

What are some considerations for with working with Indigenous communities?

Before conducting evaluation with Indigenous populations the following sociocultural considerations should be discussed and included training and planning:

	Description	In evaluation practice
Diversity	There are 40 million indigenous people in Latin America that belong to approximately 600 different ethnic groups within the region. This diversity yields important differences in cultural beliefs, practices, languages, experiences and behaviors.	Community-based agencies should be mindful of these important differences at every stage of program evaluation. Participatory methods can help identify and affirm these cultural differences.
Classification	Latinos in the United States are often lumped into ethnic categories of Hispanic or Latino. However, this does not capture differences in Latin American indigenous and non-indigenous populations. For example, Mayan Indigenous individuals use the term “ladino” to refer to non-indigenous populations of the same region or country (Hiller, Linstroth, & Ayala Vela, 2009).	When designing surveys that examine the program demographics, Community based agencies may want to be mindful of racial misclassification due to the current U.S. demographic labels that do not allow Indigenous people of Latin American to self-identify as Indigenous. Instead, Indigenous people from Latin America may be forced to identify as Hispanic or Latino regardless of their own identity. Some data suggest that Indigenous communities of Latin American may more closely identify with Indigenous culture in the United States than the Latino culture (Hiller, Linstroth & Ayala Vela 2009; Gryczynski & Johnson, 2011).

<p>Living environment</p>	<p>The relationship that Indigenous communities have with their ancestral lands is a critical aspect of their indigenous identity (Barlett et al., 2007; Hiller et al, 2007 & Apgar et al., 2009). For example, having the ability to grow subsistence crops such as maize and potatoes on their plots of land allows them to maintain their sacred relationship with the earth. The relationship with their land is an important source of stress and support that can impact their social, emotional, and physical well-being.</p>	<p>Having community-based organizations recognize the vital role of ancestral lands for indigenous communities provides an opportunity to engage in communication about social, emotional and physical well-being. In the United States, many Indigenous communities from Latin America may experience isolation and sense of loss that can affect their well-being and that of their loved ones. CBOs can position themselves in working with Indigenous members by having a cultural grounding that emphasizes the vital traditional role of ancestral land.</p>
<p>Hesitation to participate in social services</p>	<p>Distrust of government officials, medical framework, and academia among Indigenous communities can act as a barrier to evaluation of programs.</p> <p>Many Indigenous communities have documented experiences of widespread discrimination, human and land rights violations, along with forced separations that may further prohibit them from having trusting relationships with external institutions.</p>	<p>Utilizing a Participatory Action Research approach in evaluation provides an opportunity to build trust and foster participation in program evaluation. Relationship and trust-building is an essential aspect of the participatory evaluation process. CBOs should plan for sufficient time and resources for engaging communities in an evaluation partnership.</p>

<p>Service delivery resources</p>	<p>Many Indigenous communities speak only their Native languages and do not speak English or Spanish. Due to this, they may have limited access to social and health care services in their communities.</p> <p>Community-based workers may not recognize Indigenous members and assume their silence is due to other factors aside from language barriers.</p>	<p>It is important to recognize the needs of many indigenous communities as many arrived here as refugees fleeing extreme violence and state-sponsored genocide.</p> <p>Furthermore, they may have physical and mental health problems from conditions in their native homes and from the journey to the United States that are still unresolved.</p>
<p>Health beliefs</p>	<p>Indigenous perspectives include a holistic view of health that includes important elements associated with physical and spiritual aspects or causes of imbalance. These beliefs may run in contrast to Western traditions of root causes of disease. For example, common causes of illnesses may be due to imbalances resulting from hatred, envy or disrespect (BYRCS, 2011).</p> <p>Beliefs about patriarchy and family from Indigenous communities influence how families will talk about domestic violence.</p>	<p>Community-based organizations may choose to incorporate aspects of Indigenous culture when developing evaluation tools to determine whether the program makes an impact on these ways of knowing. For example, explaining issues of mental health need to be considered from a mind, body and nature connection to ensure that it addresses a holistic way of knowing and connecting them to needed health care.</p>
<p>Changing cultures</p>	<p>While many Indigenous communities may hold on to their traditional values, traditions and beliefs, it's important to recognize that these values, traditions and beliefs are being altered through their own ongoing interaction in the mainstream culture or cultures they interact with. For example, Mayas originally from Guatemala living in the United States may have differing levels of acculturation based on their experiences.</p>	<p>For program design purposes, ensuring a diversity of Indigenous community members through a community participatory action approach can address issues of diversity regarding acculturation into the national society (i.e. their home country or the United States).</p>