



An Introduction to Integrated Cultural Assessment: a value based approach.

Concerns raised by Aboriginal people when new projects are proposed include a wide range of topics such as the environment, Treaty and Aboriginal Rights (including title), social, economic, cultural heritage and human health. The complex nature of socio-cultural relationships that can be affected by changes to the environment can be difficult for Aboriginal communities to express in a way that regulators, industry or the general public can easily understand. The challenges in expressing these concerns is partially due to the fact that the tools used to quantify and measure potential effects (e.g. indicators, baseline scenarios and impact-rating criteria) do not reflect Aboriginal cultural values or worldviews.

In an effort to address this gap in understanding, the HEG has developed an approach that facilitates cross-cultural understanding of the effects development may have on aboriginal culture and way of life.

At the core of the ICA approach, is the fact that culture affects the way in which people understand themselves, their relationship to the land, their community and their purpose, or relationship with the spiritual world.



To understand potential effects to culture, the ICA approach identifies and evaluates potential linked environmental, social and economic effects that may be associated with natural resource development and policy decisions. The ICA uses familiar terms to express impacts to non-aboriginal reviewers, be they regulators, industry or general public.

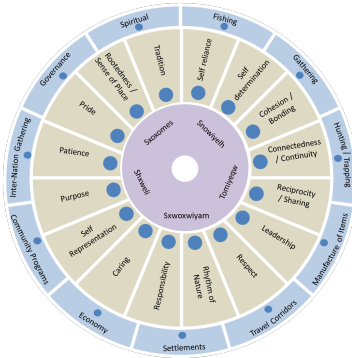
What Makes the ICA different from other environmental assessment approaches?

The ICA approach is based on cultural values. It focuses on the set of beliefs, and principles that give order and meaning to a society and provides the underlying assumptions and rules that govern people's behavior.

Participatory methods are used to identify a number of important cultural activities that reflect core cultural values. Activities are used as tangible elements of culture that can be discussed to help identify issues, impact pathways and indicators. Examples of



activities discussed may include hunting, fishing, spiritual activities, governance, raising children, gathering medicines, economic development or education.



Core Elements of Stó:lō Culture

Sxeso:mes – tradition, self-reliance, self-determination, pride, leadership, self-representation

Tomiyeqw – responsibility, cohesion/bonding, reciprocity/sharing, caring

Snoweyelh/Shxweli – rootedness, rhythm of nature, respect

Sxwōxwiyá:m/Shxweli – peace, patience, connectedness

Stó:lō Cultural Model (2014)

Source: Ts'elxweyeqw Tribe Management Limited, Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre and Human Environment Group (2014)

Community members participate in facilitated discussions to determine the strength of the linkages between cultural activities and core cultural values for historic and contemporary timeframes. By discussing the factors that affect the way cultural activities were carried out in the past, and the way they are carried out today, community members identify a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to evaluate locally important social, environmental and economic issues.

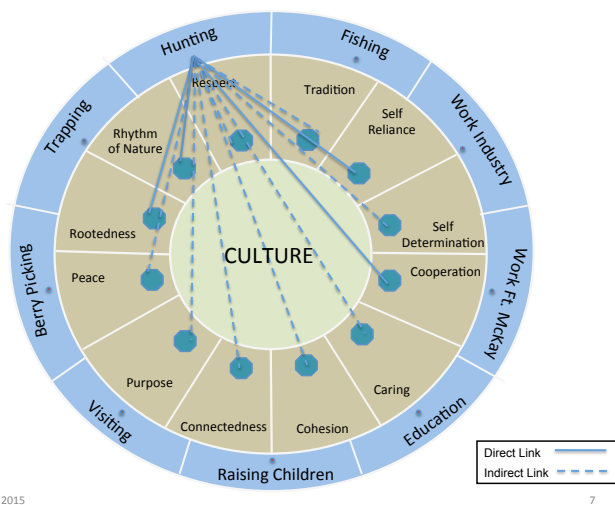
For example, for many communities the act of berry picking is important, partially for the food it supplies, but more so for the values associated with being out on the land, travelling in multi-generational groups, using language, learning place names, history and so on. The activity of berry picking helps maintain culture and instills a sense of identity, pride, and community cohesion and contributes to overall community health. All of which goes well beyond the simple value of the berries as food.

These models become a tool for expressing the complex relationships Aboriginal people have with the land, cultural activities and a range of cultural resources.

Contemporary cultural baseline scenarios identify aspects of culture that have been eroded over time and thus are at risk when faced with any sort of incremental impact.



