants and revised their youth and family surveys to examine the outcomes related to these changes in programming.

## SECOND GATHERING: COMMUNITY LISTENING

### PHASE 3: CREATING AND SETTING PRIORITIES AND DESIGNING STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The NB3 Foundation and ZYEP teams met for the second in-person gathering at Zuni and addressed ZYEP evaluation activities and the connection to the overall NB3 Foundation and ZYEP evaluation priorities. Together the teams did two things: 1) develop a process Indicator: how will ZYEP integrate language into program, and 2) develop outcome Indicators: how do they know they are strengthening Zuni identity?

After setting intentions for the time together, ZYEP team members discussed their progress since the first gathering. To set the stage for the morning session, the ZYEP co-director asked the group to keep in mind the question, “What words, ideas and themes reflect Zuni values?” The group identified concepts such as self-confidence, family connections, language, togetherness, fun, respect for self and others, resiliency, positivity and inclusiveness, among others.

Following updates, ZYEP team members discussed opportunities and challenges to data collection, including how they might revise surveys to make them more user-friendly and culturally relevant, and also how they are using the results to inform other programs.

### EXAMINING OVERARCHING ZYEP OUTCOMES

Incorporating Zuni language and emphasizing fun and kinship in basketball programming provided the ZYEP team with new strategies for a single program. The next phase of the in-person

TABLE 4:

#### ZYEP Outcome Statements

##### INDIVIDUAL

Zuni children are more aware of the Zuni identity.

##### FAMILY

Zuni families increase their participation in healthy activities that promote important Zuni values.

##### COMMUNITY

Zuni community increases opportunities for youth to participate in activities that elevate important Zuni values.

gathering was to refine outcomes that could be examined across all ZYEP programs. Evaluators reviewed the definition of outcomes and the process of writing outcome statements so as to be specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and timebound (SMART). The team also revisited the Indigenous Health Model and the NB3 Foundation outcome statements.

To frame the discussion about developing cross-program outcomes, the group discussed what is meant by “community” in the context of ZYEP, and the activities that relate to cultural connections. The ZYEP community includes youth, parents/guardians, coaches, community partners, program advisors, and ZYEP staff. ZYEP activities that promote Zuni values and connectedness to culture include oral history theater, visits to cultural sites and having Zuni elders and artists

as role models and mentors. The recent addition of Zuni language into the basketball program is a thread they will continue in other programs. A ZYEP team member commented, “If our kids are comfortable in their own culture, it would help them outside Zuni by helping them navigate living in two worlds.” Another stated, “We can’t be neutral. We want to see Zuni values across all the levels of outcomes we might measure.” The session ended with the group crafting their own outcome statements (Table 4) tying Zuni cultural awareness to the levels of the Indigenous Health Model.

### FOLLOW-UP VIRTUAL CONVERSATION AND ZYEP ORGANIZED SESSIONS BETWEEN GATHERING 2 TO GATHERING 3

Between Gathering 2 and 3, ZYEP reached Phase 4: Action Planning and Implementation of the Community Listening for Healthy Native Children; An Action Planning Guide with three deliverables: Who is going to do what? How will success be measured? And how will language be integrated into programming? This information was guided by the evaluation questions and data sources to address the three outcome statements shown in Table 4. The teams identified ZYEP activities that connected to each outcome. Then they developed evaluation questions and discussed whether tools already in use addressed these questions. ZYEP identified ways in which they might refine their current surveys and interviews of program advisors, parents/guardians, coaches and children to understand how well they are meeting the outcomes at each level of the health model.

## THIRD GATHERING: COMMUNITY LISTENING

### PHASE 5: REFLECTING ON THE LEARNING

For the third gathering NB3 Foundation and ZYEP teams were joined by representatives from the funder and provided process updates. This gathering was a reflection of Phase 5: Community Reflection Phase to share reflections and learnings.

To center the day’s activities, the teams spent the morning visiting the Zuni community and honoring the local food system. A meal was prepared by a Zuni caterer, Set To Perfection, owned by Alander Seoutewa and Feather Lewis-Seoutewa. The meal and stories demonstrate appreciation of the relationship building.

### CAPTURING THE JOURNEY

The final part of the gathering involved the NB3 Foundation, ZYEP, and the funder’s documenting highlights of the work together, beginning with the grant kickoff in December 2018 through this final meeting. Teams responded to two questions:

- What do you remember about our journey together?
- What events, learnings or highlights stand out to you?

Reflecting on this exercise, the teams noted how much work was accomplished in a short period of time.



PART II:

LESSONS LEARNED  
REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

At the end of the project, the Magnolia Consulting evaluator conducted interviews with NB3 Foundation and ZYEP staff to document the lessons learned in cocreating a culturally relevant evaluation plan for ZYEP. Interviewees included: 1) NB3 Foundation team members who either worked directly on the project or were part of the visioning for the work; 2) ZYEP staff who participated in the gatherings and the evaluation activities during the project; and 3) ZYEP coaches who implemented changes to the program suggested by parents/guardians and ZYEP program advisors.

For NB3 Foundation staff, reflecting on lessons learned will help to inform future work with other community partners wanting to develop a more culturally relevant way to evaluate their programs. For ZYEP, reflecting on the process will help to inform their own efforts moving forward. The following themes emerged from the interviews.

