

Seeing psycho-social impacts of contaminated sites through the lens of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Inclusion & Diversity Moment

- Unconscious Bias
 - 95%
Fast/Automatic/Impulsive/
Limited effort/Emotional
 - 5%
Slower/Deliberate/Reflective/
Effortful/Analytical





“Together, we will build stronger, more resilient communities and renew our nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations, Inuit and Metis”

Former Finance Minister Bill Morneau, in his budget speech to the House of Commons, March 2017

Source: <http://aptnnews.ca/2017/03/22/liberals-budget-2017-promises-additional-billions-to-indigenous-communities/>

Truth and Reconciliation

- In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) presented the Executive Summary of the findings contained in its multi-volume Final Report, including 94 "calls to action" (or recommendations)
- Calls to Action are aimed at addressing the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools

Honouring the Truth,
Reconciling for the Future

Summary of the
Final Report of the
Truth and Reconciliation
Commission of Canada



Context – the Legacy of Residential Schools

“New policies can easily be based on a lack of understanding of Aboriginal people, similar to that which motivated the schools... We must learn from the failure of the schools in order to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in the future.”

“Aboriginal peoples were economically marginalized in their own homelands when irreversible environmental damage was done in the name of ‘progress’.”

94 Calls to Action

Child Welfare (1-5)

Education (6-12)

Language and Culture (13-17)

Health (18-24)

Justice (25-42)

Canadian Government and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (43-44)

Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation (45-47)

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (48-49)

Equity for Aboriginal People in the Legal System (50-52)

National Council for Reconciliation (53-56)

Professional Development and Training for Public Servants (57)

Church Apologies and Reconciliation (58-61)

Education for reconciliation (62-65)

Youth Programs (66)

Museums and Archives (67-70)

Missing Children and Burial Information (71-76)

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (77-78)

Commemoration (79-83)

Media and Reconciliation (84-86)

Sports and Reconciliation (87-91)

Business and Reconciliation (92)

Newcomers to Canada (93-94)

