

Economic development encompasses a range of activities categorized under three broad types: macro-economic development, local economic development (LED), and community economic development (CED).² Within these broad categories, economic development encompasses both wage-based and informal activities, including independent and corporate business enterprises, the knowledge-based economy, resource development, cooperatives, social enterprises, food-related community economic development, and tourism, among others. Indigenous communities are generally considered as having mixed economies, consisting of both formal³ and informal⁴ economic activities, the latter consisting principally of participation in traditional subsistence activities such as

hunting, fishing, food gathering and agriculture (Anderson et al., 2018; Angell, & Parkins, 2011; Parlee, 2015). Both of these types of economies play an important role in the health and well-being of Indigenous communities and must be considered in economic development strategies and initiatives (Anderson et al., 2018).

This fact sheet explores the landscape for economic development in Indigenous communities, as well as the potential economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of development processes on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. It also examines the barriers to and facilitators of economic development in Indigenous contexts. The fact sheet concludes with some resources to guide economic development in Indigenous contexts.

The economic development landscape in Indigenous communities

Over the past 40 years, the landscape for economic development in Indigenous communities has undergone dramatic changes, from a colonial framework of development towards decolonization. In this colonial framework, Canada's vast natural resources were exploited at the expense of Indigenous peoples' access to and collective ownership of the lands and resources, resulting in socio-economic marginalization, significant cultural impacts, environmental degradation, as well as intergenerational impacts to health and well-being (Colbourne, 2017; Mills, 2011).

² Macro-economic development is typically exercised by governments through such practices as trade agreements, tariffs, duties, fiscal policy, and adjustment policies, with little local influence or meaningful input (Dauncey, 1996). While both LED and CED are similar in that they are community-driven approaches to developing an economically viable community, the difference between them, as defined here, is that LED is driven primarily by an economic imperative, with its focus on wealth generation (UCLG ASPAC Secretariat, 2016), while CED integrates multiple community values including, environmental, social, cultural, and community well-being in order to build a more resilient, inclusive, and equitable society (Community Economic Development, 2017).

³ The formal economy refers to economic activities that involve a legal contractual relationship between workers and their employers, with written rules or agreements, predetermined wages, hours of work and benefits, and the payment of taxes on generated income to governments (fundsforNGOs, n.d.). Throughout this fact sheet, the term formal economy will be used interchangeably with the term 'wage-based' economy.

⁴ The informal economy refers to the part of the economy that is neither taxed nor monitored by any form of government, exists merely on verbal understanding, with no fixed wages, hours of work, or work conditions, and has no forum in which workers can express their grievances (fundsforNGOs, n.d.). This can include individuals working as small farmers, street vendors, small traders, micro-entrepreneurs, home-based workers, labourers, artisans, etc., and in this fact sheet, individuals engaged in the traditional subsistence economy. Throughout this fact sheet, the term 'informal economy' will be used interchangeably with the terms 'traditional economy' and 'traditional subsistence economy'.



Over the past 40 years, the landscape for economic development in Indigenous communities has undergone dramatic changes, from a colonial framework of development towards decolonization.

These ongoing impacts continue to pose significant barriers to economic development opportunities and benefits for Indigenous individuals and communities (RCAP, 1996). After the Supreme Court of Canada's 1973 groundbreaking decision in the Calder case,⁵ which acknowledged the existence of Aboriginal title to Indigenous peoples' traditional, ancestral and unceded lands, Indigenous peoples have increasingly gained agency in shaping decisions regarding the extraction of resources on their traditional lands, leading to a wide range of economic, social, environmental

and cultural benefits (Colbourne, 2017; Prno, 2013; Papillon & Rodon, 2017). This transformation was shaped by other landmark Supreme Court decisions that established the legal requirement related to the duty to consult and accommodate in cases where Indigenous rights are affected by major resource development projects (Government of Canada, 2011; Sanderson, Bergner, & Jones, 2012), as well as by increasing recognition, as embedded in international documents such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), of the right

to free, prior and informed consent when Indigenous rights are affected by major resource development projects (Papillon & Rodon, 2017).

Indigenous participation in resource development decision-making has primarily taken three forms: co-management regimes, environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes, and impact benefit agreements (IBAs). Several co-management regimes have emerged from comprehensive land agreements such as the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (1984), allowing for significant community

⁵ In *Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia, Frank Calder and other Nisga'a elders* sued the BC provincial government in 1967 to assert sovereignty of their traditional lands, drawing on arguments about their historic and contemporary uses of the lands and the lack of a treaty (McConville, 2017). The case was considered by both the BC Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal, which rejected their claims, as well as the Supreme Court of Canada, whose decision was split. While its decision did not settle the land question, it acknowledged the existence of Aboriginal title and opened the door for other Aboriginal rights cases, paving the way for the federal government's comprehensive land claims process by which Indigenous groups could claim title to their territory (Salomons, 2009).

