



Ka taea e tātou, the Seventh Gathering sessions evaluation

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Abstract

In a world with a rapidly evolving technological landscape, Indigenous people are striving to reclaim and strengthen their traditional cultural knowledge bases for the wellbeing of their people. Currently, there is sparse literature on the use of technology in evaluation with indigenous people. This article provides an example of a *Kaupapa Māori* evaluation which utilised a novel technological approach to collect evaluation data from indigenous people, in a way that demonstrated Indigenous cultural values of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and improved understanding of the Seventh Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Gathering's (Seventh Gathering) contribution to the wellbeing of its attendees. Specifically, the article describes the process undertaken to evaluate the *sessions* component of the Seventh Gathering, that was held in Aotearoa, over four days. The evaluation team describe the use of an iPad based mixed method e-survey to gain participant impressions about, and the benefits of, the Seventh Gathering sessions. This article will share benefits of the application used to build and run the survey; how participation in the survey was encouraged; as well as provide examples of the information gained. All of which is helpful for Indigenous people considering using this or similar technology to gain information about Indigenous wellbeing; as well as those seeking to run a similar event.

Keywords: Evaluation, Indigenous, kaupapa Māori, technology, wellbeing, iPad.

Introduction

In November 2015 Te Rau Matatini, national Māori health workforce organisation of Aotearoa (New Zealand) hosted Mauri Ora (Wellbeing), Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW): The Seventh Gathering. Healing Our Spirits Worldwide (Seventh Gathering) is an international Indigenous conference with a strong tradition of being solutions focused regarding Indigenous health and wellbeing, as well as advocating the sustainability of Indigenous cultural practices (Currie, LaBoucane-Benson, & Gibson, 2006; Jeffries, 2006). The Seventh Gathering, held in the city of Kirikiriroa (Hamilton), Aotearoa; in the heart of Tainui¹ country, was unique amongst the series of Gatherings that have been held since the initial Gathering in Edmonton, Canada (1992) for a number of reasons. In terms of an overall theme, it was the first time Māuri Ora was selected. Mauri Ora was chosen because of its significance to the host nation people of Aotearoa and because of its resonance with the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide community globally. From an evaluation perspective, another unique aspect of the event was that for the first time ever, both the technology and resources were available to undertake evaluations of every aspect of the Gathering, including the Keynote addresses, to the Rangatahi (Youth) programme, the Kaumātua (Elders) programme, and the proffered papers in the conference *session* programme.

In this paper, *Ka taea e tātou* the process undertaken for specifically evaluating the sessions component of the Seventh Gathering is outlined, which presents reflections by the evaluation team on this process. A snapshot of the results that were obtained is also offered. In themselves the results collected provide a useful picture of delegate experiences of the Seventh Gathering, and the types of understandings that can be collected from Indigenous people regarding wellbeing using innovative technology. Whereas in this paper we can only present a portion of delegate views, the report entitled *Tuku taonga: Mauri Ora Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, Seventh Gathering, 2015 Evaluation Report* (McClintock et

al., 2016) provides a full commentary on the quality of Indigenous experiences within the Seventh Gathering sessions and wider conference programme.

Evaluation has been defined as the systematic determination of the quality or value of something (Scriven, 1991) and is usually carried out for one of two reasons: to find areas for improvement and/or to determine the overall quality or value of something (Davidson, 2005). Evaluation data therefore, when collected through a robust and rigorous process, provides critical information to assist decision-makers improve the quality of an experience, a programme, or an event, such as the Seventh Gathering 2015 (Scriven, 1991).

For the hosts of the Seventh Gathering, understanding the experience of their delegates was seen as integral to the continued relevance and necessity of the HOSW movement. These findings will also be relevant to those who are planning and organising similar Indigenous wellbeing events; as well as inform evaluators, particularly Indigenous, considering using similar technology.

The Seventh Gathering session programme was comprised of 240 individual presentations grouped into four streams, with each stream taking place on a different day (Monday – Thursday). These four streams, in order of occurrence were; Indigenous Leadership, Indigenous Solutions, Indigenous Potential, and Indigenous Futures. On each day, five separate 45-minute-long sessions were held. During each session, 12 concurrent papers were presented in different locations across the conference venue. A total of 60 presentations were available each day.