Business and Reconciliation

*92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.*

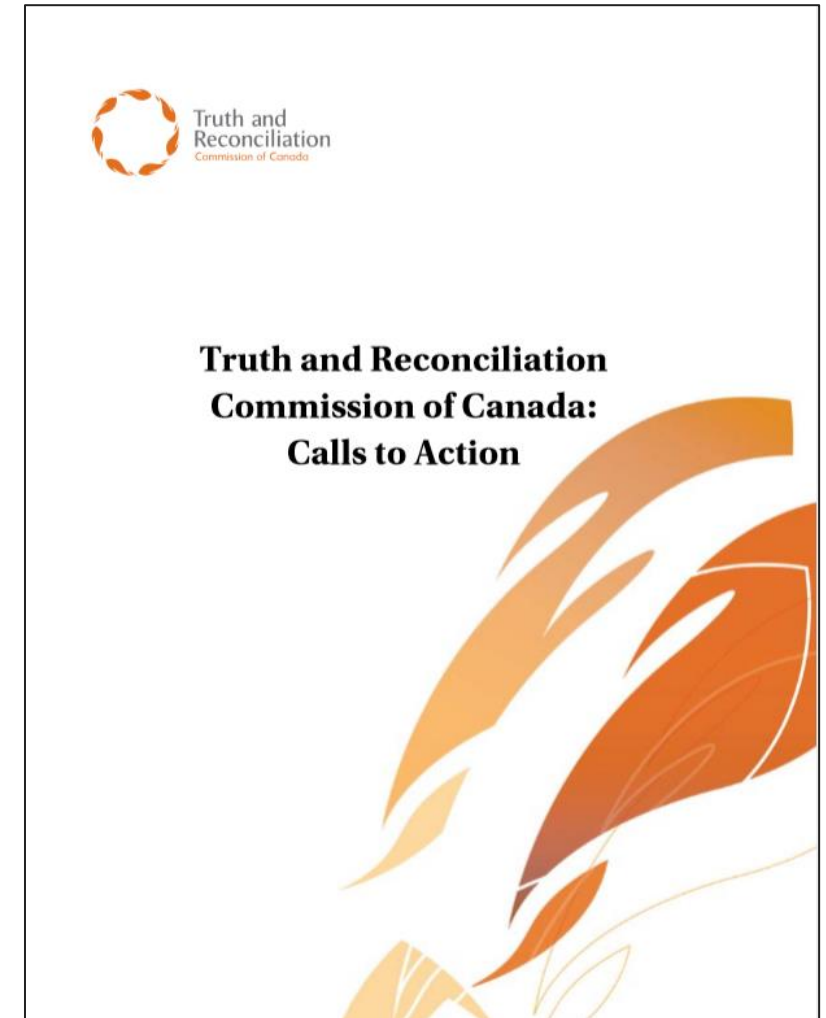


United Nations

Business and Reconciliation

This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- i. Commit to **meaningful consultation**, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.
- ii. Ensure that Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to **jobs, training**, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain **long-term sustainable benefits** from economic development projects.
- iii. Provide **education for management and staff** on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and **anti-racism**.





Environmental Racism and Contaminated Sites?

- Environmental racism historically tied to the environmental justice movement
- Can be traced back around 500 years with the arrival of the Europeans and their displacement of Indigenous People
- Marginalized communities that do not have the socioeconomic and political means to oppose large corporations or governments are at risk to environmentally racist practices
- Members of minority groups may bear a greater burden of the health problems that result from higher exposure to **waste and pollution**. This can occur due to unsafe or unhealthy conditions where no regulations exist (or are enforced) for poor communities/neighborhoods that are uncomfortably close to toxic materials

Unconscious Bias? No Way – Not Me!

- Is it possible that a “colonialist approach” may not address the potential **psycho-social impacts** caused by contaminated sites – from their historical context to the proposed way-forward (traditional remedial approaches)?
- Whether health impacts can be clearly demonstrated or not, the modern pressures voiced by anti-colonialism and any perception of historical abuse can have a significant impact on the psycho-social health of the Community and the “project”





Lessons-Learned

- Psycho-Social impacts are often misunderstood or not considered
 - Traditional Remedial Options Analysis (ROA) and Remedial Action Plans (RAP) may not be seen through the lens of the TRC and the UNDRIP
- There are great benefits to be derived from developing Aboriginal awareness proper to the Community affected by the contamination/project



“All too often, economic development has disrupted Indigenous peoples’ cultural, spiritual, and economic ties to the land, resulting in the devastation of traditional economies and self-sufficiency, community trauma, public welfare dependency, and poor health and socio-political outcomes.”

Source: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, July 23, 2015



Definitions of “Health”

- **HEALTH:** “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (from the Constitution of the World Health Organization: Principles)¹
- **MENTAL HEALTH:** “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”²
- **PSYCHO-SOCIAL:** relating social conditions to mental health <psychosocial medicine>

Source 1: World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/about/mission/en/>

Source 2: World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/



Biophysical Interaction

Mental

Cultural Interaction

Social

Health

Physical

Biotic Interaction

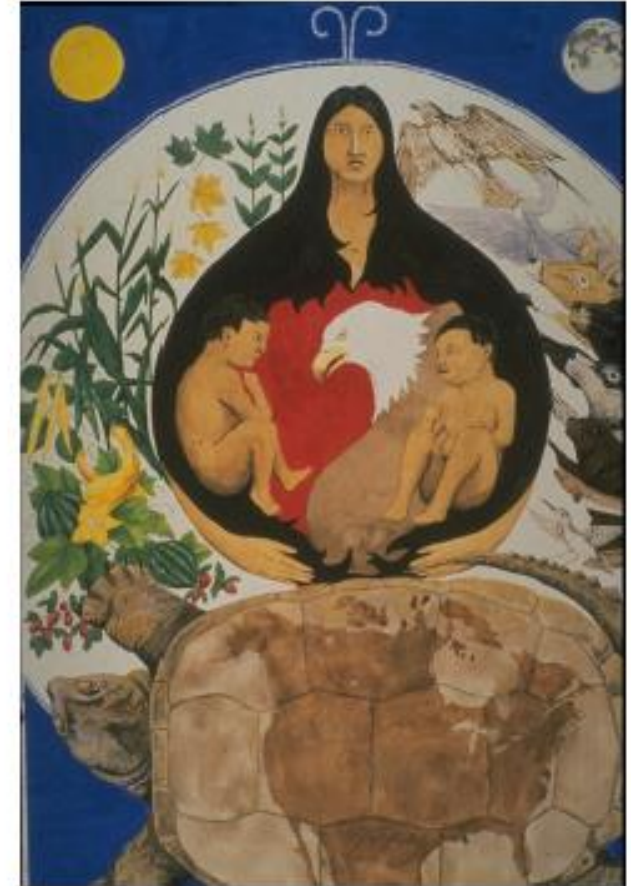
Health Impact Assessments – Determinants of Health