participation and shared decision-making in the sustainable management of natural resources, as well as a range of socio-economic benefits (Ayles, Porta, & Clarke, 2016; White, 2018). EIA processes emerged from the legally mandated requirement regarding the duty to consult and accommodate with Indigenous peoples when actions or decisions may affect their Aboriginal or Treaty rights. They engage with affected stakeholders, including Indigenous peoples, during the planning phase of major resource development projects to help identify potential economic, social and health impacts, and determine strategies to negate these impacts (Baker & Calder, 2019). While these processes have provided some opportunities for meaningful input into proposed resource development planning processes, often Indigenous peoples' voices are not heard and their concerns not addressed (Baker & Calder, 2019; Papillon & Rodon, 2017). These processes often lack meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and fail to consider cultural and social impacts of development, especially on Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people⁶ (Bond & Quinlan, 2018; Booth & Skelton, 2011a/b; Manning,

Nash, Levac, Stienstra, & Stinson, 2018; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Additionally, they have the potential to replicate colonial power imbalances (Booth & Skelton, 2011a; Dylan, Smallboy, & Lightman, 2013). It remains to be seen whether the federal government's 2019 overhaul of the environmental assessment system will rectify these deficiencies.⁷ IBAs are legally binding contractual agreements that seek Indigenous consent for projects, based on the principle that Indigenous peoples have inherent rights to their traditional territories, and act as a mechanism for establishing the legitimacy of resource extraction projects (Kielland, 2015; Papillon & Rodon, 2017). They aim to address potential negative impacts of resource development by providing an array of socio-economic, environmental and cultural benefits to Indigenous peoples in exchange for their support of the project; however, these benefits depend very much on the negotiating skills and capacities of individual Indigenous communities (Horowitz et al., 2018; Kielland, 2015; O'Faircheallaigh, 2016).

These instruments have provided Indigenous peoples with some levers to influence decision-making in land and resource development. Nevertheless, Indigenous rights and interests continue to be ignored, abrogated or subject to court challenges to force governments to honor terms of agreements and prevent continued encroachments by industries on lands important for Indigenous culture and livelihoods (Booth & Skelton, 2011b; Desbiens & Rivard, 2014). This has been due, in part, to ambiguity around the nature and scope of required consent, a reluctance on the part of governments to give Indigenous peoples the ability to control or veto decision-making processes, and their continued support for, and advancement of, non-Indigenous interests over those of Indigenous peoples (Colbourne, 2017; Newman, 2014; Panagos & Grant, 2013).

Many Indigenous communities have seen the emergence and dramatic growth of a diverse range of individual and community-based entrepreneurial and economic development activities since the early 2000s. This has been spurred, in part, by the approximately 260 Aboriginal

⁶ See for example the security and safety issues facing Indigenous girls and women resulting from an influx of mostly single male resource development workers highlighted in a recent CBC News article (Zingel, 2019).

⁷ In 2019, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (2012) was replaced with a new Impact Assessment Act that expands the focus of impact assessment beyond direct impacts to the natural environment to include both direct and indirect impacts to both humans and the environment. The new Act also provides for the use of Traditional knowledge in identifying these impacts.



Economic Development Corporations established across Canada to stimulate community-based entrepreneurship on reserve and in northern and remote regions (Conference Board of Canada, 2017). In 2015, Indigenous businesses on reserve were highly concentrated in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, construction, and retail trade. In Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, they were primarily concentrated in the arts, entertainment, recreation, and construction sectors, of which many were tied to major projects in the resources sector. The majority of Indigenous businesses were in urban centres; these were less concentrated in industry and more in construction or professional, scientific and

technical services (Conference Board of Canada, 2017). These economic activities often adopt a more comprehensive and holistic community-based approach to development that better aligns with Indigenous worldviews, values and needs⁸ (Bennett, Lemelin, Koster, & Budke, 2012; Curry, Donker, & Michel, 2016; Thompson, Kamal, Alam, & Wiebe, 2012). Among these values are respectful interactions with the natural world, reliance on family and kin, sharing and reciprocity, and a commitment to tradition, heritage and culture (Anderson et al., 2018; Beckford, Jacobs, Williams, & Nahdee, 2010; Kunkel, 2017; Thompson et al., 2011, 2012). The incorporation of Indigenous worldviews in economic

development activities is often reflected in efforts to strike a balance between environmental sustainability, social equity and economic prosperity (Beaudoin, 2012; Bennett et al., 2012; Curry et al., 2016).

