Engaging Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems in Socio-Economic Baseline Development

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Introductions

Challenging Epistemic Barriers to Collaborative Socio-economic Baseline Development

1. Overview of Arguments
2. Advances with IAA
3. Theory versus Practice
4. Indigenous Knowledge
5. Collaborative Tools and Methods
6. Takeaways & Discussion

Section 1

Overview of Arguments

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Culturally appropriate engagement

Information required for baseline assessments does not always manifest in the shape that Projects and Clients want; alignment of impacts on holistic pillars

Flexible knowledge gathering

Respecting Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as deeply local, we can work to understand the relationships between land, IK, and culture to gather knowledge that best reflects this

Representation and capacity levels matter

We identify in conversation what levels of capacity are versus desired interest, and who within communities is best positioned to identify concerns and priorities

Section 2

Advances with Impact Assessment Act (2019)

Shifts Towards Inclusivity with Impact Assessment Act (2019)

2012

Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA)

Focus on a duty to consult Indigenous Nations

2019

Impact Assessment Act (IAA)

More nuanced approach to valuing and including Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous and treaty rights, and self-governance

2021

UNDRIP Adopted by Canada

Adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to provide roadmap on lasting reconciliation and cooperative relationships

2022

New Environmental Projects Affected

Projects we use as case studies are some of the first to work under the new IAA Climate Change Canada released Indigenous Knowledge Policy Framework

Section 3

Indigenous Knowledge

Section 3

Reconciling Different Ways of Knowing

Indigenous Knowledge

- Not universal or static – complex, culturally bound
- Attached to landscapes
- Evolve with communities
- Represent connection to natural world as central to Indigenous Peoples

Traditional Knowledge

- Broader category, includes IK
- Created by any individual/group and carried through generations
- Tends to be associated with landscape and environment

Western Knowledge

- Knowledge system based on measurements, quantifying, objectivist/rational truths