- **Physical Environments**
- Education
- Healthy Child Development
- Biology and Genetic Endowment
- Health Services
- Income and Social Status
- Social Support networks
- Employment and Working Conditions
- Personal health practices and coping skills

Source: Canadian Handbook on Health Impact Assessment (HC, 1999), ISBN 0-662-28086-5
<http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H46-2-99-235E-1.pdf>

Canadian Handbook on Health Impact Assessment:

The Basics



This document has been divided into a series of files for easier downloading from our web site.

Part 1 of 2

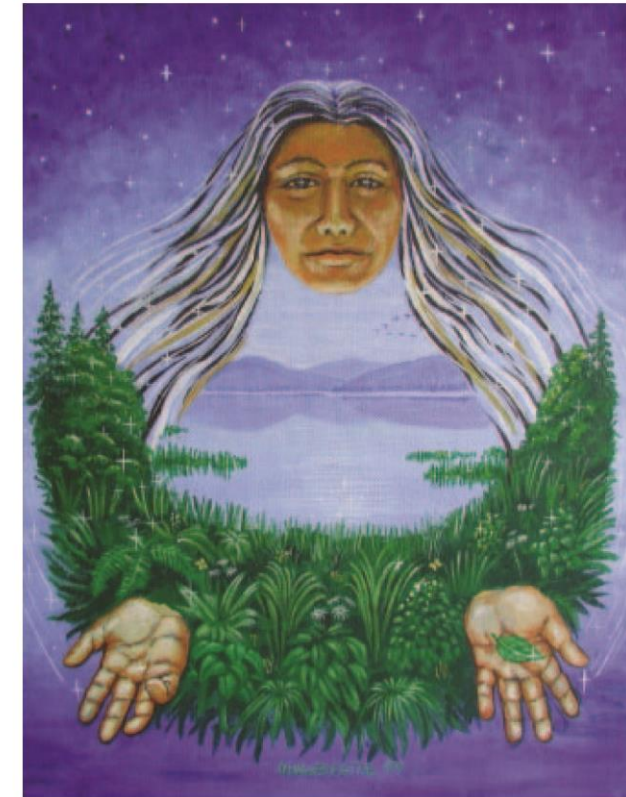
Socio-Cultural Well-Being

“Socio-cultural well-being, is much more difficult to assess since changes in the way of life or quality of life are often subtle, occur sporadically over different time spans and **affect individuals differently**. Consequently, indicators reflecting social well-being as it relates to health in EA are still in the developmental stage.”

Source: Canadian Handbook on Health Impact Assessment (HC, 1999), ISBN 0-662-28086-5
<http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H46-2-04-361E.pdf>

Canadian Handbook on Health Impact Assessment

Volume 2: Approaches and Decision-making



Health Canada Guidance (2005)