INTERVIEW THEMES

THEME 1:  
HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND  
PAST OPPORTUNITIES/  
CHALLENGES WITH  
EVALUATION

ZYEP and NB3 Foundation staff talked about why they saw the need for a different way of thinking about program evaluation from what they had experienced in the past. In separate interviews, ZYEP and NB3 Foundation team members talked about the historical trauma associated with research that had been done to Native

communities rather than with them (Deloria Jr, 1988; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). One person commented on the importance of transparency when asking individuals to provide information for evaluation. This person noted,

There’s always a concern, especially in Native communities, that people feel like they’re being studied. We try to be as sensitive to that as possible and really make sure that people knew why we were collecting data and why we want to hear back from them.

ZYEP was open to working with the NB3 Foundation as a Native-led organization who

understands the history of evaluation in Native American communities. ZYEP had confidence that NB3 Foundation would uplift their work and base measurement on an Indigenous understanding of “success”. They noted that, for the most part, federal funders do not consider cultural contexts when examining the success of projects and have a different lens through which they view success. This project provided the opportunity to apply both a broad Indigenous lens and then co-develop a Zuni specific lens to evaluate ZYEP.

The NB3 Foundation chose ZYEP for this work because they had an established mutually respectful relationship. This relationship established trust between the two organizations that would be essential to doing the work.

THEME 2:  
BALANCING NATIVE AND  
WESTERN EVALUATION  
APPROACHES

In doing the work of developing a culturally relevant framework, it is helpful for communities to utilize models (like the Indigenous Health Model) as a way to spark ideas and make it their own. This creates an opening to marry Western and Indigenous methodology. One NB3 Foundation team member commented on their work with the community partners they fund:

Evaluation is not an easy topic to talk about, particularly in Native communities. There’s a really long history of harm that has been done in the name of research and evaluation, and so it’s something that we’re very sensitive about.

We definitely wanted a framework for evaluation that fit and uplifted and recognized Indigenous values, approaches, and knowledge as the foundation for any type of meaningful tracking of success and challenges in our communities.

—NB3 Foundation team

We felt that it was our responsibility to have a space for people to tell stories and to share evaluation and keeping track methods that matter to them. Not to us as the funders, but to them—that they can go back and tell their stories and share them with community.

As one person commented, “I think Western approaches are extremely limiting for our communities, and if we don’t fit in the box of what those approaches are trying to achieve, we are deemed unsuccessful.” Team members also discussed how some of the traditional evaluation methods were not resonating with their community partners. One individual commented, “I think that’s what Indigenous communities are

**See, look at the paintings. Look at the way we’re doing it keeping track. This is the thing that we can take back and we’re going to make sure that we’re telling our history the way we want to and not the way [non-Natives] want.**

**—ZYEP program advisor and Zuni artist**

doing. They’re taking from it what is helpful, and then putting the other stuff aside.”

In work with community partners over the years, NB3 Foundation understands the importance of community autonomy. Framing evaluation as “keeping track” is more in line with their community partners’ core values. Telling a story, making a video, creating art—these are all things they want their community partners to view as data to be reflected on and passed on to another generation. In the end, what is important is that the results of evaluation come back to the community and are understood and used by them. Via the Community Listening for Healthy Native Children: An Action Planning Guide, this closes the circle.

### **THEME 3:**

## **THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH MODEL AS A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION**

NB3 Foundation found that the Indigenous Health Model’s spiderweb design was very purposeful to viewing health from an Indigenous lens because all aspects of an individual including emotional, mental, physical and spiritual cannot be viewed separately but are interconnected in a way that supports health.

Developing indicators that are tied to the model allowed the NB3 Foundation to respond to funders’ needs for evidence of success while still honoring the community partners doing the work. Team members discussed how the Indigenous Health Model and indicators allow community partners to define what health means to them. As one NB3 Foundation team member commented,

I think some Indigenous communities are ready to work with us, meaning they are ready to have those difficult conversations. What does health mean to them? What does it look like? It’s

**I think as Native Americans we struggle to find our voice. And doing evaluation in this way is helping us find our voice. So that we can gather the data that is more important for the community to understand. There’s also that difference between Western and Indigenous models.**

not just clinical indicators, or health service indicators, or mental health indicators. It’s not just what the funding sources say health is, but actually having the opportunity to connect to their community and really talk about it.

The ZYEP codirector commented that understanding the model took time and thought, but as it became more familiar it resonated with him. He said, “The thing that I liked about it was how interconnected everything was—and that seemed Indigenous to me and to my understanding of what that means. It made it visible.”

Aligning the spiderweb model to evaluation helped ZYEP understand how to evaluate their

programs by recognizing all levels of the model: individual, family, community, and creation. He stated, “The model can help ZYEP staff think about all of the different people in the community at the different levels of the model and their needs that we can strive to meet.”

### **THEME 4:**

## **MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

ZYEP was created as a safe space for youth to engage in meaningful and healthy activities, to have positive role models and to build their leadership capacity. The ZYEP founder noted that although he started the program, it blossomed when the community took ownership. He stated,

It was really just identifying the strengths that already exist within Zuni that could meet that need. And then as an organization our job is to just match those needs with the existing community strengths and let them do what they want to do.

The NB3 Foundation team helped ZYEP think about how they could use the levels of the model when doing needs assessments with their stakeholders.

It really was eye-opening to think that before we start a program we could talk to the community and get their input. And then we could take that input to families and ask them what they thought and get their input. And we could take that to the youth who we were serving at the individual level and get their input. We could really design a program that was meeting the community’s needs, the family’s needs, and the individual kid’s needs. If we did that, our programs would be better, and they would be more effective.