Methodology – A Kaupapa Māori Approach

In light of the fact that the Seventh Gathering was being hosted in Aotearoa by a Māori (indigenous people of Aotearoa) organisation and a large proportion of the Gathering attendees were expected to be Māori because of the

¹ Tainui, a Māori tribal region in the North Island of Aotearoa.

location; the Te Kīwai Rangahau team (Te Rau Matatini's Research and Evaluation unit, and Seventh Gathering Evaluation leads) considered it appropriate that the evaluation of the sessions be underpinned by a Kaupapa Māori approach. Moewaka-Barnes (2009) describes key elements of Kaupapa Māori evaluation as being Māori controlled and owned, that it meets the needs of Māori, that an understanding of Māori culture is essential, that it challenges dominant culture and norms, and that it is transformative. Similarly, Kerr (2012) in a summary of different understandings of Kaupapa Māori theory and its' relevance to evaluation speaks about control, culture, challenging status quo, and change. In addition, Kerr (2012) mentions connection, the importance of relationships in knowledge sharing and generation.

While Indigenous people have commonalities in their worldviews, similar experiences with regards to colonisation, and in some instances shared ancestry, it is still important to understand that they are a diverse group of people and cultures. There is space within Kaupapa Māori evaluation for this to be acknowledged and accounted for (Kerr, 2012; Moewaka Barnes, 2009).

Data Gathering

The Te Kīwai Rangahau Research and Evaluation team, developed a mixed methods self-completed electronic survey (e-survey). The aim of this survey was to assess the impact of the Seventh Gathering sessions. Specifically, impact was assessed by asking whether attendee expectations had been met; if and how attendees would use information learned through the sessions; and what attendees identified as the strengths or areas of improvement for each of the sessions attended.

Ethical approval and community consultation for the session evaluation was sort through the International Indigenous Council who oversee HOSW Gatherings. Their role is to ensure the sustainability and integrity of the Gatherings vision (Te Rau Matatini, 2015). The council currently consists of representatives from Canada, the United States, Australia, and Aotearoa. The council members are chosen for their expertise and experiences working in the alcohol and other drug field within their respective countries, as well as their knowledge of

their Indigenous cultures. All members are Indigenous people, not paid for their roles, nor are they funded by Te Rau Matatini.

A mixed method approach was utilised because it provided the means of collecting responses that could quantify attendees' assessments of the sessions attended and also give insight into attendee's experiences of the sessions (Green, 2008).

Similar to previous Gatherings, the Seventh Gathering sessions evaluation survey used a combination of rating scale questions and open questions (Currie et al., 2006; LTG Associates, Inc., 2010). The questions used at the Seventh Gathering were adaptations of questions that had been utilised in the evaluation of previous Gatherings (Currie et al., 2006; LTG Associates, Inc., 2010).

Aspects that are unique to the Seventh Gathering evaluation of the sessions is that, unlike previous Gatherings, where participants were primarily asked for additional comments (Currie et al., 2006; LTG Associates, Inc., 2010), the open questions asked at the Seventh Gathering asked participants how the information learned/gained through the sessions would be used, to identify strengths and areas of improvements of the sessions, in addition to the participant demographics.

Previous Gatherings had successfully employed paper-based surveys to elicit responses from attendees regarding the Gatherings (Currie et al., 2006; Jeffries, 2006). An iPad based e-survey was chosen for the Seventh Gathering, as opposed to a paper based one, in order to utilise innovative and engaging technology that would be easy for participants to use, as well as increase the accuracy, speed, and efficiency of uploading and collation of participants' responses (Davis, Thompson, & Schweizer, 2012).

The QuickTapSurvey application (TableDabble Inc., 2015), was used by the Te Kīwai Rangahau team to offer an e-survey, in a format that is similar to SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, 2015). The evaluation team had experience with SurveyMonkey and were therefore confident that the platform selected would be relatively easy for participants to navigate. The benefit of using QuickTapSurvey over SurveyMonkey, was that

QuickTapSurvey does not require an internet connection to work. This was a major benefit as the quality and consistency of internet access at the Gathering venue could not be assured.

The e-survey for the session evaluations was made available for completion on iPads at three “evaluation stations” positioned at major sites around the conference venue. Each evaluation station comprised of five iPads available from 7.30am every morning until 6.00pm. This meant that Gathering delegates could complete the survey at a time convenient to them. This provided more time for attendees. The stations were continually manned by the members of the evaluation team, comprising of staff from Te Kīwai Rangahau as well as other support people brought in specifically to help with this task². The evaluation team, from development through to analysis, were predominately Indigenous people. All leadership positions were held by Indigenous people.

