# Social Justice and Credible Evidence in Program Evaluation

## Professor Donna M. Mertens

## Gallaudet University

Australasian Evaluation Society
James Cook University
Cairns Australia 2010.

# Sin Qua Non

Evaluators need to provide credible evidence

# Questions

- What is credible evidence?
- What criteria establish credibility of evidence?
- What does our evidence lack in credibility?
- What sources give us insight into credibility?
- What is the place of social justice in credibility?
- How do voices of marginalized communities enhance our understandings of credibility?
- Why is it important for *Pakeha* to understand indigenous perspectives of social justice?

**My Family**

**Race Consciousness**

**Gallaudet University**

# Need for a Social Justice Lens

Marie Battiste (2000):

"...society is sorely in need of what Aboriginal knowledge has to offer"

Chilisa (2005)

"it is an issue of life and death"

Brookes (2006)

Failure to include racism as a potential contributor to disparities

# Transformative Paradigm & Commensurate Theories

- Feminist theories
- Critical Race Theories
- Critical Theories
- Human Rights Theories
- Disability Rights Theories

- Transformative Participatory Action theories
- Indigenous theories
- Deafness rights theories
- Queer theories

# Transformative Paradigm: Philosophy

- Axiology: Respect for cultural norms; support for human rights and social justice; reciprocity
- Ontology:

Critical interrogation of multiple realities: social, political, cultural, economic, race/ethnic, gender, age, religion and disability values to unmask those that sustain the status quo of inequities

- Epistemology:

Interactive link; knowledge is socially and historically located; trusting relationship

- Methodology:

Qualitative (dialogic)/ Quantitative mix; Context

# Transformative Axiological Assumption

- Improve social justice and human rights
- Respect cultural groups
- Provide reciprocity
- Challenge discrimination & oppression
- Relationships based on trust
- Address power inequities

# Ethical Standards

- Australian Aboriginal communities: The National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) guidelines

- Maori and Pacific Peoples: Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee (SPEaR, 2008) guidelines

- Harris, Holmes, & Mertens (2009) Terms of Reference for Sign Language Communities

# Commonalities across Sources

- Social Justice and Human Rights
- Respect for cultural groups
- Reciprocity
- Attention to discrimination & oppression
- Trusting relationships
- Community involvement
- Address power inequities

# Unique to Indigenous and Sign Language Communities

- Survival and protection
- Responsibility to others in the community and the effects of the evaluation on the entire community
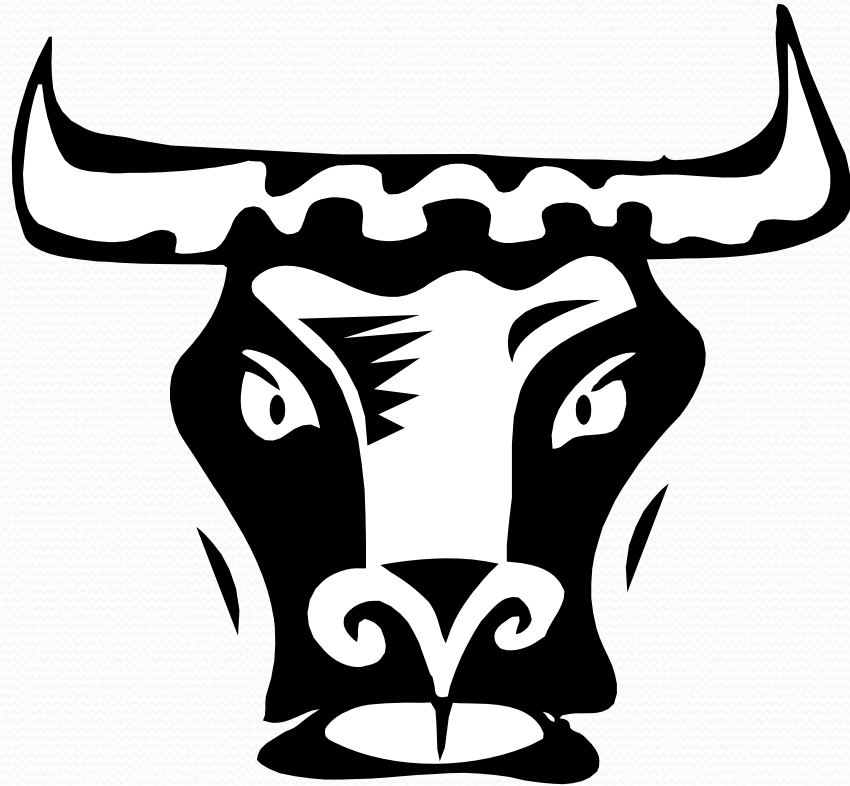
# Unique to indigenous peoples