# TRANSLATING THEMES INTO ACTION

## 1. GROUNDING THE WORK IN AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMUNITY

The NB3 Foundation team reflected on the importance of grounding the work with ZYEP in the Zuni community. Both the NB3 Foundation team and ZYEP codirector stated separately that holding the gatherings in Zuni rather than doing the work virtually or at the NB3 Foundation offices centered the work in the community and showed support for Zuni values. The codirector stated,

The convenings that we've had in person to really work through the Indigenous health framework and think about how this would apply in a place like Zuni were also extremely helpful. It's not something that we experience very often. We don't get a lot of visitors to Zuni and we don't get a lot of our funders who necessarily come here.

The final gathering began with a guided visit of the Zuni community. Upon reflection, the NB3 Foundation team realized that the community visit should have been part of the first gathering or even prior. The community visit, led by a local artist active in the Zuni traditions, helped to ground the work in an understanding of the Zuni way of life. When doing this work with another community, the team would like to begin with this grounding to help the work feel more connected to the community.

One NB3 Foundation team member also commented that a community member (non-ZYEP staff) should be part of the entire process of creating a culturally relevant evaluation plan so as to "use their lens on how they are comprehending all of this and how we can tweak

**[NB3 Foundation] came to us and that allowed our full staff to be active participants in the process, which makes things initially a lot messier because you have a lot of ideas and things coming in, but over the long run it creates way more consensus and the sharing of more ideas.**

it to work for the community." Including elders in the gatherings would have helped to ensure that the work was relevant and that decision-makers in the community were part of the work. ZYEP's work with their program advisors helped to make sure those voices were heard, but the NB3 Foundation team recognized that this is something they may want to be more purposeful in when working with future community partners (grantees).

## 2. NEED FOR COMMUNITY BUY-IN AT ALL LEVELS

Grounding the work in the community ensures that the results of evaluation are relevant and meaningful for that community. It also means that evaluation findings are shared in a way that makes sense to the community. As one team member commented, "If that was my aunt or someone I loved or adored and they were sitting there listening to me, what is going to get to the heart?" If the work is community-based there will be buy-in, and program planning and evaluation will matter to them and "be on their terms."

## 3. NEED FOR ADEQUATE TIME AND FLEXIBILITY IN PLANNING

NB3 Foundation team members noted the amount and intensity of the time it took to support ZYEP in evaluation planning and creation. Over the course of the grant, approximately 60 hours of intense planning and meeting took place to bring the work to fruition. The ZYEP team was working beyond that with their community members, coaches and youth to collect and analyze data.

The ZYEP codirector commented that a process like this, which is intense and highly reflective of community input and values, takes a substantial amount of time. He said,

**We're all different; all Native Nations are different. So, you can't just make one model and expect everybody to apply it. There has to be room and there has to be a flow to the work. But the point at the end is it has to matter to community.**

**—NB3 Foundation team**

I think the challenge is that these things take more time. It's not the short path; you have to take a longer view. You're going to work a lot after the hours of nine to five to work with community members to have these conversations. But at the end of the day, you're going to have a better product to offer to the people you're serving.

NB3 Foundation team members also commented on the need for flexibility with the work. A good deal of planning went into the gatherings and follow-up virtual meetings, but they found that flexibility in the meetings and how they played out was essential. One stated, "Sometimes we needed to change things on the spot, and being open to that was essential."

4. **STARTING FROM WHERE THE PROGRAM IS**

The ZYEP codirector has a PhD, a background in research, and an understanding of evaluation. He is also Native American which gives him an inherent understanding of Native American ways of knowing. The ZYEP team had already been consistently collecting data from parents/guardians and youth about their programs. NB3 Foundation team members noted that programs in other communities may not have this depth of understanding of research and evaluation processes and methods. This raised awareness that with other programs, the NB3 Foundation team may need to do an “Evaluation 101” with them at the start to set the context for the work. The NB3 Foundation team discussed developing a toolkit, checklist or guide based on

“**So, the other thing is to have someone who understands evaluation. What does that mean? Whether it’s a Western method or Indigenous ways, if they have that in their back pocket—even if it’s just a sliver—I think that is really essential.**”

the Indigenous Health Model and indicators. The checklist may be a way to assess the program staff’s level of understanding of evaluation and to assess what data they already collect. A toolkit can help if the community partner needs more support to understand evaluation. Helping community partners to recognize that they are already keeping track or collecting data will be essential to building trust in the process.

5. **PROVIDING STEP-BY-STEP SUPPORT**

A successful strategy in the work with ZYEP was to provide step-by-step support as they framed changes to their program and reframed the types of data they collected from their youth and parents/guardians. The ZYEP codirector commented,

I have really appreciated how we’ve been able to have conversations through conference calls and meetings every step of the way. We don’t typically get a lot of the technical support that we received through this opportunity and so that’s been extremely helpful.

Another ZYEP team member commented that the close support provided by the NB3 Foundation team made the process more engaging and rewarding, allowing them to create something valuable and useful for the future. This atmosphere allowed the ZYEP team to mobilize and expedite their work. These efforts will ensure that the ZYEP team has the capacity to continue improving the evaluation of their programs after the work with the NB3 Foundation has ended.

6. **GROUNDING THE WORK IN CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY**

As noted earlier in the report, past trauma in Native communities around research and

evaluation means that a high level of trust is necessary for a healthy and productive partnership. The codirector commented that the NB3 Foundation was a “good relative” to ZYEP throughout the process, honoring where they were, and being responsive to their needs. He further stated, “We’re working with kids we care about, and it was very clear through this project, that they also cared about the kids in the Zuni community.”