The traditional subsistence economy also remains important in many Indigenous communities, especially in rural and remote areas where access to affordable healthy market foods is challenged by inadequate transportation infrastructure and small population size, and where formal economic opportunities may be more limited. According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS), 56% of Inuit, 35% of Métis and 33% of off-reserve First Nations participated in

⁸ In First Nations communities, this approach is based on the concept of ‘Minobimaatisiwin,’ a term used by Anishinabeg and Cree peoples that means the ‘good life’ or ‘continuous rebirth’, and embodies an “intimate understanding of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem, and the need to maintain that balance” (LaDuke, 1994, p. 128).

hunting, fishing and trapping activities in 2017 (Kumar, Furgal, Hutchinson, Roseborough, & Kootoo-Chiarelo, 2019). Hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping activities provide income in kind, including food, heat, and clothing (Kuokkanen, 2011). For some Indigenous individuals, these activities also provide supplemental cash income (Cooke & Murchie, 2015; Harris & Millerd, 2010; Turner & Cocksedge, 2008; Thompson et al., 2012). Indigenous individuals are more likely to supplement their income from these activities if they are unemployed, out of the labour force, or Inuit (Kumar et al., 2019). The “harvesting, processing, and distribution of wild foods and resources

continues to be a central component of Canada’s northern social economy” (Natcher, 2009, p. 85), contributing not only to self-sufficiency, but also to the transmission of the social values that are fundamental to the maintenance of vitality and cultural continuity in Indigenous communities.

The nature and type of economic development that occurs within Indigenous communities is shaped by the assets available locally and their diverse “cultures, histories, languages, and priorities for economic development, environmental protection and heritage preservation” (Horowitz et al., 2018, p. 410). These assets can include geographic proximity

to a major city, a resource, or an attractive tourist destination; economic stability; a skilled and knowledgeable workforce; and good transportation and community infrastructure, including housing, social, health, education, utilities, communication, and recreation infrastructure and amenities, among others (Coates, 2015). Whether and how Indigenous communities choose to engage in economic development is dependent on the values, needs and priorities of the communities themselves (Urquhart, 2010).

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Impacts of economic development on Indigenous peoples' health and well-being

Economic development can bring much needed improvement to socio-economic conditions in Indigenous communities, which can help mitigate the adverse health and social impacts associated with poverty (Dylan et al., 2013). However, it can also have negative outcomes depending on the type and nature of the development. The impacts of economic development on Indigenous peoples' health and well-being can be experienced across economic, social/cultural, and environmental domains. While the literature often focuses on the economic impacts, these other impacts are often overlooked, especially in relation to understanding the importance of the land for spiritual health (Booth & Skelton, 2011b). This section describes the diverse impacts of economic development on Indigenous health and well-being, from the perspective of both formal and informal economic development activities.



Economic impacts

Formal economic development activities can help alleviate poverty and reduce economic stress in Indigenous communities by increasing employment and income, reducing levels of social assistance, enhancing small and medium enterprise sector growth, diversifying the economy, and providing indirect employment opportunities (Dylan et al., 2013; Horowitz et al., 2018; Kadenic, 2015; Meerveld, 2016). These types of benefits can vary widely across communities and tend to be greater in communities that have negotiated benefit-sharing agreements or implemented collaborative decision-making approaches that allow benefits

to be distributed more equitably (Meerveld, 2016; Wilson, 2019). For example, communities that have negotiated IBAs have a substantially larger portion of their population engaged in meaningful, full-time labour, higher incomes, and corresponding increases to community well-being⁹ scores compared to communities without such an agreement (Meerveld, 2016). IBAs typically include provisions for local employment, training, and procurement opportunities that give preferential use of Indigenous contractors, services and hiring practices, as well as financial benefits such as royalties, profit shares, fixed cash amounts and equity interests that

⁹ The Community Well-being (CWB) Index measures poverty based on a composite of four components: education, labour force activity, income and housing (Indigenous Services Canada, 2019). In 2016, CWB scores were available for 623 First Nations and 50 Inuit communities.

By addressing poverty and unemployment, economic development has the potential to substantially improve health and well-being in Indigenous communities.



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can be invested in the community and used to promote sustainable development (Kielland, 2015). These provisions can contribute to greater economic stability, with impacts to community well-being over the long term.

By addressing poverty and unemployment, economic development has the potential to substantially improve health and well-being in Indigenous communities. The creation of jobs and training opportunities can give people something meaningful to do, enhance their self-esteem and give them hope for a better future, which can improve mental health and reduce the prevalence of addictions (Bennett et al., 2012; Dylan et al., 2013). Higher incomes can be used to purchase hunting and fishing equipment, supporting participation in traditional land-based harvesting activities (LeClerc & Keeling, 2015; Laneuville, 2013). This can promote a healthier lifestyle and increased access to healthier foods which, in turn, can help reduce the prevalence of obesity

and obesity-related illnesses like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, health issues that are especially of concern in First Nations and Métis communities (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018; Foulds, Shubair, & Warburton, 2013; Haman et al., 2010). Increased employment and income derived from these activities can also make it easier for individuals to better meet their daily needs and provide for their families, thus reducing some of the stressors that can lead to mental health issues (Czyzewski, Tester, Aaruaq, & Glangy, 2014; Kulchyski & Bernauer, 2014).

However, participating in formal economic development activities can also lead to poorer health outcomes. This can include increased work-related injuries, illnesses, or deaths (Jin, George, Brossoni, & Lalonde, 2014; Stokes, Marshall, & Veiga, 2019; Urquhart, 2010); as well as reproductive health impacts resulting from exposure to toxic environmental chemicals released from development

activities like mining (Balise et al., 2016; Carvalho Henriques, Loureiro, Fardilha, & Herdeiro, 2019; Ha et al., 2017; Karri, Schuhmacher, & Kumar, 2016). Resource development activities offer the potential for higher incomes, which can exacerbate existing drug and alcohol addictions, especially in rural, remote or isolated communities where mental health support services may be lacking, contributing to increased incidences of family violence, family breakdowns and sexual abuse (Bowes-Lyon, Richard, & McGee, 2009; Czyzewski et al., 2014). These types of impacts differentially affect the health of Indigenous girls and women, a population already experiencing high rates of domestic abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies (Brennan, 2011; Department of Justice, 2017; Gibson & Klinck, 2005; Shandro, Veiga, Shoveller, Scoble, & Koehoom, 2011; Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, 2013; Stokes et al., 2019). Employment in high paying, low skilled, jobs

can result in a brain drain from other sectors of the economy, placing strain on the provision of essential community health and social services, potentially delaying needed care (Parlee, 2015). These types of jobs can also serve as a disincentive to higher education, training and entrepreneurship, which can pose a barrier to community adaptation once the life of a development project ends (Parlee, 2015).

Economic benefits from resource development projects are not always evenly dispersed or as expansive as anticipated, which can exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities in Indigenous communities. Research has shown that resource development projects often fail to generate significant local development and investment, achieve hiring or training targets, or significantly improve socio-economic outcomes (Belayneh, Boutet, Rodon, & Schott, 2018a/b; Kadenic, 2015;

Rodon & Lévesque, 2015). Many Indigenous individuals face barriers in securing jobs with development projects, including lack of necessary skills and education, or lack of childcare (Czyzewski et al., 2014; Peterson, 2012; Rodon & Lévesque, 2015; Stokes et al., 2019). These barriers may worsen conditions of poverty, especially for women who are most often the primary caregivers of children (Kuokkanen, 2011; Meerveld, 2016; Sosa & Keenan, 2001). Indigenous workers are more often employed in lower-skilled, lower-paying, jobs and have fewer opportunities for promotion compared to non-Indigenous workers, which can cause resentment and lead to increased social tensions and anti-social behaviours, with negative impacts to community well-being (Czyzewski et al., 2014; Gibson & Klinck, 2005; Peterson, 2012).

Though more difficult to measure, traditional subsistence activities also have significant

economic value in Indigenous communities. For example, it is estimated that subsistence activities have a 'shadow value' of over \$10 million in the Qikiqtaaluk Region of Nunavut alone¹⁰ (Wenzel, 2013). Some initiatives that support participation in traditional subsistence activities have also generated tangible economic benefits such as the creation of employment opportunities. For example, the Nelson House Country Foods Program employs people to hunt and fish to help address food insecurity for members of the community most in need, and the Northern Healthy Food Initiative hires local staff for several gardening projects (Thompson et al., 2011). The subsistence economy is a key strategy in alleviating poverty and food insecurity, and promoting a healthy lifestyle, especially in northern and remote communities.

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¹⁰ Shadow value can be defined as the real economic price of activities, goods and services in the absence of a market price.



Social and cultural impacts

Current evidence shows that formal economic activities can bring about tremendous social change in Indigenous communities, with both positive and negative outcomes to health and well-being for individuals, families and communities. Indigenous peoples' increasing engagement in land claim agreements, agency in resource decision-making, and involvement in business development can contribute to increased autonomy and help build local capacity and social capital (Blais, 2014; O'Faircheallaigh, 2011; Samson, 2016; Samson & Cassell, 2013; Vining & Richards, 2016). While often intangible, these social impacts can help strengthen Indigenous communities by enhancing the ability to determine their own futures and better cope with the booms and busts of resource development activities (Parlee, 2015). However,

when Indigenous communities must constantly participate in time-consuming, frustrating and deeply divisive consultation processes, individuals may be left feeling powerless and fearful about the environmental impacts of resource development and their inability to effect changes to the level of these impacts (Booth & Skelton, 2011c).

Revenues and royalties from resource development activities can support a range of community social, health, education, and cultural initiatives that enhance individual and community wellness. These can include enhancements to community and transportation infrastructure, such as churches, recreational facilities, medical facilities, hotels, housing, shelters for street youth, airports, roads, and Elder residences; investments in local small businesses and scholarship programs; as well as development of programs

that support or enhance the maintenance of culture (Blais, 2014; O'Faircheallaigh, 2011; Orr et al., 2011; Rodon & Lévesque, 2015). They can also include cultural benefits that support the traditional economy and are critical to Indigenous identity and well-being, including "harvesters funding" programs that subsidize hunting, long-term leave for hunting and trapping seasons, and environmental considerations to safeguard the land that is so important to Indigenous identity (Dylan et al., 2013; Edwards & Kleer Townshend, 2012). When resource development projects lead to higher levels of education and income, better job prospects, and better housing, these can contribute to an increased sense of security and independence, help alleviate poverty, and mitigate the social issues that often accompany resource development projects (Meerveld, 2016). However, some research suggests that the social outcomes are more positive when revenues and royalties are distributed to, and administered by, the community rather than given directly to individuals (Guedel, 2014; Rodon & Lévesque, 2015). Additionally, the spin-off and multiplier effects from increased population growth, income growth, and demand for goods and services can lead to enhanced social and health services, indirectly leading to better health outcomes (Bennett et al., 2012; Horowitz et al., 2018; Kadenic, 2015).

Research has also shown that the dynamics of resource development activities can have significant negative social and cultural impacts. Resource development projects are typically characterized by “variable, short term wage work opportunities;” boom/ bust dynamics, large influxes of migrant workers, and rapid, large-scale changes to the landscape (Angell & Parkins, 2011, p. 68). This type of development can come with significant social and environment costs, with potential impacts to the health and well-being of individuals and communities. In times of boom, the influx of new workers, with different economic, social and cultural values, can affect the social cohesion of Indigenous communities, leading to further erosion of cultural identity and Indigenous languages (AREVA Resources Canada, Inc., 2011; Kadenic, 2015). The higher incomes that accompany these booms may not be enough to offset the rising cost of living resulting from an influx of new workers and the pressures they place on housing and services, driving individuals further into poverty (Horowitz, et al., 2018). The sustainability of nearby Indigenous communities may be threatened by fly-in-fly-out economic development projects, as individuals relocate to larger and less isolated regional centres, taking with them their technical skills, knowledge and expertise (Jourden, 2014, as cited in

Horowitz et al., 2018; Storey, 2010). The social impacts of resource development projects are particularly acute during bust phases of resource development when there are massive layoffs and corresponding financial difficulties (Stokes et al., 2019). They are also especially acute in regions where multiple industrial and resource development activities leave little land untenured, such as in the oil and gas rich region of northern BC (Gislason & Anderson, 2016). In these regions, the failure to consider cumulative impacts

on human health and in social and cultural domains treads “a slippery slope of human rights violations” (Booth & Skelton, 2011b, p. 698). Both boom and bust periods have been shown to bring stresses that have exacerbated existing mental health and social issues in some Indigenous communities, including addictions, gambling, and prostitution, with resulting health impacts (AREVA Resources Canada Inc., 2011; Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation, 2012; Voisey’s Bay Nickel Company Ltd., 1997).



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Economic development activities that adopt a community development approach, such as social enterprises or collectively owned Indigenous corporations, co-operatives, or other business ventures that are guided by Indigenous worldviews, have the potential to result in better socio-economic outcomes than externally-driven resource development projects. They better incorporate the community's values and address community needs and preferences regarding social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits (Curry et al., 2016; Tedmanson & Guerin, 2011; Vining & Richards, 2016). For example, Indigenous tourism and forestry projects can lead to the conservation of traditional sites, landscapes and resources; cultural rejuvenation; as well as local employment and training opportunities (Bennett et al., 2012). These types of activities also involve social networking and build social capital and trust, key ingredients needed to facilitate coordination and mutual benefits from other economic development activities to help diversify the economy and better cope with the cycles of resource development activities (Bennett et al., 2012; Côté, 2012; Parlee, 2015). By enhancing interdependence and independence, these types of enterprises also promote better mental health outcomes and social well-being (Tedmanson & Guerin, 2011).

The traditional subsistence economy promotes multiple social benefits, with impacts to Indigenous health and well-being. It provides an outlet for dealing with stress, fosters intergenerational relationships, promotes healing, boosts individual autonomy, and builds a vital sense of self-worth and cultural identity that is critical to individual and collective well-being (Angell & Parkins, 2011; Burgess, Johnston, Bowman, & Whitehead, 2005; Thompson et al., 2011). These connections between a strong cultural identity and Indigenous peoples' health and well-being have been well-established (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000; Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003). Traditional subsistence economies promote collective hunting and food sharing efforts, which contribute to self-sufficiency and food security for the most vulnerable segments of the economy (Angell & Parkins, 2011). They also play an 'integrating role', which helps build social trust and local capacity (Condon, Wenzel, & Condon, 1995; Thompson et al., 2011). These assets can be leveraged to facilitate cooperation on other types of economic activities that can lead to sustainable development and help mitigate some of the negative effects of resource development (Parlee, 2015).

Environmental impacts

Industrial and resource-based economic activities have had devastating impacts on the lands used to sustain Indigenous peoples and maintain their cultures, threatening the well-being of current and future generations (Booth & Skelton, 2011b). Because of the close relationship Indigenous peoples have to the land, they are particularly susceptible to negative health impacts resulting from threats to the ecosystem and wildlife diversity, environmental degradation, pollution, and chemical contamination of traditional food sources and water (Angell & Parkins, 2011; Laneville, 2013; Parlee, 2015). This has potential impacts not only to Indigenous peoples' physical health, but also spiritual health.

At present, research assessing the health outcomes of environmental impacts of resource development activities is sparse. While a number of studies have identified potential health issues arising from development activities, they often fail to show a verifiable causal relationship (Wiebe, 2016). Higher levels of toxic environmental contaminants have been found to be present in water, fish, wildlife and humans resulting from mining activities and hydro-electric power development (Angell & Parkins, 2011; Beckford et al., 2010; Castleden,

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et al., 2017; Di Renzo, et al., 2015; Leddy, 2013; Sandlos & Keeling, 2016); however, their outcomes in relation to Indigenous health remain largely unknown. Several studies have identified possible cancers, premature deaths, and immune system problems among First Nations resulting from the leakage of toxic chemicals from oil sands operations in northern Alberta (Huseman & Short, 2012; Kelly et al., 2009; Parlee, 2015; Urquhart, 2010). There is also a body of research showing that resource development activities have disrupted migration patterns and destroyed habitats of food sources considered important for Indigenous peoples' diets, such as caribou and berries, resulting in changes to their harvesting practices and food sources (Booth & Skelton, 2011b; Rodon & Lévesque, 2015; Sharp, Black, & Mitchell, 2016; Whyte, 2016). Any environmental threats to Indigenous food systems can affect food security and the quality of Indigenous peoples' diets, with potential

health consequences related to the prevalence of obesity-related chronic diseases.

Since the land is the foundation of Indigenous peoples' cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs, the environmental impacts of resource development can have devastating impacts to spiritual health. Many First Nations peoples have been deeply distressed by the impacts of resource development on the environment, leaving them questioning how they will be able to continue to exercise their Indigenous rights and sustain their cultures (Booth & Skelton, 2011b; Kunkel, 2017; Parlee, 2015). Kunkel (2017) provides a good example of the spiritual significance of the land to the Tsilhqot'in people in northern BC. She identifies numerous sites that are considered to be of cultural and spiritual significance to the Tsilhqot'in people that are threatened by Taseko Mine's proposal to develop a copper mine on their traditional

territories. These include sites considered important for their spirituality, rituals and for their healing powers; for maintaining ancestral connections through stories and kinship; for gathering medicinal plants and foods; and sites considered important for cultural artifacts and landmarks, for teaching the history and culture of a people, and for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. Degradation to or loss of these sites may lead to demoralization and despair (Boutet, Keeling & Sandlos, 2015; Kunkel, 2017; Scott, 2001). This vital connection between the land and Indigenous peoples' spiritual health is not well understood by industrial and resource development proponents, and is thus often absent from the planning of industrial extraction activities (Booth & Skelton, 2011b). In contrast, this connection is at the heart of the traditional subsistence economy and often a key consideration in community-driven LED and CED activities.

Barriers to economic development

Structural inequities and unique barriers can make it difficult for Indigenous communities to attract and facilitate economic growth. In northern regions, geographic isolation, challenging terrain and climatic conditions, exacerbated by climate change impacts on permafrost stability, can increase the costs of building and maintaining infrastructure (Centre for the North, 2014). Lack of or distance from markets, inadequate transportation networks and community infrastructure and services (such as housing, health care and education), and unresolved

land claims can make it difficult to attract investment and development opportunities on First Nations reserves and in northern and remote regions (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Coates, 2015; Stokes et al., 2019). Entrenched systemic disadvantage arising from the appropriation of Indigenous lands, disruption of Indigenous livelihoods, and colonial imposed regimes of governance can further constrain economic development opportunities for Indigenous communities (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010). This disadvantage has resulted in socio-economic barriers, such as low educational attainment, lack of work experience or driver's license, a lack of affordable

housing, and personal barriers resulting from the effects of intergenerational trauma, such as lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, alcohol addiction, depression and anxiety (Stokes et al., 2019). These barriers can make it challenging for individuals, especially youth, to take advantage of employment opportunities.

Additionally, government control over access to natural resources presents a significant barrier to the equitable distribution of economic benefits from resource development activities in Indigenous communities. Government policies and regulations effectively exclude many Indigenous peoples and





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communities from creating jobs and generating income from their own commercial resource extraction activities such as fishing, forestry, and the sale and distribution of wild meat (Capistrano & Charles, 2012; Thompson et al., 2011, 2012). For example, commercial fishing has increasingly become important as a source of income for First Nations since the decline of the fur trade; yet, every aspect of the fishing industry is regulated by government, including the imposition of quotas, restrictions on the mesh size of gill nets, the duration of the fishing season, who receives a fishing license, the number and type of fish caught, where the fish can be sold, where it must be processed, and how the food is inspected (Thompson et al., 2011, 2012). These types of restrictions and regulations make it challenging for individuals to make a decent living and ensure their livelihoods are sustainable.

Significant barriers also exist in developing and sustaining Indigenous entrepreneurship

and business development, including financial, structural, cultural and institutional barriers. These barriers vary by location of residence on or off reserve, in northern regions, or in urban centres. Indigenous entrepreneurs may face financial hurdles in starting-up, including lack of collateral, being a new high risk business, and having too much debt or a poor credit rating (Anderson, 2013; Conference Board of Canada, 2017). Structural challenges stemming from difficult socio-economic conditions, such as lower levels of education and employment, can result in deficits in the local workforce, including numeracy, literacy and problem solving in technology-rich environments (Conference Board of Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2015). Indigenous people may face cultural and institutional barriers that impede their ability to access capital and financial services, including linguistic differences, lack of trust in mainstream financial institutions, and lack of understanding of

the circumstances of business development in Indigenous communities by financial institutions (Ketilson, 2014; Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2003). Perceptions among non-Indigenous lending institutions and organizations that ‘western models’ of work and entrepreneurship are superior to Indigenous models, coupled with attitudes of paternalism, racism and stereotyping of Indigenous people, can work to give a structural advantage to the dominant culture while effectively disempowering Indigenous bodies (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010). These perceptions and behaviours can operate at policy, organizational and individual levels. First Nations living on-reserve face some unique challenges to business development, including provisions in the Indian Act and the First Nations Fiscal Management Act that limit the ability to raise revenue by collecting property taxes (Conference Board of Canada, 2017).

Facilitators of economic development

Much research interest has focused on identifying facilitators of economic development in Indigenous contexts. In these contexts, economic development can be considered successful if it facilitates more positive outcomes to health and well-being than harmful ones. Findings from this research reveal that successful economic development is about more than just profit-driven economic development, but about sustainable development and a focus on the needs of Indigenous communities over the long-term, including social, cultural, and environmental needs (Beaudoin, Bouthillier, Bulkan, Nelson, & Wyatt, 2015; Cornell & Kalt, 1990, 1998, 2000; Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010). This

section focuses on key facilitators of economic development in Indigenous communities identified from the literature.

Economic development in Indigenous communities requires a holistic approach that incorporates elements of culture, community healing, traditional practice and empowerment (Colton & Whitney-Squire, 2010; Curry et al., 2016). Economic development must strike a balance between environmental sustainability, social equity and economic prosperity (Kadenic, 2015; Nelson, 2019). It must be guided by traditional knowledge, worldviews, and values including sharing resources, caring for and respecting the environment and all living things, and self-reliance (Bennett et al., 2012; Beaudoin, 2012; Curry et al., 2016; Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2018). It must be based on principles

of social and environmental justice (Gislason & Andersen, 2016; Sandlos & Keeling, 2016; Wiebe, 2016; Whyte, 2016). Economic development must also be intertwined with self-determination, as Indigenous peoples must have equal power and control over their lands and resources (RCAP, 1996; Desbiens & Rivard, 2014; Hernandez, 2013; Mills, 2011; United Nations General Assembly, 2007).

To facilitate economic development in Indigenous communities, interventions are needed at multiple levels to reduce the many individual, structural and system barriers to formal economic development. This includes interventions that address the social, political, and cultural challenges facing Indigenous economic development, including: a skilled and positive

Economic development in Indigenous communities requires a holistic approach that incorporates elements of culture, community healing, traditional practice and empowerment

(Colton & Whitney-Squire, 2010; Curry et al., 2016).



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forward looking work force (Newhouse, 1999, as cited in Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010); access to capital, markets and management experience (Loizides & Wuttunee, 2005); legislative barriers contained in the Indian Act (Booth & Skelton, 2011a/d; Conference Board of Canada, 2017); government policies and restrictions that exclude Indigenous peoples and communities from creating jobs and generating income from their own commercial resource extraction activities (Thompson et al., 2011, 2012); and infrastructure deficits (Coates, 2015). It also requires interventions to reduce barriers to participating in traditional subsistence activities, including: providing wages for harvesting jobs, establishing funds that harvesters can access to purchase expensive equipment and supplies, and investing in badly needed marine infrastructure (small harbours and deep sea ports), food processing plants, and training centres; as well as programs to develop and transfer skills and knowledge around traditional harvesting activities (Qikiqtani Inuit Association, 2019).

In addition to the above facilitators, economic development in Indigenous communities requires some unique governance and management considerations. Governing institutions must be culturally appropriate and

perceived in the community as legitimate, based on effective governance mechanisms, strong leadership, strategic planning, a shared vision, and accountability and fairness (Bennett et al., 2012; Cornell & Kalt, 1998, 1990, 2000; National Centre for First Nations Governance, 2009; Graham & Bruhn, 2009; Wesley-Esquimaux & Calliou, 2010). Community politics must be separated from the business administration of development projects (First Peoples Group, 2009; Tulk, 2015). Engaging citizens early and at all stages of development projects can help ensure community buy-in (Bennett et al., 2012; Kadenic, 2015; Pearce, McLaughlin, McDonald, & Hguyen, 2010). Finally, while self-determination is critical in Indigenous economic development, a willingness to partner or collaborate with non-Indigenous peoples, based on a relationship of mutual respect and equality, can also facilitate successful development (Bennett et al., 2012).

Conclusion

While economic development has the potential to improve social and economic conditions in Indigenous communities, and to alleviate some of the negative health outcomes associated with poverty, too often little consideration is given to the long-term or cumulative social, cultural and environmental effects, leaving communities with little capacity to mitigate

these impacts (Rodon, Riva, & Blais, 2014; Rodon & Lévesque, 2015). Indigenous communities need a stable socio-economic future, based on principles of social equity, economic vitality and sustainability (Stokes et al., 2019). For this to occur, Indigenous voices must be heard in development decisions that occur within their traditional territories, and an enabling environment must exist that allows Indigenous peoples to engage in their own economic development activities, including those that strengthen the traditional subsistence economy. This requires that the numerous economic, social, and political barriers that impede economic development in Indigenous communities be addressed, including socio-economic marginalization, recognition and protection of Indigenous land rights, underfunding of economic development initiatives, lack of entrepreneurial skills and human capacity, Indian Act barriers to development on reserves, government regulations that restrict Indigenous peoples' access to and use of natural resources, failings in the Canadian and BC environmental assessment processes, and infrastructure deficits. Without these changes, the very survival of Indigenous peoples and their land-based culture will be at risk (Booth & Skelton, 2011a/d).

Resources

Best practices

Wesley-Esquimaux, C., & Calliou, B. (2010). *Best practices in Aboriginal community development: A literature review and wise practices approach*. The Banff Centre.

banffcentre.ca/sites/default/files/Lougheed%20Leadership/Research/Indigenous/2_Chapter_1.pdf

First Peoples Group. (2009). *Aboriginal economic development in Canada: Best practices, policies and strategies*.

firstpeoplesgroup.com/mnsiurban/PDF/economic_development/Aboriginal_Economic_Development_In_Canada.pdf

Success stories

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. (2016). *Success stories: Economic development*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1307014211008/1307014336701

Conference Board of Canada. (2008). *From vision to venture: An account of five successful Aboriginal businesses*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

conferenceboard.ca/temp/8ebad5b3-85b0-463a-b45c-647ca3003dc4/08-130VisionToVentureRPT.pdf

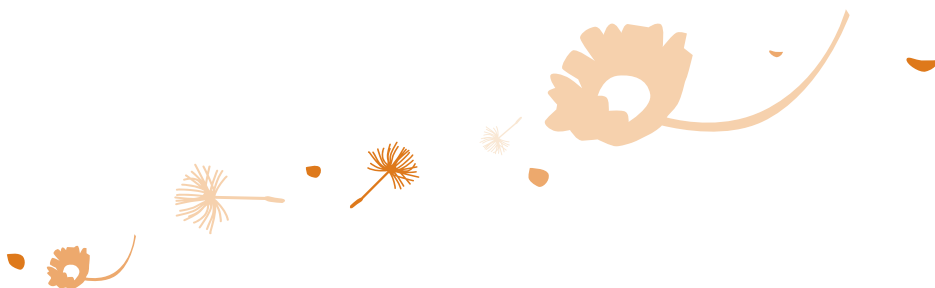
Toolkits

BC Assembly of First Nations. (2018). *Economic development toolkit for Indigenous communities*.

bcafn.ca/priority-areas/economic-development/blackbooks

Saskatchewan First Nations Economic Development Network (SFNEDN). (n.d.). *Toolkits*.

sfnedn.com/toolkits-2



Website resources

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2016). *Community and commerce: A survey of Aboriginal economic development corporations*. Toronto, ON: Author, in partnership with Environics Research Group.

nadf.org/upload/documents/community-and-commerce-final-report.pdf

Cando

A national Indigenous organization involved in community economic development. They facilitate partnerships with economic development officers, academics, Indigenous leaders, and senior corporate and government representatives, and provide skills and training for economic development officers working in Indigenous communities or organizations.

edo.ca

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development

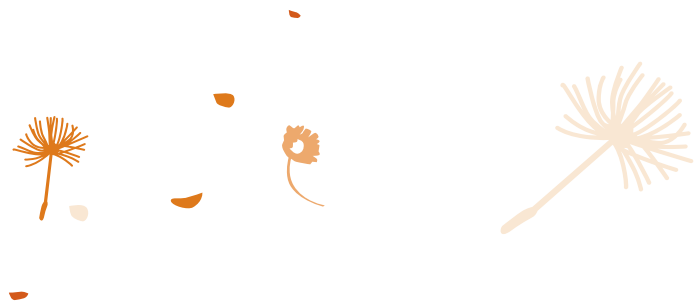
The website includes research and toolkits about what works, where and why in Indigenous social and economic development. While the context is development on American Indian reservations, the key findings and resources from this project are nevertheless useful across other Indigenous contexts.

hpaied.org/about

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

Delivers programs that facilitate the growth of Indigenous businesses, builds relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, and facilitates life-long learning for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

ccab.com



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