

Are resources sufficient for the evaluation of social impacts of resource projects?



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SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

- In BC, SIA is part of the overall Environmental Assessment (EA) review process for resource projects
- Traditionally used as a mechanism to predict the social effects of a project
- Lack of a specific regulatory framework for SIA has resulted in an uneven quality of SIA components in EAs
- In alignment with international best practices, SIA has moved from the periphery of EA to a key area of focus
- SIA is evolving into a comprehensive process to identify, monitor, and manage social dimensions of resource development



INCENTIVE FOR CHANGE

There are several key issues and concerns regarding the adequacy of EA processes in BC:

- Low public confidence
- Too few opportunities for participation of Indigenous Peoples and the public
- General perception that projects would be approved regardless of the potential for adverse socio-economic and environmental effects
- Restrictive timelines for engagement



CHALLENGES FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

- Government commits to work with participating Indigenous communities to seek consensus throughout the review process
- Community participation in the process is critical for contributing to public trust
- Early engagement phase is intended to start meaningful engagement about a project well before key decisions are made
- SIA must be informed by the issues and concerns as well as the aspirations of affected people
- Community participation is often constrained by lack of capacity and large volume of requests



MODERNIZATION OF THE EA REVIEW PROCESS IN BC

Three main objectives:

- To advance **reconciliation** with Indigenous Peoples and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*
- To protect the environment while enabling the approval of **sustainable** projects
- To restore **public confidence** in the EA process



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES SPECIFIC TO SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Analysis of both positive and negative potential effects
- Focus on community benefits
- Analysis of disproportionate effects
- Focus on early engagement
- Opportunities for Indigenous-led assessments
- Integration (application) of Indigenous Knowledge
- Implementation of Community Advisory Committees
- Focus on post-EA compliance



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INCREASED SCOPE REQUIRES MORE DATA

- Limited data quality and availability for small communities
- Importance of considering local values and interests and to have a robust and clear approach
 - Community “buy-in”
- Develop indicators collaboratively
- Legitimacy of mixed methods for SIA data collection and analysis
 - Use of qualitative and quantitative information
- Holistic understanding of community health and wellbeing
 - Social, economic, health and cultural outcomes are interrelated and can be driven by biophysical changes
- Legitimacy of perceived effects



APPLICATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

- Indigenous Knowledge is required to be “integrated” throughout the EA, when provided or approved by Indigenous communities
- Respectful application of IK is critical
- Main challenges:
 - Lack of training, financial constraints, timelines
 - Unresolved treaty and title rights
 - Perceived hierarchies of knowledge
 - Imbalanced decision-making powers
 - Data confidentiality
 - Lack of trust
 - Externally-driven nature of EA



EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP STRATEGIES

- Socio-economic effects management (SEMP) and ongoing monitoring is considered a best practice for social management
- SEMP can be used to:
 - Evaluate accuracy of predicted effects (uncertainty in SIA predictions)
 - Evaluate effectiveness of mitigation or enhancement measures
 - Manage and monitor actual project effects
- Requires agreed upon metrics and indicators, and clear responsibilities for ongoing data gathering and reporting
- Challenges include a lack of clear guidelines and uneven application



STRATEGIES FOR PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Regulatory and community approval depend on building meaningful relationships
- Community-based, participatory research approach
- Cultural training for proponents and practitioners
- Increased understanding and solutions for capacity constraints
- Follow-up strategies: effects management and monitoring programs

Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments via chat in the IAIA22 platform.



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