Prior to completing the survey, staff were on hand to explain *kānobi ki te kānobi* (face to face) the purpose of the evaluation to attendees, that participation was voluntary, what participation involved, and what would happen to their contributions (Davidson, 2005). A laminated poster with this information was displayed at each station throughout the course of the conference, for reference. Participants were also encouraged to ask questions or seek assistance if they were unfamiliar or nervous about using the iPads, as the evaluation team were excited to *manaaki* (support) participants through the process.

Participants consented to the process by completing the iPad based e-survey. Those who did not wish to participate in the survey were free to leave with no further explanation (Thomas & Hodges, 2010). The evaluation team’s contact details were made available at the Gathering and on the HOSW website post the Seventh Gathering, if any participants had questions after completing their surveys. For attendees who did

not want to use the iPad but still wanted to provide feedback, paper based versions of the survey were available. Less than 1% of the total number of people who completed session surveys chose to complete a hardcopy version.

Due to the fact that English was the common language spoken among the Indigenous people at the Seventh Gathering, the survey was written in simple English. In order for the evaluation team to pay respect to the Indigenous culture of Aotearoa in an inviting manner for non-Māori, the research team greeted and thanked participants bilingually using Māori and English. Each person who did complete a survey was presented with a Seventh Gathering bracelet as a process of *koha mai koha atu* (reciprocity).

Every Seventh Gathering participant who completed the survey also had the option of entering a daily raffle draw, at no cost, to win one of four *taonga* (gift from Aotearoa). Close to 300 delegates per day participated in the raffle. The raffle was paper based and overseen by staff, who only invited people to participate after they had completed the iPad based survey. The details of the people who participated in the iPad survey and the paper based raffle were not linked, so as to maintain participant confidentiality.

Participants were informed that multiple surveys could be completed providing responses to different sessions. The iPad survey allowed participants to talk about up to five sessions successively without having to re-enter their demographic information. Participants could provide feedback after each session attended or attend several before feeding back on all of them at once. Confidentiality of survey responses was ensured through the e-survey tool as responses to each survey were anonymous and no identifying information was collected on survey participants.

Analysis

At the conclusion of each day, the e-survey responses collected through the iPads were uploaded/synced to Te Kīwai Rangahau’s

² Evaluators included the Group Manager Māori, Health Research Council of New Zealand, the Acting Director of Whakauae Research Centre for Māori Health and Development Wanganui, and Waikato University students from the School of Psychology, the School of Māori and Pacific Development and staff from Te Rūnanga o Kirikiriroa, a Māori Health Provider in Hamilton.

QuickTapSurvey account where the data was automatically collated and tabulated by QuickTapSurvey. After all responses had been uploaded, the data was downloaded as a single excel spreadsheet for analysis by the Te Kīwai Rangahau team. Using excel, a descriptive analysis of the participant demographics and quantitative data collected through survey questions was undertaken in order to provide a summary of important aspects of the data (Larson, 2006).

In particular, the absolute frequencies (raw counts) and relative frequencies (proportions and percentages) were calculated (Larson, 2006). The qualitative data collected through the survey was analysed thematically according to the Mauri Ora themes of Indigenous solutions, Indigenous potential, Indigenous futures and Indigenous leadership. Some of the key findings from this descriptive and thematic analysis are presented below.

Summary Statistics

Survey Participants

In total 1554 session evaluations were completed over the four days of the Seventh Gathering, representing an average of 6.5 completed evaluations per presentation. While this is smaller than the 4446 session evaluations completed at the Sixth Gathering in Hawaii (LTG Associates, Inc., 2010) and the 2115 sessions evaluations completed at the fifth Gathering in Canada (Currie et al., 2006), the Sixth Gathering had nearly double the attendance of the Seventh Gathering and registration data for the Fifth Gathering is not available, so a fair comparison cannot be made. Also, while the number of session evaluations for the Seventh Gathering are smaller than publically available past Gathering data, the amount and depth of the qualitative data collected through the Seventh Gathering session evaluations is larger than previous Gatherings. Also, when the potential burden placed on attendees to complete a survey after every session attend is considered, which could be up to 20 in total over the whole gathering, the evaluation team consider this number of responses reasonable.