**ZYEP TEAM LEARNING**

The ZYEP team wanted to be part of the work with the NB3 Foundation because they had struggled as an organization to define their approach to evaluation and were poised to learn. The founder of ZYEP noted that progress with the youth they work with is “nonlinear” which makes it challenging to measure outcomes. He commented,

If ultimately, we want to improve self-esteem or prevent a disease or suicidality, or encourage someone to feel like they could go to college, that was going to be a long-term goal and progress toward that goal was not always going to be linear.

The team talked about opportunities/challenges in the past with data collection that didn’t feel meaningful to stakeholders and reflected that the Indigenous Health Model and the ZYEP team’s focus on cultural connections in the work helped them to reframe how they thought about their programming. Going to the community and asking what was important to them, and how Zuni values could be better incorporated into ZYEP programming was a new approach. ZYEP had always incorporated Zuni arts and traditions in their programming, but they had acted more as a facilitator rather than making those connections purposeful. A team member said,

We’ve always connected youth to their traditions. But we would be over here and [artists and elders] would be over there and we would facilitate that. What made this process different is that now we were bringing people into conversations about how we could build our programs on Zuni values.

Talking to the community to understand what is important and what is valued to inform programming was an extremely valuable aspect of this work. This feedback came from program advisors, parents/guardians and coaches. ZYEP felt highly successful in incorporating Zuni language into their summer programs. The team felt that including Zuni language in programming served the community at all of the levels of the model. The common thread of language also strengthened the ZYEP team around a common goal.

The team looks forward to emphasizing Zuni kinship systems within their programming as suggested by the program advisors to further reinforce Zuni values with their youth. One team member noted, “These are all things that are really exciting because our business is youth development, and these are key tools that we can use to help develop Zuni youth in a really positive and culturally responsive way.



**We always knew it was important to tie Zuni culture into activities. We were always trying to figure out the best way to do that, but never really asked specific questions about that in the evaluations. And now we are doing it in a very intentional way.**

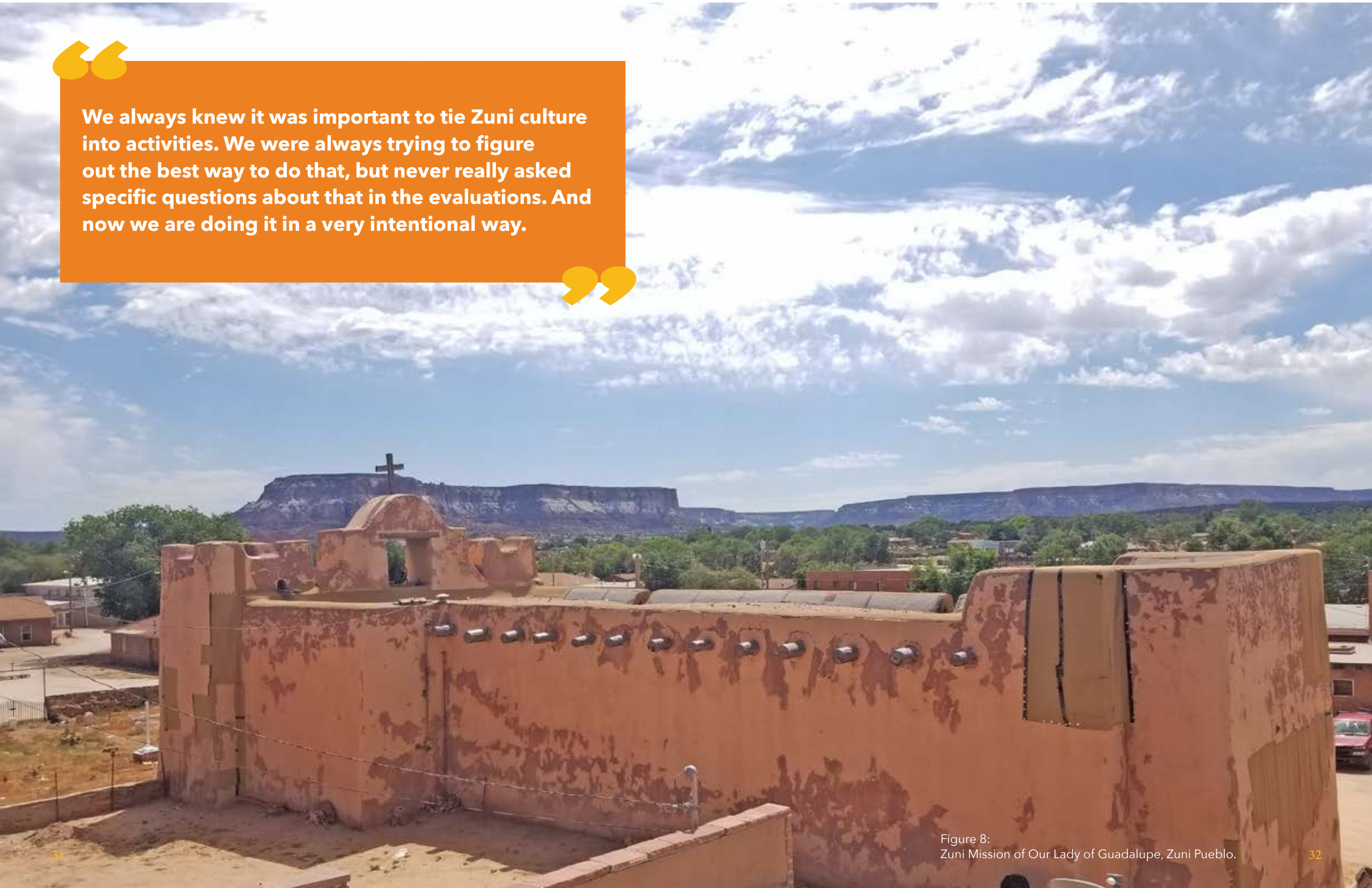


Figure 8:  
Zuni Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Zuni Pueblo.