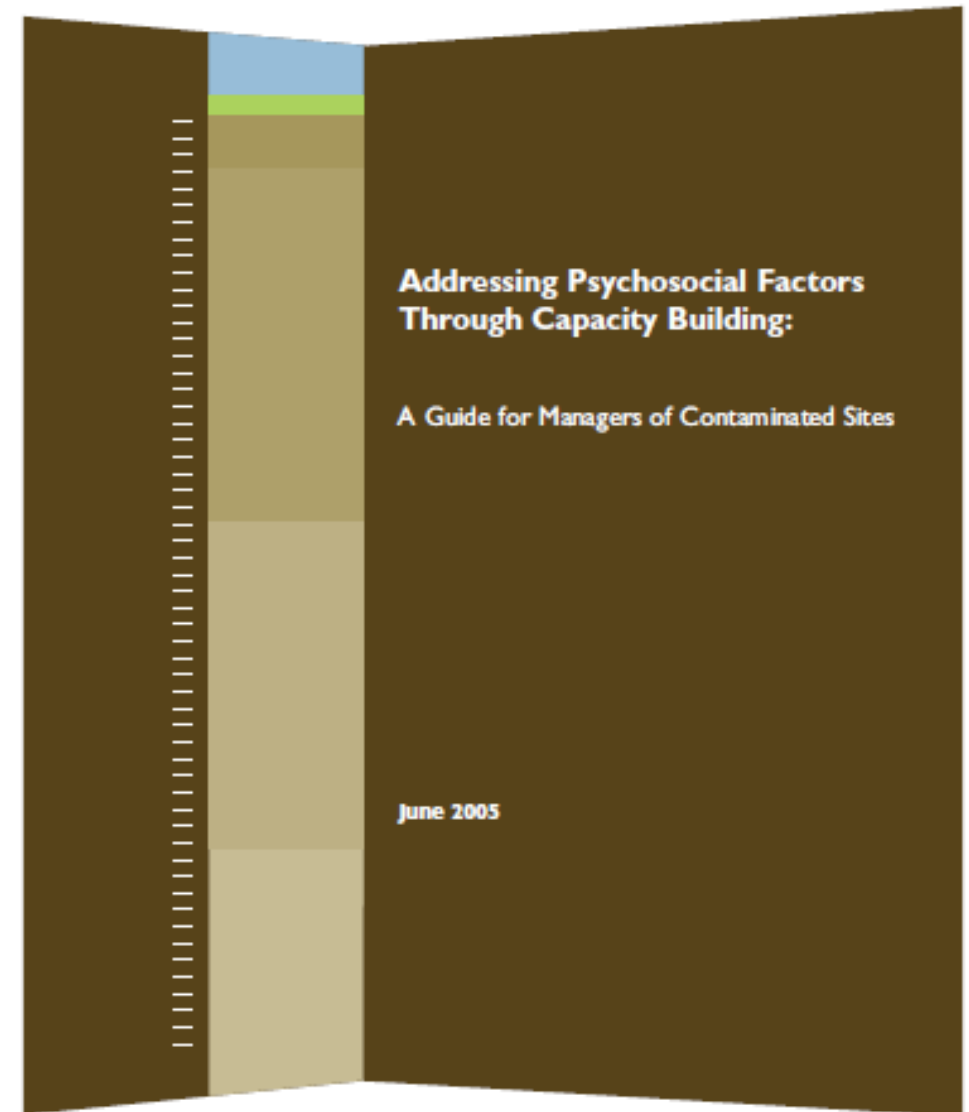
Social Factors

- Economic Concerns
- Community Conflicts
- Cultural Concerns
- Community Relocation

Psychological Reactions

- Fear
- Anger
- Distrust
- Feelings of Vulnerability and Powerlessness
- Frustration
- Depression

Source: Addressing Psychosocial Factors Through Capacity Building: A Guide for Managers of Contaminated Sites (HC, 2005)
 ISBN 0-662-40894-2 (Archived)
 A product of the former Risk Communication and Public Involvement group at Health Canada