Similar to the paper based surveys used at the Sixth and Fifth Gatherings, a limitation of the

methodology used at the Seventh Gathering which sought to maintain anonymity, is that there is no way of knowing definitively who completed the survey (or not) and how diverse/representative feedback is of conference participants. Also similar to the Sixth and Fifth Gatherings, the response rate for the Seventh Gathering sessions evaluation is not available. However, country of origin (shown in Figure 1 below), gender, and age data collected through the e-survey indicate the sample collected could be considered representative of the Seventh Gathering attendees.

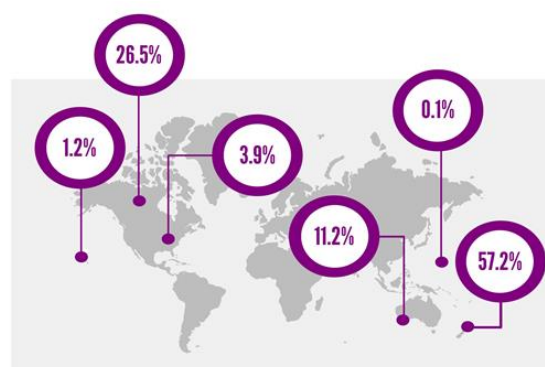


Figure 1: Country of Origin

Country of Origin

Session evaluations were completed by Seventh Gathering attendees from five main countries. Unsurprisingly, given that Aotearoa was the host nation for the Seventh Gathering, the largest number of session evaluations 57.2% (n=889), were completed by delegates from Aotearoa followed by Canada with 26.5% (n=412) of the total, Australia with 11.2% (n=174), United States with 3.9% (n=60), Hawaii with 1.2% (n=18) and 0.1% (n=1) completed by a person whose country falls into the other category. On average there is only a 2.5% difference between the percentages of registrants grouped by country compared to the percentages of the countries represented in the session evaluation surveys.

Gender

Approximately 80.8% (n=1255) of the session evaluations were completed by wāhine (women) and approximately 19.2% (n=299) by tāne (men). We know from the registration data that this does not reflect exactly the make-up of delegates who provided gender information during registration, where 69.3% (n=778) were wāhine and 30.6%

(n=344) were tāne. The differences in gender between registration and the session evaluation may be due to a variety of reasons. It may be because of differences in gender reporting between the registration data and sessions evaluation data, 17.3% (n=235) of registrants did not provide gender information.³

Age

67.8% (n=1053) of session survey responses had age information and of those, 89.7% (n=944) were from people aged between 25 - 64 years, 4.2% (n=44) were 24 years and younger, and 6.17% (n=65) were 65 years plus. The dominance of people aged between 25-64 years aligns with the fact that while the sessions were running, there were additional activities specific for Rangatahi (youth aged 15-24 years) and Kaumātua (65 years +).

Responses

On starting the survey, participants entered their demographic information, then gave feedback on a session(s). The App could loop back through the session-specific questions up to five times without the respondents having to enter their demographic information again. When people completed the survey, the QuickTapSurvey app date and time marked when responses occurred. During analysis, the research team were able to compare the date and time marks with the sessions evaluated.

By looking at the results for people who did provide feedback about more than one session at a time, and those who answered yes to a question within the survey that asked if attendees had completed the evaluation survey previously, it is possible to see that 78.9 % (n=1226) of the responses were completed by people who gave feedback about at least two sessions. Anecdotally, the evaluation team noticed attendees returning to complete evaluations for different sessions, many without having to be prompted. As stated previously, similarly to the Seventh Gathering, response rate for past Gathering session evaluations are not available for comparison.

Stream & Sessions

Of all the completed session evaluations, the largest proportion were completed about the Indigenous leadership stream (Monday), 39% (n=607), followed by Indigenous solutions (Tuesday) with 28% (n=436), Indigenous potential (Wednesday) with 18% (n=279), and then Indigenous futures (Thursday) with 14.9% (n=232).