## PART III:

# ZYEP EVALUATION FINDINGS

After developing outcome statements and ways to track success, ZYEP had their data analyzed by Emily Haozous, PhD, RN, FAAN, and citizen of Chiricahua Fort Sill Apache. The purpose of the formal external evaluation was to independently examine previous and current data to identify whether ZYEP successfully delivered their programming while connecting children to their Zuni traditions. An independent and comprehensive 22-page data analysis report was provided to ZYEP by the analyst. To close the loop for the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP partnership, the qualitative data analysis results are a reflection of the outcome statement development and activities. The value of this triangulation is confirmation that the community-centered Indigenous evaluation is reflected in the quantitative data.

The results of this analysis revealed that ZYEP promotes self-confidence, skill development and sportspersonship, while modeling positive cultural values in a safe environment that supports children to play and develop at their own pace. Through careful qualitative and quantitative analyses, five themes emerged from the data which will be discussed in the following section. The data indicated that this inherently Indigenous-centered program promoted the core values of the community and that the children who participated showed positive personal growth and sense of achievement.

Storytelling was an important component in the evaluation process. The NB3 Foundation team and ZYEP reflected on storytelling as an Indigenous strategy for keeping track. When viewed as a whole, their body of evaluation data tells a story about the ZYEP program that reflects on their values and goals. In this story, we see that ZYEP does the difficult work of straddling the many demands required of it: managing expectations of parents/guardians, children, funders and the community. Although there may be critical comments that occasionally surface, when one is able to listen to the full narrative, the story told is of a caring, culturally-centered program that places community at the center. This program manages the practical elements of coaching children to be better athletes, learning to care for themselves and each other and helping them build on their inherent understandings of their community core values.

This report has isolated and analyzed the many different types of evaluation data provided about ZYEP. There are several components that were also included but not deemed critical to this analysis. Most notably, the technical statistical analysis did not contribute to the larger story. [We made this available linked here for those interested in understanding those technical aspects.](#)

Figure 12:

ZYEP team developing a Zuni-based evaluation framework at the Ho'n A:wan Youth Center, Zuni Pueblo.





DATA ANALYSIS

The contents of this report include qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey tools, interview data and survey data provided by the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP. Several analysis tools were used to analyze data. The qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo version 12.5, coded and searched for dominant themes. A table of data includes a simple matrix analysis to identify dominant themes from the interviews. Once that matrix was created, a cross-analysis of the interview themes with the key Zuni words used throughout ZYEP was developed. Qualitative comments from the survey data were also analyzed using a separate matrix analysis.

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Next, a comparison of pre and post-survey results in the children’s data used a paired t-test comparing groups after ensuring the data were normally distributed. Then, an analysis of both the children’s and guardian data looked for correlations across the dataset. Pearson’s chi-squared test and Spearman’s rho correlations coefficient were used to determine these correlations.

Figure 13:  
Joe Claunch facilitates conversation with ZYEP coaches and community at the Ho’n A:wan Youth Center, Zuni Pueblo.



KEY PHRASES AFTER DEVELOPING ZUNI-BASED OUTCOME STATEMENTS

Through work with community members and stakeholders, ZYEP generated a list of important phrases in the Zuni language. The intention was to use those phrases throughout their programming as an organic reinforcement for the children’s traditional language skills. This list of important phrases was provided in a file where they had been ranked in order of importance by parents/guardians. The process began with first coding phrases and identifying how the phrases would fit into a broader Indigenous world-view and into a general youth coaching program. Some phrases had only one code, some had as many as three codes. Then analysts clustered the codes based on their primary, secondary and tertiary codes, comparing each cluster on the priority or value assigned by the parents/guardians. Once there was consensus that clustering was best represented by the primary, secondary and tertiary codes, themes were assigned to each cluster. The final themes that emerged from this analysis were as follows. See Table 9.

TABLE 9  
KEY PHRASES (THEMES) DEVELOPED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

1	<b>I VALUE YOU.</b> Many of the phrases centered on ideas of encouragement and fostering positive self-concept of others. These phrases are coded as “I value you” because they convey a sense of positive community worth. This was a very large theme, with high priority among the parents/guardians. Examples include “I’m proud of you.” And “you did really well.”
2	<b>WE ARE ONE PEOPLE.</b> “We are one people” reflects phrases that focus on the value of the collective and the importance of supporting each other. This theme also reflects important cultural values, which supports the high ranking by the parents/guardians. Phrases included in this theme are “help each other,” “lift each other up,” and “everyone enjoy playing together.”
3	<b>CLEAR MIND, STRONG MIND.</b> This theme includes the phrases that place an emphasis on emptying one’s mind of thoughts and playing with a stronger mindset. This theme was of moderate importance in the parent/guardian priority list.
4	<b>TIME.</b> This theme encompasses phrases that have a reference to time or speed. Interestingly, these phrases were ranked lowest priority among the guardian rankings, reflecting the cultural values in this community. These phrases included “try again tomorrow.” And “I’m glad you’re here early.” This is an important finding, because although these may be important general phrases to know in the Zuni language, for parents/guardians who are focused on retaining cultural knowledge, they are much lower in priority than phrases that center on collective worth and maintaining a clear mindset.
5	<b>UTILITY PHRASES.</b> As this is a sports-based program for children, it is to be expected that there are phrases that reflect the necessary needs for coaching. These are titled, “utility phrases,” to set them apart from those that might have specific cultural implications. Only three utility phrases clustered entirely in this theme, “throw the ball to...,” gender, and “hustle.”