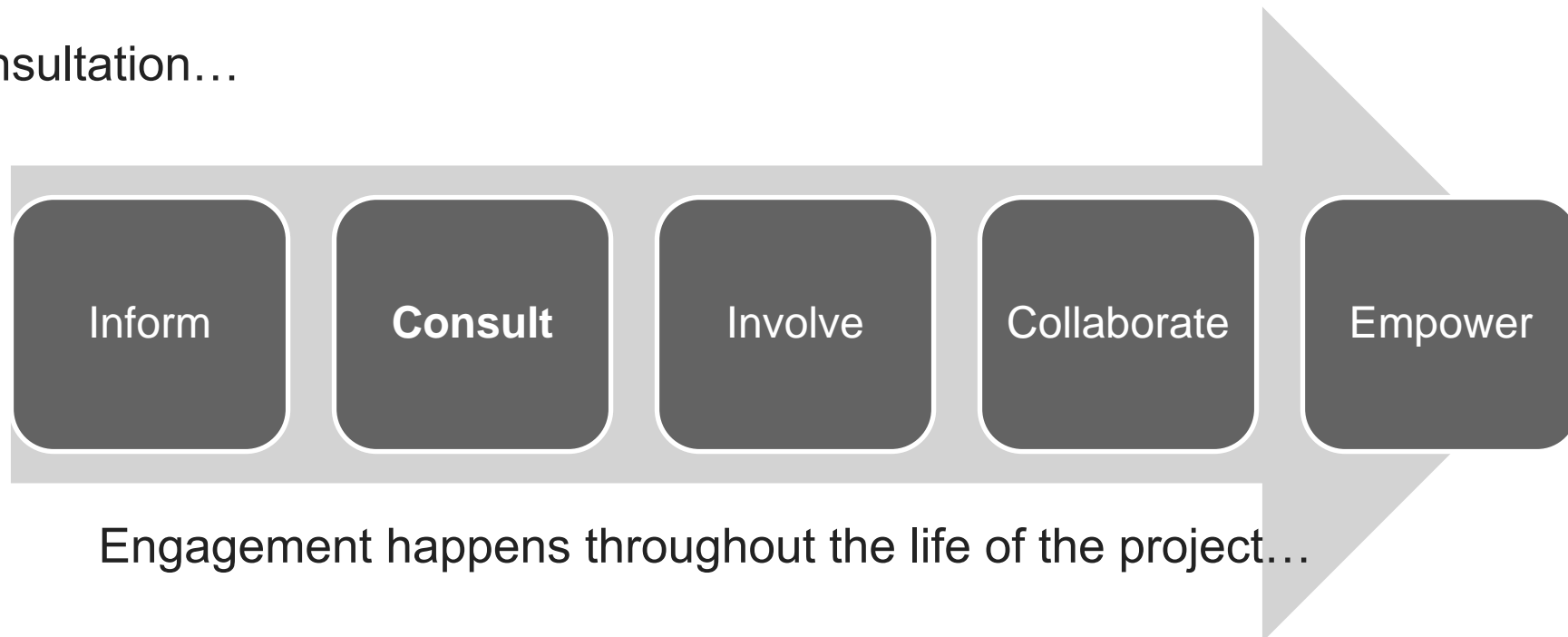
“Establishing constructive, mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with Indigenous communities will contribute to their economic growth, improve community health and well-being, and ensure environmental sustainability that will ultimately benefit Indigenous peoples and all Canadians.”

Source: Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, July 23, 2015



What is “Significant”?

- What is significant to First Nations may not be something we would have considered in traditional PH I or PH II/III ESAs
- Archaeology and Traditional Knowledge Studies may become significant aspects of the project
- Engagement vs Consultation...



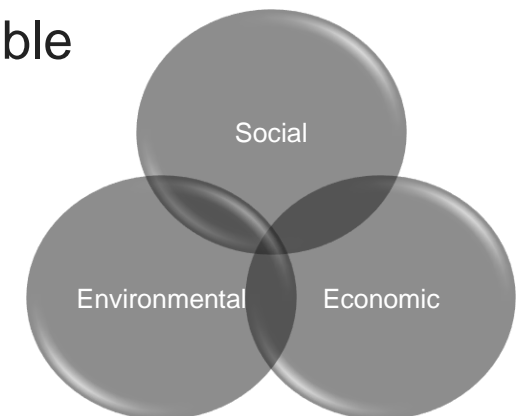


Way-Forward

- Anticipate, Plan, and Consult
 - Identifying and assessing important psychosocial factors affecting residents
 - Helping residents voice and present their concerns
 - Setting up appropriate psychosocial educational support activities for all age groups
- Meet early, meet often
- Lose your bias
- Learn the local history

PROJECT ENGAGEMENT PLAN

- Ensure Transparency
- Recognize and Respect Local Expertise
- Facilitate Communication within the Community
- Focus on Education
- Integrate “local concerns”
- Be Specific and Flexible
- Think “Sustainability”





“No Canadian can take pride in this country's treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and, for that reason, all Canadians have a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation in ways that honour and revitalize the nation-to-nation Treaty relationship.”

Questions?

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