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FOUNDATION

# Unasked Questions in Evaluation: Creating Ethical Space Through Ceremony



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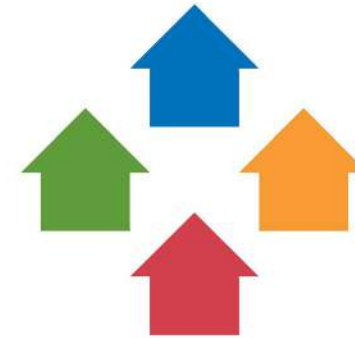
# Welcome & Opening Song





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- Indigenous-led Calgary organization offering family, youth, housing, and mental health supports.
- Provides **culturally grounded**, holistic services rooted in traditional teachings.
- **Strengthening Home Fires**: supports youth housing, independence, and healing.



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- **Guides** the fight against homelessness in Calgary
- Works with governments and partners to **coordinate effective system responses** by allocating a portion of sector funding.
- Focuses on **maximizing resources** and creating lasting pathways out of homelessness.

# CHF's Mid-Year Review Process

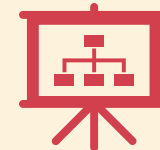
- For all CHF-funded programs
- A narrative method of data collection, evaluating activity and operations of programs
- Includes staff from CHF & the housing programs
- Limiting when used in isolation
- Impact domains: Health, Housing, Finance, Connection



**Fillable form & meeting:** answering a set of questions via a written form and follow up meeting.



**Hitting the mark:** what is going well in the program? What are the challenges? What strategies is the program using?



**Reporting on trends:** CHF compiles responses to report back to community and inform future work.

# Miskanwah's Four Core Teachings

## **Miyo-pimatsiwin**

Living a good life in a balanced way so that you can help yourself and others.

## **Nagatohke**

Be careful; be safe.

## **Setoskatowin**

We are all well together, I will help you, you will help me.

## **Siim'ohksin Wahkotiwin**

Blackfoot and Cree Natural Law for living in relationship. Founded on the principles of Respect, Responsibility, Accountability, and Discipline.

Videos on the above teachings can be found at: <https://www.miskanawah.ca/teachings>

# Indigenous & Western Parallels



- There is no 1:1 replacements between Indigenous ways of knowing and being & western data collection practices
  - Instead, find parallels where Indigenous & Western approaches can coexist
  - Aim to find the similarities, and review where things do and do not overlap
  - This is done through relationship, listening, and compromise
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# The Tea Dance Ceremony

- Held in place of the annual Mid-Year Program Review between Strengthening Home Fires & CHF
- Led by Elders Dr. Reg and Rose Crowshoe and Ceremonialist Karli Crowshoe
- Culturally grounded and sacred environment
- Included program participants, staff, funders, and partnering agencies across Calgary's Housing and Homelessness sector
- Ceremony & storytelling oral practice as the way of **witnessing** rather than evaluating



# The Tea Dance Ceremony

- Opening songs and intentions
- Smudging and pipe ceremony
- Preparation of the tea
- Gathering in circle
- Oral practice
- Multiple voices in circle (youth, funders, staff, partners)
- Drinking of the tea
- Closing and feast



# Creating an Ethical Space

- Guided by Elders
- Smudge & setting intentions
- Connection
- Circle
- Creating safety
- Speakers & Witness
- Letting go of the outcome
- Cultural safety is a **practice**, not a checklist



# Activity





*The Tea Dance acts as a living framework for inclusive decision-making, reminding all partners that authentic relationships are the foundation for sustainable and transformative change.*

*The Tea Dance Ceremony reminds us that evaluation is not simply a technical process, but as a living, relational practice that honours connection and collective vision.*

*Meaningful change grows from relationships nurtured over time, grounded in respect, and guided by the wisdom of both heart and community.*



# The Living Data Framework

- Living, relational practice
- Nurtured over time
- Opening the floor to others
- Rooted in stories over metrics
- Data gathering as relational rather than transactional

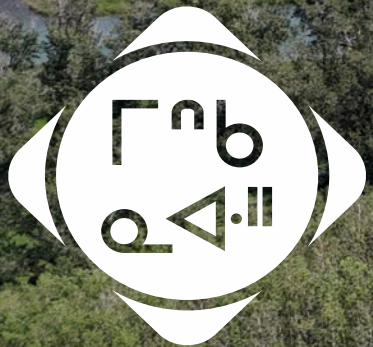


# Reflective Questions



- What important experiences or stories about the people we serve might be missing because they don't fit into current data tools?
- How do our values impact what we measure? How might our values be different from the values of the people we serve?
- Which elements of cultural safety demonstrated through ceremony (e.g., intention-setting, witnessing, relational accountability, letting go of control) could be meaningfully incorporated into our everyday work or program structures?

# Nitsíniiyi'taki Thank you



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