# INTERVIEW DATA

Participants in the qualitative interviews included ZYEP youth participants, parents/guardians, coaches, a tribal council member and program advisors. Within the qualitative data there was a clear division between the way the parents/guardians and children spoke about the program and the coaches, advisors and tribal council member spoke about the program. Overall, the interview participants spoke well of the program, with positive reflections including statements about how the children learned sports skills, the facilities were enjoyable, sportspersonship was an important component in the curriculum, and it was a worthwhile experience. Although this was a small sample, these interviews provided background regarding similarities and differences in how these two groups talked about ZYEP and their experiences with the program.

## PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND CHILDREN

This evaluation was focused on ZYEP's sports league and included seven interviewed participants. Several child participants were interviewed together as siblings. All but one of these participants mentioned concern about getting hurt during the programming. All participants were positive about skills in sportspersonship and participating in team sports.

Only half of the participants mentioned cultural content positively, including traditional dancing, language, bread making, and connecting language, family, and culture. One parent was initially positive about the program, but as the interview progressed the tone of the interview transitioned. This parent was much more interested in the sports skills her child learned than the cultural content and indicated that the

learnings provided by ZYEP were superficial and impractical.

The children who were interviewed are positive about learning the Zuni language, but they focus almost entirely on the athletic components of the program. One sibling dyad is thoughtful in their discussion of the program, connecting exercise, food, and their health, and reflecting on the value of learning their language. They understand the importance of the language, but do not yet have an appreciation for how the language and culture are related.

**I know that in practice I've heard coach use the ZYEP symbol, let them know they all connect together. They bring it together and that's basically what Zuni does. We're all one, we're all connected to mother earth. The nature, it's just like in Lion King and it's a circle of life.**

**—Parent**

## PROGRAM STAFF

As is expected, the reflections provided by the program staff are vastly different than those of the participants. Their interviews reflect the thoughtful and engaged dedication they devoted to implementing this program. Their focus was not on fulfilling a grant and providing deliverables. Instead, their focus was to teach life skills and ensure the continuation of their culture with the children under their care. Several coaches described their teaching philosophy as supportive and holistic, and they used an Indigenous-based perspective that was grounded in seeing the whole child and supporting the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual sides of that person.

The staff members interviewed for this evaluation demonstrated a deliberate approach to providing a rich cultural experience for the children. They worked to ensure the physical setting was decorated with depictions of cultural values, symbols, and images from their traditions. They were careful to center their culture in the language they used. They spoke about how they watched for the best ways to teach the children, and they observed the children paid more attention when they were spoken to in their traditional language. They infused their coaching and teaching with Zuni core values of positivity, respect, and integrating their spiritual life into their daily thinking.

With this perspective, some of the critical feedback from the parent and child interviews on "teaching more than sports" may reflect the holistic way the program staff integrated cultural content into every aspect of the programming. The Western educational standard is to showcase culture in programming through special breakout sessions. ZYEP used a different approach. They deliberately select program staff who embodied the Zuni core values that were central to the overall desired outcomes, and integrate the desired cultural content into every day and every activity. This subtle shift in institutional culture could be missed by parents and guardians who are not spending a great deal of time immersed in the day-to-day programming of ZYEP.

## SURVEY QUALITATIVE (WRITE-IN) DATA ANALYSIS

Many of the parent/guardian survey respondents made comments at the end of the post-season survey. A large percentage of these comments were brief comments that could be classified as simple compliments, statements of gratitude or statements of encouragement.

The respondents did not explicitly discuss culture, language or cultural values in these write-in responses. In this analysis, comments are clustered into their most logical group and then looked at what was being said as well as what was not being said. Through this analysis, a subtext regarding cultural values emerged. Parents/guardians were concerned about their children being safe and staying out of trouble. They found ZYEP a setting in which they could trust their children would be able to make friends and learn about basketball. Many observed their children playing and having fun, which was mentioned repeatedly as an extremely positive outcome, reinforcing this as a value within the culture.

Parents/guardians also emphasized that ZYEP is a positive place. They stated that the coaches are role models who teach positive messages and they bring community together in a positive manner. The frequent use of the word "positive" indicates that operating with an asset-based, positive framework reflects the cultural values of the community. Many parents/guardians referred to the skills of sportspersonship and the gain in self-confidence they observed in their children. These qualities were important to the parents/guardians, and they felt this was a key outcome and benefit of the program. Sportspersonship and the skills of learning to be a team player reflects strongly the communal and community-centered values within the larger community.

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The pre- and post- test quantitative survey data provided important supporting evidence that their culturally-focused programming was



effective in meeting ZYEP’s goals. ZYEP began surveying their participants before the NB3 Foundation team began their Indigenous-centered evaluation process. These surveys were designed to gather standard evaluation information, (i.e. satisfaction with the program and overall change in specific variables like skills development and water intake). The post-test surveys included additional questions that measured culturally influenced outcomes, including community connection and supportive presence for children.