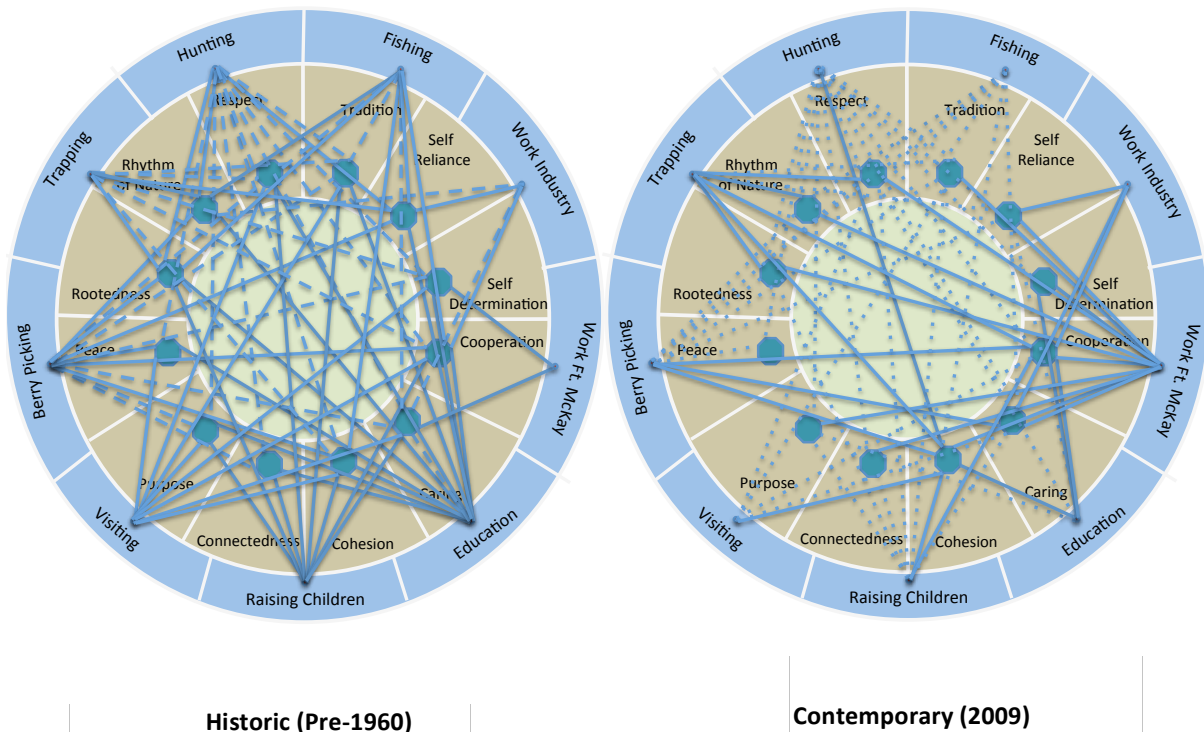
The examples below are from Human Environment Group (2009) *Indicators of Cultural Change (1960 to 2009): A framework for selecting indicators based on cultural values in Fort McKay*. Prepared for the Industry Relations Corporation August 2009.



Participatory methods were used to establish historic and contemporary value linkages for each activity.

The figure above is an example from one community showing the strength of the connection between activities and cultural values. A solid line indicates the activity has a direct connection to the cultural value and directly influences the way this activity is carried out. The dashed lines represent “indirect linkages”. For example, Hunting is an activity that is directly linked to “rhythm of nature” since it is planned and conducted depending on the seasons. The value of Caring is indirectly linked to “hunting” as it is instilled more through the product of hunting when community members share and provide for others in the community.

The figures below summarize the results for each activity for both the historic (pre-1960) and contemporary (2009) scenarios. The dotted lines represent links that have been eroded or weakened due to changes to the way the activities are conducted as a result of environmental and social impacts of natural resource development in the area.



Establishing a contemporary baseline takes into account the range of cumulative effects that have influenced aboriginal cultures over time. This helps to focus new assessments on individual projects and project-specific impacts as opposed to historical grievances.

The ICA approach allows communities to decide what gets measured or assessed, using their own impact rating criteria based on cultural values. The ICA model can provide a framework for EIAs to select both quantitative and qualitative indicators that address a fuller spectrum of Aboriginal interests. This helps communities identify their own issues and concerns, in their own words and communicate them to industry and regulators.

Selecting appropriate indicators not only ensures appropriate issues get assessed, but more importantly, appropriate mitigation/management plans are developed. This helps proponents and government effectively respond to concerns raised during consultation processes. For issues that can't be mitigated, ICAs provide a framework for discussions around impact benefit agreements and accommodation.



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The Human Environment Group was founded on the principle that cooperation and communication are fundamental to the three pillars of sustainability. HEG is committed to enhancing the capacity of communities, government and industry to effectively address the human dimension of development activities through sound environmental practices and progressive social participation.