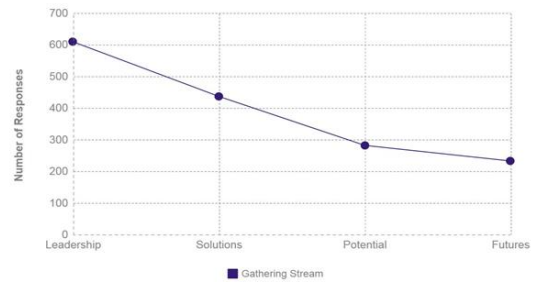


Figure 2: Number of Responses per Stream

In terms of when the evaluations responses were made, 18.8% (n=292) were made on Monday, 39% (n=606) were made on Tuesday, 22.8% (n=354) were made on Wednesday, and 19.4% (n=304) were made on Thursday.

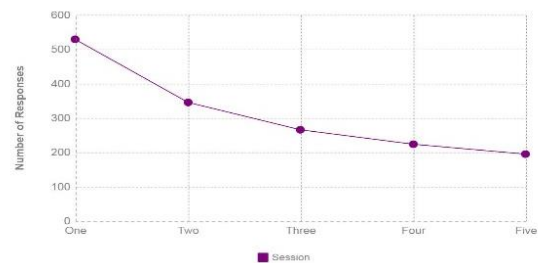


Figure 3: Number of Responses per Session

Of all the completed evaluation surveys, across all of the days, the responses for the session one sessions make up the largest proportion with 34% (n=529) of responses, followed by the session two sessions, with 22.2% (n=345), the session three sessions with 17% (n=264), the session four sessions with 14.4% (n=223), the session five sessions with 12.4% (n=193).

The larger representation of the earlier session compared to the later sessions may indicate a limitation of the methodology used. Anecdotally

³ Within the iPad survey, participants only had the option to choose either male or female. Several participants during the Seventh Gathering voiced a preference for more gender options.

the evaluation team noticed that the numbers of attendees at the Gathering decreased as each day progressed, peaked on Tuesday, and then decreased as the week progressed; which would suggest the survey responses are reflective of attendance.

Findings: Quantitative

Expectations

In order to gain an understanding of whether Seventh Gathering attendee's expectations of the presentation(s) were met, participants indicated how much they agreed with the statement "I got what I wanted from this session". Participants could choose one of five options; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Just over a half of all respondents (54.6%, n=849) strongly agreed with this statement, a third (32.8%, n=510) agreed, 8.6% (n=133) were neutral, 2.6% (n=40) disagreed, and 1.4% (n=22) strongly disagreed.

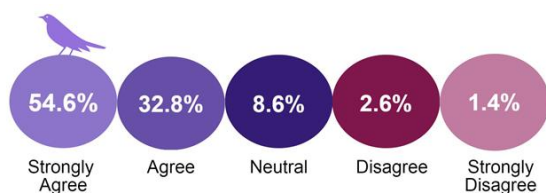


Figure 4: Participants' responses to the statement "I got what I wanted from this session"

The sessions met the expectations of more than 87.5% (n=1359) of respondents who indicated they strongly agreed (54.6%) or agreed (32.8%) with the statement "I got what I wanted from this session".

Usefulness

In order to gain an understanding of how useful Seventh Gathering attendees found the presentations, participants had to indicate how much they agreed with the statement "I will use the information I gained in my work and/or personal life". Participants could choose one of five options; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Just under half of all respondents 49.1% (n=763) strongly agreed with this statement, 35.7% (n=555) agreed, 12% (n=187) were neutral, 2.2% (n=34) disagreed, and 1% (n=15) strongly disagreed.

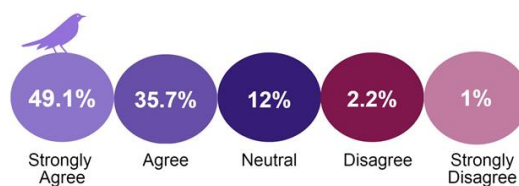


Figure 5: Participants' responses to the statement "I will use the information I gained in my work and/or personal life"

Transferrable learning outcomes or benefits were identified by 85% (n=1318) of respondents who indicated that they strongly agreed (49.1%) or agreed (35.7%) with the statement "I will use the information I gained in my work and/or personal life".

Findings: Qualitative

Utility

Participants were also asked to give examples of how they would use the information gained, as well as the strengths and challenges within the sessions. This qualitative data was thematically analysed and is presented under the Seventh Gathering themes, i.e. Indigenous potential, Indigenous solutions, Indigenous futures and Indigenous leaderships.