The children’s pre- and post-test data provided small improvements in the children’s overall enjoyment in the program and positive changes in their water drinking habits. These results were not statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ , but when comparing overall mean scores it is evident that children’s enjoyment and beverage habits were trending positively. Parent /Guardian mean scores for all satisfaction items were all extremely positive, with all responses positively correlated with each other (statistical significance at the 0.01 level). [We made this available linked here for those interested in understanding these statistical findings.](#)

Analysis of correlations across the parent and child post-test data allows us to identify which variables in the parent/guardians are linked to the same variables in the children. Examining the correlations between parent/ guardian and child responses to the post-test questions also allows us to triangulate the data from the qualitative analysis. Finally, we can use these data to identify directions for future strategic planning.

The most important findings from the [parent/guardian and child post-test correlations analysis](#) is the link between parent/guardian feeling that ZYEP provided positive support for their child, and overwhelming positive responses from child in all post-test questions. Although variables such as children having fun, improved confidence, and improved health were all linked to similar responses in children, those families who felt their child had positive support at ZYEP were most likely to have a child who thrived in the program.

## INTEGRATED RESULTS

The evaluation story of ZYEP requires integrating multiple forms of data that were gathered by the community, for the community. This report is a tool designed to track the hard work of the staff, parents/guardians, children and community of Zuni Pueblo in their efforts to enrich their children’s lives. In these unified results, the quantitative results inform the qualitative analysis, triangulating the findings to strengthen the overall story. See Table 10.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The partnership between the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP staff provided a way to test the Indigenous Health Model by co-designing a framework for ZYEP evaluation. Over the course of eight months, through a series of gatherings and meetings, the NB3 Foundation and ZYEP teams worked through the Indigenous Health Model, developed outcome statements for the community level of the model around cultural connections core area (of four core areas), and examined ways to measure their own success.

Through the efforts of this grant, ZYEP engaged community stakeholders, including Zuni elders who are part of their program advisors, in learning how to support cultural connections for the youth they serve. ZYEP enhanced their programming by including Zuni phrases of support, encouragement, and gratitude in their work with youth. While on the surface a seemingly small change to programming, this led to youth being more connected to their culture while participating in the ZYEP activities. ZYEP was then able to customize their evaluation tools, including interviews and surveys, to better understand how well they had met the goal of incorporating Zuni cultural awareness into their programming.

The teams reflected on both the process and the outcomes of their work together. The process was time-intensive and deeply reflective. When

TABLE 10

## INTEGRATED RESULTS FROM QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS THAT STRENGTHEN KEY PHRASES (THEMES)

1	<b>I VALUE YOU.</b>  ZYEP emphasizes preserving childhood for the children of Zuni Pueblo. The children learn they are supported, adults are proud of them, and they are valued as children of their community. The surveys reinforce this result, showing those children who are supported are those who thrive. Finally, the children are told in as many ways as possible that they are important, supported, and they have a place in their community.
2	<b>WE ARE ONE PEOPLE.</b>  Although ZYEP is ostensibly a program about athletics, the value of fostering culture and community health and wellness was present in how staff members spoke about their roles, the comments made by parents/guardians regarding the presence of role models who teach the children with a positive approach, and in the survey results, the correlation between the parents/guardians whose children enjoyed basketball and their feelings of community connectedness and positive support demonstrates ZYEP’s success in promoting this value within their community.
3	<b>CLEAR MIND, STRONG MIND.</b>  ZYEP programming helps children build lifelong skills that align with cultural values. This theme emerged from qualitative data that demonstrated a priority on stepping outside the individual to benefit the community. ZYEP helps children learn to step outside one’s personal barriers and step into action. To do this, one must leave behind the self, clearing the mind, in as much as is possible.
4	<b>TIME.</b>  While ZYEP teaches children athletic skills and larger life skills, their programming does not place an emphasis on promptness, tardiness, or attention to time. The omission of these typical Western values from this body of data communicates the message, “Who are we as Zuni people, and who are we not?” Instead, although sportspersonship is important to participants, the discipline and skill building of athletics are demonstrated in more culturally consistent manners.
5	<b>UTILITY PHRASES.</b>  Utility phrases. As this is a sports-based program for children, it is to be expected that there is a theme that reflect the necessary needs for coaching. This theme was titled for the utility phrases that were taught to the children. Participants and staff alike felt it was important the children learn certain practical words such as “male” and “female.” These words serve a cultural role as well by helping the children learn the respectful use of their language.

asked about what needs to be in place to do this type of work in other communities, both teams talked about the need for an organization and community to be open to learning about evaluation and to have a willingness to think deeply about how it can be done in a way that resonates with the organization and the community.

Situating the work as keeping track is vital. This facilitates a process of information sharing that is meaningful to the community and rooted in the way they have always done things. Evaluation efforts can be culturally relevant and embedded in what is important to the community. Holding the gatherings in Zuni, visiting the community, and sharing moments of gratitude all enhanced the process and the outcomes of the work. For ZYEP, the process will guide them in future work with their youth, parents/guardians, and program advisors to ensure their work is meaningful to all who are touched by it.

Through evaluation of their summer program, ZYEP staff learned that the program promotes self-confidence, skill development and sportspersonship while role modeling positive

cultural values in a safe environment that supports children to play and develop at their own pace. Through analyses of survey and interview data, five themes emerged as they developed Zuni phrases: (1) I value you, (2) we are one people, (3) clear mind, strong mind, (4) time and (5) utility. The data indicate that this inherently Indigenous-centered program promoted the core values of the community and the children who participated showed positive personal growth and sense of achievement.