- Spirit & Integrity

# Social Justice & Credible Evidence

- Nan Wehipeinana & Kataraina Pipi (2008) Working for Families Tax Credits evaluation

- Helen Moewaka Barnes, Tim McCreanor, Shane Edwards, and Belinda Borell (2009), members of the Whariki Research Group at Massey University in Auckland's guidance to ethical review boards

# Criteria for Credible Evidence

- Rigorously controlled experiments
- Culturally responsive transformative approaches

# Silos

How Ocean Currents Work

©2008 HowStuffWork
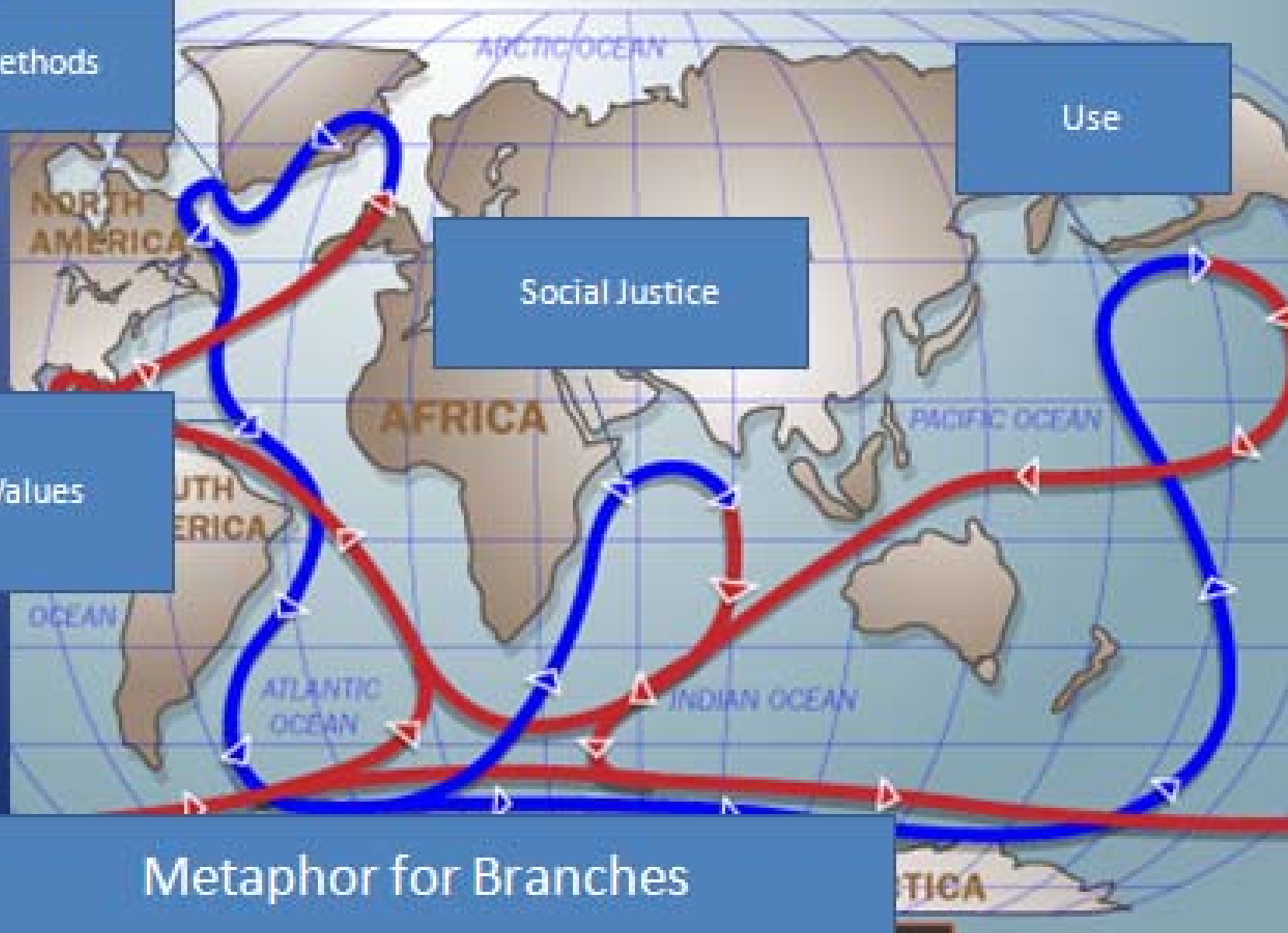
Global Conveyor Belt

Methods

Use

Social Justice

Values

Metaphor for Branches

# Contact Information

- Donna M. Mertens
- Donna.mertens@gallaudet.edu