Indigenous Potential

Sessions survey respondents were particularly inspired by presentations that articulated self-motivation, which considered the ability of individuals to take responsibility for their own healing and how this healing could be achieved. Personal growth at an individual level was acknowledged as needing to occur first, in order for individuals to be available to assist with healing others. If *whānau* (family) growth occurred, then it was believed that this development could widen to support communities and/or provider organisations.

"Heal my spirit and to share her oho ake with others"

"Working toward community healing by starting with self"

"Cleanse the Wairua to work better"

"More forgiving of self"

Indigenous Solutions

Session survey participants spoke with admiration about the presentations that were strength-based. As a result, some participants indicated that they would look to extend their own practise and make a real commitment to including a greater cultural component in their practice. Participants expressed a desire to enhance the delivery of their programs and to use their learnings from the Seventh Gathering to engage whānau in creative ways to explore their own heritage, connection to ancestors, what is important to them and continuing to use creativity in healing.

“Add to my delivery and use it to engage whānau in creative ways to explore their own heritage and what’s important to them”

“Amazing talk. So much great info on health systems, community interactions, and what works for clients and their families from an indigenous experience. I will use knowledge with clients”

Indigenous Futures

Session participants felt their level of knowledge had increased through hearing the presentations and were committed to becoming more politically astute, and more politically active as a means of making positive changes in their communities. Being politically active was also regarded as a necessary step towards transformation. Participants expressed a commitment to contribute to the discussion on improving issues that affect Indigenous people; challenging policies that diminish Indigenous practice; and reducing the barriers and inequities facing Indigenous people’s wellbeing. The value of evidence in service planning and delivery, and utilising new methodologies e.g. photo voice and digital story telling with youth to collect data, was highlighted by participants. Attendees communicated the need for a unifying research approach, research that advances knowledge that is strengths based, that focuses on knowledge which provides understanding and positive movement for Indigenous nations.

“Advocating for change”

“Incorporating community knowledge into programs, finding ways to make sure we are

reaching people and delivering relevant projects to community”

“Share a framework to influence change in mainstream areas”

“fight for rights to my language”

Indigenous Leadership

Session respondents valued hearing stories that were empowering which encouraged them to lead by example, to be role models. Participants commented that the greatest attribute of a leader was the ability to build leaders and that successional leadership training was required both at a formal and an informal level. Formally this could occur through a defined pathway of teaching knowledge and skills and informally through processes such as observation and being with known leaders within their whānau, communities and organisations. Youth believed that leadership skills could be obtained while working alongside their elders. Youth also believed they had an important voice.

“Expand ideas in development and promotion of indigenous leadership programs and youth in community programs”

“Integration of traditional knowledge into our everyday approach to education and preparation of our future leaders”

“Feed to my job, peers, and future generation. Building a good life through my culture. Not only talking about it but putting into actions. Such as programs for the youth like I’ve always wanted”

“Build leaders within our community using strength based programmes/workshops”

“Youth inspiring youth”

Strengths

The qualitative data from the survey highlighted that the Seventh Gathering Session Programme was celebrated as an Indigenous forum that gave *voice to the dreams of Indigenous people*. The session presenters, their presentations, their topics and the ability for the session attendees to provide feedback during the sessions, at the allocated question time, as well as the post session through the e-survey have all been identified as major strengths of the sessions.

Presenters. Survey responses to the many session presenters was positive. Presenters were

appreciated as talented vibrant storytellers, skilled artists, traditional drummers, singers and dancers, all expressive, passionate and strength-based when talking about their Indigenous experiences. Presenters were also valued as healers of the spirit, courageous, deadly, challengers of thinking and using laughter to heal. Presenters from all age groups, elders through to youth were respected for their Indigenous knowledge and for their belief in their culture.

Survey participants also admired presenters for *sharing their personal stories, their journey of recovery from addiction*. Personal accounts were viewed as giving *authenticity* and providing evidence of the *true strength, making positive choices* often these were in the face of adversity. The views of presenters were reported as *encouraging, of talking, finding solutions to and being supportive for others wanting to make change*. This approach resonated with survey participants, as *a powerful message, a clear message, so easy to understand*.

Presentations. Survey participants were complimentary of the quality and standard of the presentations. A range of tools were acknowledged that contributed to this high quality, such as the use of technology and visual representations. Elders were congratulated for their skill in using digital storytelling acknowledging that elders were indeed keeping pace with new technologies, and youth for their beautiful vivid images and energy that excited the audience.

Survey participants also valued the access to traditional and culture knowledge, the retention and integration of traditional knowledge, traditional instruments, traditional ceremonies and traditional dress wear that enhanced the information dissemination of the presentations. Presentations were also reported as being positive and encouraging, reflective, were reaffirming, reinforcing, empowering, informative, showed how communities were making a difference, and shaping and improving their future. Presentations were viewed as transformative practice and would benefit all Indigenous communities.

Content. Survey responses acknowledged there were shared topics relevant to all Indigenous people such as loss of land, loss of language, loss

of culture, loss of a food base, polluted waterways, and of historical trauma.

However, survey participants also celebrated the Seventh Gathering Session Programme and how it provided insight into the *amazing strengths based* initiatives of *tino rangatiratanga (self-determination)* being developed and offered through the Indigenous communities represented at the Seventh Gathering (Brown, McClintock, & Sewell, 2016).

The survey participants also expressed their gratitude, *felt lucky, privileged, inspired* to attend sessions on reclaiming *ancestral knowledge and contemporary knowledge, from our time*. Knowledge gained from the Session Programme was celebrated and the content provided insights into the *amazing* initiatives being developed and offered through the Indigenous communities represented (Brown et al., 2016).

Providing feedback. Survey participants welcomed the session time schedules accommodating a question and answer time. Participants noted that these times meant that they had an opportunity to seek clarity, make a comment and engage with the presenter. The ability to provide written feedback on the sessions was also seen as a positive initiative, with survey participants eager to contribute to the Seventh Gathering e-survey platform and engage with the technology, no matter what age, gender or country of origin. Monday and Tuesday and sessions one, two and three were the most profitable in collecting session evaluations.

Challenge. The qualitative data from the survey also identified challenges that applied to the Seventh Gathering Session Programme. These included specifics in relation to: venue, content, session facilitation and presenters experience.

Venue. The feedback from the survey participants in regards to the venue for the Session Programme was for some attendees, one of disappointment. Frustration was caused by the closeness of the rooms with only a curtain as a divider. This meant that the noise level was often a distraction for those in the next room close to, drummers drumming, singers singing, dancers, dancing. In addition, the technical support wasn't always available to assist, when the audio system went down.

This posed a barrier for the presenters, as DVDs didn't have sound and power points wouldn't display. The air conditioning also caused discomfort; it was too hot and stuffy, and other times too cold. It was also not obvious to the attendees who was monitoring these situations and who could address them. In most circumstances these problems were passed to the Session Chairs to follow up.

Programme. As a general comment, the survey participants appreciated the large posted session programme and utilised the same. However, it was also reported that it was difficult to find any in-depth information about the sessions and would have appreciated to have a *blurb* available either on the large poster timetable provided or in the Gathering Programme Booklet.

Copies of presentations were also requested (Brown et al., 2016). Despite the desire by the Seventh Gathering organisers to give primacy to *te reo Māori* as an official language of Aotearoa, it was noted that abstract titles using Indigenous language are not necessarily appropriate for all participants. One person noted in their evaluation that *the title in Māori doesn't help me know what it is about*.

Session facilitation. The session chairs were given the responsibility of facilitating the sessions, for introducing the presenters and to ensure that presenters stayed to time and perhaps to alert or liaise any information or technology needs. However, some sessions went overtime complicated by poor technology, too much content in the presentation and a lengthy question and discussion time. This often caused congestion for those waiting for the next session that followed and therefore put the whole programme in certain session rooms behind frustrating attendees.

Presenter experience. Survey participants reported it was obvious that some presenters were new and inexperienced as presenters. Survey responses, included comments such as read the presentation straight from the power point, some had no obvious structure, no conclusion, needed help with the power point ruined her presentation, too much to say in a limited time, couldn't be seen behind the podium.

Conclusion

One of the key goals of moving to an electronic platform for the evaluation of the Seventh Gathering of the Seventh Gathering was to ensure that the organisers received a wealth of rich information to help inform the planning of future Gatherings, and that this information could be collated and analysed quickly. Despite using “state of the art” technology as the primary means of information gathering, versus the tried and true means of a paper based survey, participants young and old, male and female, and people from a variety of Indigenous groups contributed through the Seventh Gathering e-survey platform.