ZYEP manages to do the difficult work of straddling the many demands required of it: managing expectations of parents/guardians, children, funders and the community. Although there may be critical comments that occasionally surface, when one is able to use the wide-angle lens to view the full picture there is a clear and cohesive image that delivers rich cultural content for their community. This program manages the practical elements of coaching children to be better athletes, and to learn to care for themselves and each other while helping them build on their inherent understandings of their community core values.

Figure 14:  
The Ho’n A:wan Park is filled with Zuni youth playing flag football.



## KEY OFFERINGS FOR THOSE WANTING TO (OR CONTINUING TO) RECLAIM EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES:

1. Engage community about keeping track as a way to create/continue sustainable communities (Healthy Native Communities Partnership, 2012). Be inclusive of those not routinely consulted such as the administrative staff, coaches, youth, parents/guardians/caregivers, artists and elders. Remind community they have always been evaluators and researchers as evident in art, stories, language and geography.
2. Change the perspective of evaluation as a tool community can use, not arbitrary measures from “externalities”, but something they direct, adapt and see the use.
3. Consider how Indigenous and Western evaluation methodologies can intertwine in a way that matters to community.
4. Facilitate Indigenous communities to use models (and re-create their own) specific to their nation, culture, language and geography.
5. Be appropriate and intentional about bringing in Indigenous perspective and histories into conversation to be less intimidating by starting with story sharing. For example, ask thoughtful questions throughout the gatherings to elevate what is known inherently. They know the answers and often need the space, time and good listening. The collective wisdom guides the work and answers become revealed in a story and holds healing qualities.
6. Acknowledge deficit narratives as only a way to inspire change and focus on positivity and success.
7. Obtain permission from decision makers when sharing information including data both internally and externally (when needed).
8. For funders, trust community partners’ (grantees’) to do work that uplifts their community priorities and maintain that trust by learning from each other.
9. Use models and evaluation process as opportunities for multi-generational feedback and re-prioritizing of community/organization/program goals or reconnection of contemporary issue to culture to reassert what is most important.
10. Close the loop by sharing what is learned with community in easy and understandable ways.



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Figure 15:  
Zuni community members leading a visit to Zuni homelands.

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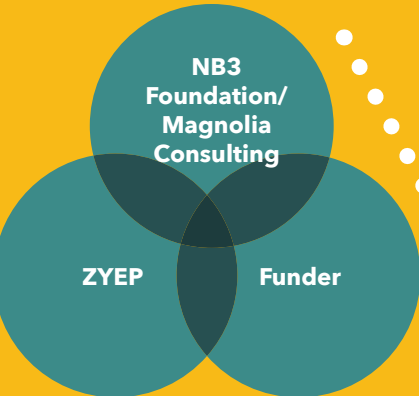


START

SHARING DATA/  
INFORMATION WITH  
COMMUNITY

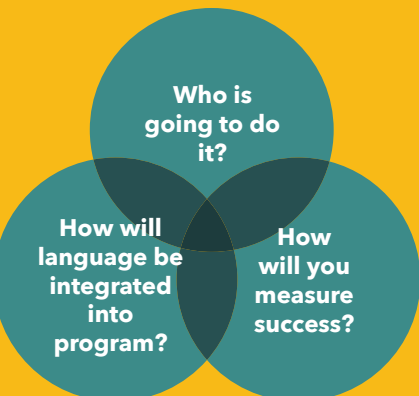
NB3 FOUNDATION/  
ZYEP 3RD GATHERING

Phase 5: Community  
Reflection Phase



ZYEP ORGANIZED  
SESSIONS AND  
VIRTUAL GATHERINGS

Phase 4: Action Planning and  
Implementation Phase



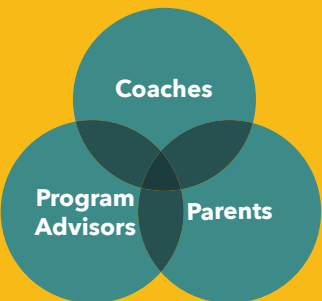
NB3 FOUNDATION/  
ZYEP PRE-GATHERING  
AND 1ST GATHERING

Phase 1: Preparation and  
Getting Ready



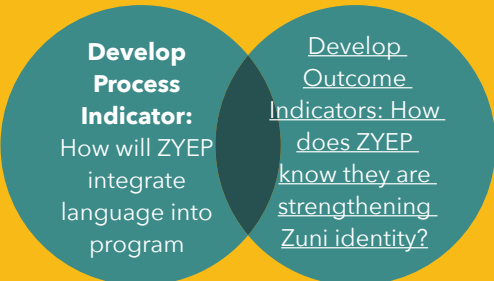
ZYEP ORGANIZED  
SESSIONS  
AND VIRTUAL  
GATHERINGS

Phase 2: Community  
Listening with:



NB3 FOUNDATION/  
ZYEP 2ND GATHERING

Phase 3: Creating and Setting  
Priorities and Designing  
Strategies for Change



PROCESS MAP  
TO DEVELOP  
ZUNI BASED  
EVALUATION  
FRAMEWORK

[Click here to see part 1 of 2 of this report.](#)

ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM



ZYEP SUPPORTS COMMUNITY CORE VALUES

Following a careful evaluation process, ZYEP learned several important lessons.



Kids enjoyed playing basketball more at the end of the season. (survey scores increased by 1.6%)



At the end of the season, 4.2% more kids were drinking at least 8 cups of water a day.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Parents and guardians who felt their children received positive support had kids who had a fun and enjoyable basketball season; and they felt successful, healthy and have improved their basketball skills