Section 3

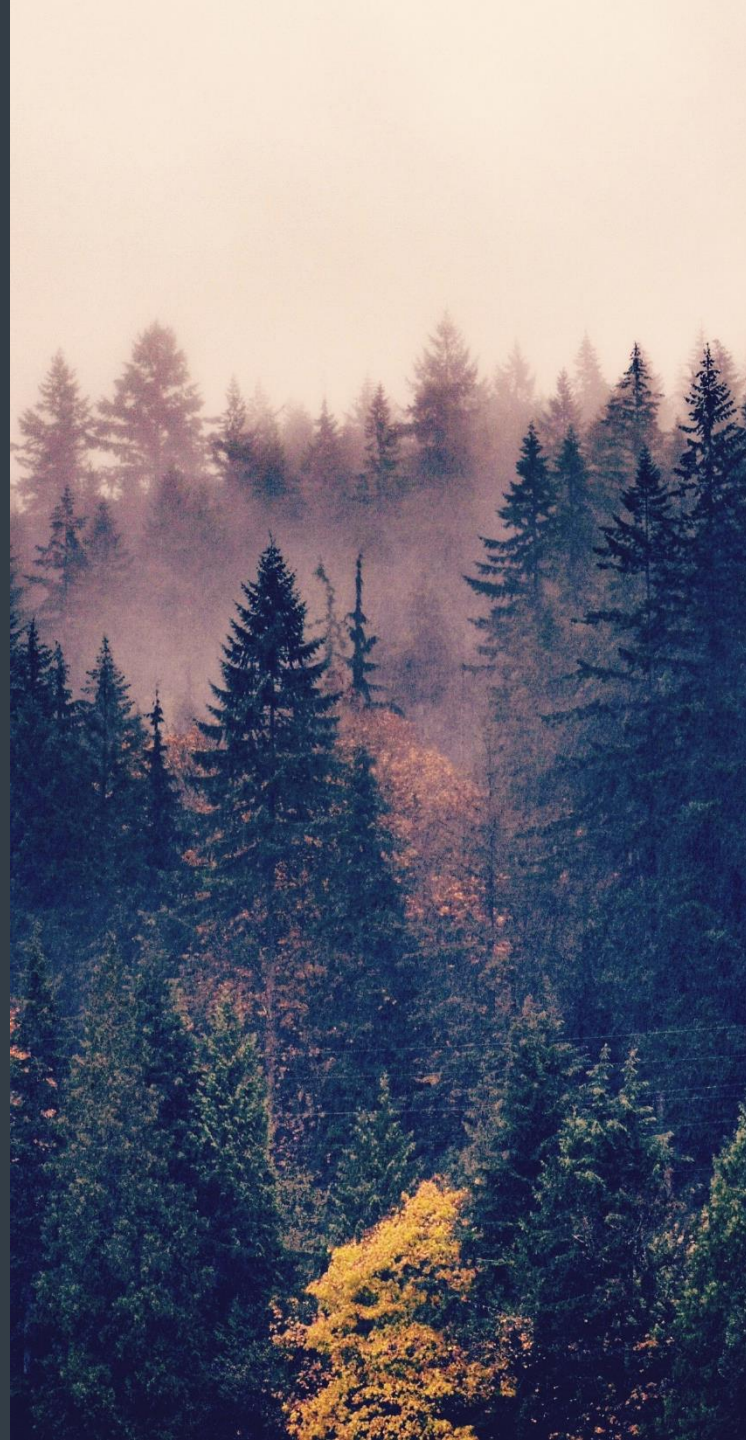
Indigenous Knowledge

As understood through Impact Assessment Studies

- Because land and relationship to the natural world is central, IK is inherently connected to culture, identity, traditions, and self-determination and sovereignty
- Understanding the more deeply rooted historical and contemporary relationships between IK, Indigenous Peoples, and landscapes allows for a more respectful approach to knowledge gathering together

Section 4

Indigenous Engagement: Theory versus Practice



Section 4

Indigenous Engagement and Inclusion in Socio-Economic Baselines

Tools of the Trade

- Rely on classic tools to achieve requirements
- Includes surveys, desktop research, and census data
- Western-focused with emphasis on quantitative metrics

Section 4

Indigenous Engagement and Inclusion in Socio-Economic Baselines

Culturally Appropriate Tools

- Stories and storytelling as knowledge and information
- Ceremonies
- Guided walks
- Qualitative and lived experiences as knowledges in their own right, not rooted in metrics

Section 4

Indigenous Engagement and Inclusion in Socio-Economic Baselines

Storing Knowledge as Static

- Storage of data as a static, constant
- Storytelling as a more fluid and adaptible way of conveying information that changes as land and connections grow
- Books and written culture as capturing information
- Landscape is in itself a repository of knowledge

Section 4

Indigenous Engagement and Inclusion in Socio-Economic Baselines

Information YOU Need Versus What is Given

- Different timelines and understandings of time
- Information that you as researcher or consultant needs is not a readily available encyclopedia entry
- Diffused knowledge in various realms
- Our approach of social, health, environment, and economic pillars as holistic and interconnected
- Our responsibility to our relationships to align research pillars with constructions of project impacts

Section 5

Collaborative Tools and Methods

Section 4

Reconciling Different Ways of Doing

Indigenous Knowledge

- Community Meetings
- Elder teas
- Community feasts
- Paddles/walks

Traditional Knowledge

- Participant observation
- Key informant interviews
- Integrative mapping

Western Knowledge

- Meetings
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Comment Forms

Section 5

Collaborative Tools and Methodologies

Guiding Principles

- Understand and respect level of capacity, expertise, and interest in project
- Discuss preferences for engagement approach, times, venues, and protocols
- Recognize Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®) over data
- Synergy in information gathering for community benefit

Section 6

Main Takeaways

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Impact Assessment Act

With the recent changes to baseline requirements through the Impact Assessment Act, there are new opportunities to engage and create inclusive and collaborative work with Indigenous Peoples and Nations

Holistic and Interconnected

Approaches that understand how land, health, economics, and socio-cultural factors connect

Culturally Appropriate Engagement

Shape of information given will not always reflect the shape a Project or client wants

Flexibility for Knowledge Gathering

This process is new, and leaves space for us to better understand and respect IK and how to gather the most appropriate knowledge to reflect this

Capacity and Interest

Recognizing what a Nation or community's interest versus capacity is to best understand how to engage

Section 6

Discussion

Challenges or Barriers to Engagement

Do you have examples of challenges or barriers you've faced under the IAA with Indigenous Engagement?

How might we work through them?

Thank you

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