The findings show that detailed information was able to be collected from the full spectrum of Gathering attendees, from *rangatahi* (youth) through to the *kaumātua* (elders). Furthermore, collecting the information meant that data was readily available to the evaluation team.

In reflecting on how the evaluation team have employed an evaluation design that incorporates modern technology with kaupapa Māori methods of data collection, the conclusion is that this method of undertaking evaluations of large conferences could easily be used or adapted by others, including at future Gatherings or similar Indigenous wellbeing events. Indigenous peoples, are keen adapters of new tools, new methods and new processes (Durie, 1997; Kamira, 2003). This characteristic of Indigenous people was certainly evident in the interest that was taken in the evaluation stations, in the evaluation itself, and in using the iPads to complete the survey. It was evident, through the 1554 surveys completed for the Seventh Gathering Sessions, that attendees valued the opportunity to provide feedback. The new technology, the e-survey, was embraced and the authors would certainly encourage future Gathering organising committees, and indeed those who are planning other Indigenous conferences, to consider using this method of data collection in evaluations of discrete events.

Areas that could be strengthened in future research using the same or similar technology include developing ways to accurately and appropriately determine response rate where

participants are invited to make multiple responses and there is anonymity, ensuring you have a representative sample of attendees and sessions evaluated, as well as minimising burden on participants.

As to the results of the evaluation, as noted and demonstrated throughout this paper, which after all, only provides a snapshot of results; a great deal was provided by the Gathering participants about what was considered excellent, what could be improved upon, and what needs to be reconsidered altogether. The actual data collected will be an important source of information for the next planning committee. To that end, a number of recommendations are made for consideration, based on the findings from the session evaluations.

Recommendations

The following four recommendations have been developed from the feedback that was given by participants who responded to the individual sessions that were held over the four days of the conference. The purpose of these recommendations is to ensure that future organising committees may learn from what could be improved upon, so that subsequent Gatherings are even more useful to participants and presenters alike. It is important that the Gathering host:

1. provides a quality Indigenous environment for the session programme attendees. Such an environment requires the provision of quality acoustics; easily accessible and responsive technical support people; a venue that ensures the session programme is delivered in comfort for Indigenous people; and a clear process for addressing reported problems;
2. provides access to abstracts or information about the content of the sessions at the Gathering. This will ensure Gathering attendees can make informed decisions about what sessions to attend;
3. is explicit about the proffered papers and the process for facilitating these sessions. In particular, the organisers have a responsibility to ensure session Chairs are aware of the need to keep to the time allocated and that these times are clearly

articulated in all the conference material available to presenters, including the Gathering Handbook.

The session Chairs' role is to support the Handbook Guidelines to ensure the presenters have time to deliver in a supportive, monitored environment. Adequate time for questions and answers also needs to be factored into presentation time. The Gathering host also has an important role for the training of session chairs in regards to their responsibilities, as well as connecting them to the relevant technical support for presenters to ensure presenters are appropriately supported.

4. It is important that there is provision for growth that supports Indigenous people to present at future Gatherings. Dedicated support may also be needed for emerging leaders, presenters, through the HOSW International Indigenous Council networks, for experienced *tuakana* (senior) presenters and role models to provide informal or formal guidance for the less experienced *teina* (junior) to embed succession planning. Access to the Seventh Gathering Keynote videos for all participants would assist to impart the knowledge of *tuakana* to *teina*.

“Mehemea ka moemoea au, ko au anake.

Mehemea ka moemoea tatou, ka taea e tatou.

If I am to dream, I dream alone

If we all dream together, then we will achieve”

- Te Puea Herangi

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Ko Tangihui te maunga; Ko Wairoa te moana; Ko Te Parawhau te hapu; Ko Nga Pubi nui Tonu te iwi; Ko Tania Tito-Edge toku ingoa.

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Ko Maunga-a-kahia taku maunga, Ko Wainui taku awa, Ko Takitimu raua ko Kuruhapu oku waka, Ko Rakato, Ngati Hikairo, Hinenhata nga hapu, Ko Rongomaiwahine taku iwi, No Mabilia abau.

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Ko Manaia te maunga; Ko Teringa paraoa te moana; Ko Ngatokimatawhorua te waka; Ko Patuharakeke te hapu; Ko Nga Pahi nui Tonu te iwi; Ko May Hart toku ingoa.

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