RIPPLE EFFECT MAPPING

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REM is a participatory evaluation approach that encourages reflection, captures a project's intended and unintended impacts, generates momentum, and engages and re-energizes participants, furthering their motivation and commitment to the initiative. REM visually captures the impacts, compelling stories, and ripple effects of a program on individuals, groups, communities, and beyond.

Useful in situations in complex, real-life settings where:
- both **intended and unintended effects** are likely
- when the intervention or program is something to which people can **identify their contributions**
- when people are **already talking about the "ripples"** from the program or intervention

REM engages participants by using:
- **appreciative inquiry** (Cooperrider et al., 1987)
- a **participatory** approach
- interactive **group interviewing** and reflection
- **radiant thinking** or mind-mapping

The beauty of this methodology is that it (1) invites all types of learners to participate because it incorporates individual, group, written, and oral involvement; (2) incorporates all participants' voices into the information collected; and (3) doesn't weigh any voices more than others. (Meyerhoff, p. 4)

REM is well suited to ask:
- What are people doing differently?
- Who is benefitting and how? How is the fact that people are doing things differently affecting others?
- What changes are you seeing in the community's systems and institutions and organizations?
- Are everyday ways of thinking and doing changing? How?

3 Variations of REM Approach (Chazdon et al, 2017)
- **Web mapping** - examines short-term, medium-term, and long-term impacts, uses Community Capitals mind map
- **In-depth rippling** focuses on the deepest and most impactful chains of events
- **Theming and rippling** generates impact themes, and examines ripples once themes are generated

Benefits of REM Approach
- REM encourages individual and collective reflection
- Often generates momentum and re-engages participants, furthering their motivation and commitment to the initiative at hand
- Powerful way of sharing the value of a program with funders, partners, and decision-makers

Empathy CoP Case Study

An initial evaluation suggested a positive impact, we were interested in learning more about the broader impacts of CoP participation. We wanted to know the extent to which participants' learning would continue to influence their teaching practices in the subsequent school year. As such, we aimed to document the impact of CoP participation while offering reflections on the effectiveness of CoP as a professional learning strategy for capacity-building in the context of empathy conservation.

How We Adapted the REM Approach

- Added **Participant Journaling**: We added this component as a way to encourage reflective practice, guide our planning of the subsequent appreciative inquiry step, and serve as a springboard for the reflection and discussion
- **Integrated data** from both journal responses and what was generated during REM session
- We found it useful to communicate impacts through the combination of a figure and a table, as it was difficult to fit the extent of text needed to convey the impact within the figure.
- Used our **theoretical framework** to organize our findings: Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing
- Conducted a **second REM session** where analysis and a first draft of our ripple map was shared with participants (member checking)

Findings

It is important to note that REM evaluation is not intended to convey causality between the ripples, but instead the many ways in which the CoP contributed to changes in participants, and how those changes rippled outward.

Our findings suggest a CoP approach can be an effective way to build teachers' capacity for supporting empathy development, with other positive impacts that ripple outward beyond teachers to children, families, and beyond.

- Participants reported that these changes in their teaching practices influenced the children in their care, with children demonstrating greater empathy toward peers, teachers, and more-than-human relatives, and exhibiting greater breadth and independence in empathic responses.

- The breadth and depth of impact beyond the teachers suggests the CoP supported not only individual capacity-building for supporting empathy but also program- or organizational-level and community-level capacity-building as well, impacting children, families, community, and wider field.

We found REM not only conducive to evaluating an empathy capacity-building initiative but also transformative in its ability to renew commitment to this work and have a positive, catalytic effect on participants.

REM helped in my reflection and application of the empathy strategies. It was valuable to recount stories to see how the strategies impacted outcomes within the group and individuals. I liked circling back through the ripples in community to deepen understandings and learning. It offered meaningful support to see the strategies in action. It is exciting to consider their impact in the future.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES