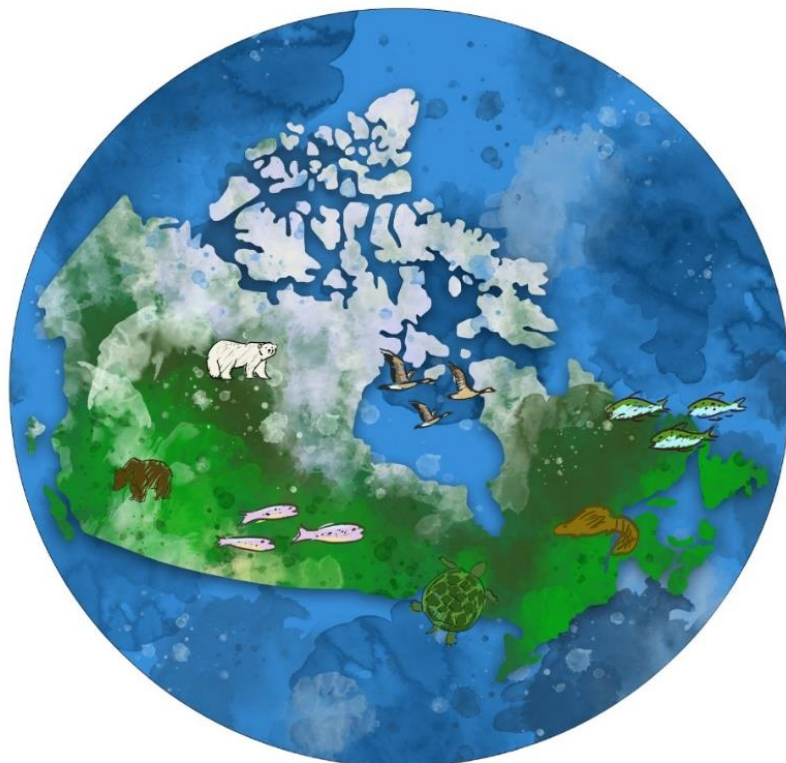# Intangible Impacts

More-than-mental health: Indigenous identity, culture, community and relationship with land are integral to Indigenous wellbeing

TRAINING MANUAL

Prepared by: Diana Lewis, Ph.D., Shannon James, B.Sc., Olivia Thom, Sasha Doxtator, B.A., Michaela Nahmahbin-Hiltz and Emily Beacock, Ph.D. (ABD)

June, 2021

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Dedication:

Sasha Doxtator

1981-2021

We miss you. We put this work out into the world in honour of your brilliant mind and your gentle heart, inspired by your fierce determination and with your sparkling laugh forever in our hearts.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to acknowledge the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada for providing the financial support for the preparation of this training manual and ArcGIS StoryMap.

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- Elder Barbara Dumont-Hill
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We also would like to acknowledge our artist Claire Brascoupé for the beautiful art, and Liz Sutherland for supporting our use of StoryMaps.

Disclaimer:
This ArcGIS StoryMap and Training Manual are intended to assist Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) staff and proponents to come to an understanding of what is perceived to be mental health impacts of major project development on Indigenous peoples in Canada. These tools should serve as reference only. The information presented in the ArcGIS StoryMap and Training Manual is intended to bring the users to a broader understanding of how impacts of major project development are perceived by Indigenous people and an understanding of how connection to place is central to Indigenous health, including mental health.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Daryl Redsky, Shoal Lake # 40 First Nation:

When you have been given the responsibility to look after the land, you do it with honour, you do it with pride. The land has been referred to as Mother Earth. And you would treat your mother the same way. You would look after her. (Government of Canada, 2017a, para. 2.3.4)

The mere presence of Indigenous people in these newly colonized lands blocked settler access to the land. To gain control of the land of Indigenous people, colonists negotiated Treaties, waged wars of extinction, eliminated traditional landholding practices, disrupted families, and imposed a political and spiritual order that came complete with new values and cultural practices.

The outcome was usually disastrous for Indigenous people…Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between the settlers and Indigenous peoples.

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 45)

In February 2020, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research held a "Best Brains Exchange" in Ottawa which brought together experts to discuss how to assess mental health impacts in impact assessment (IA) of major projects on specific subpopulations of interest: workers, Indigenous communities, racialized communities, women, 2SLGBTQQIA, people with disabilities, or youth. Subsequently, the IAAC issued a Call for Proposals to advance the discussions that were held in February, and to support the development of methodological guidance focused on mental health indicators in IA.

More-than-mental health: Indigenous Identity, Culture, Community and Relationship with Land are Integral to Indigenous Wellbeing is intended to provide methodological guidance and operational direction focused on mental health indicators in IA for major projects that impact Indigenous populations. Our team (Dr. Diana Lewis, and a team of undergraduate and graduate students with similar interests in IA) outline an approach to engagement, partnership, and support for the Indigenous-led development of indicators specific to the Indigenous community being impacted by a project.

***Indigenous** is the term used throughout this training manual as opposed to Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, or Indians. This paper intends to be consistent with the terminology of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021 and is now enshrined in Canadian law. The only time these terms - Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, or Indians - are used is when the terminology is used in the historical context of a direct quote, in legal terminology, or is in the name of legislation.*

We use ArcGIS StoryMap as an interactive training tool to teach you, as the reader, how to proceed to an understanding of what IAAC calls 'mental health indicators'. This training manual is intended to provide you with guidance as you proceed through the ArcGIS StoryMap and provides suggestions for supplementary reading to enhance your knowledge. Read along, and we will prompt you to when to start the ArcGIS StoryMap. The ArcGIS StoryMap will prompt you when to return to the manual.

As you proceed through the training module, we want you to understand that we are telling you a story. Without the context of the (his)story of Indigenous settler relations, you may not understand why 'mental health impacts' are a misnomer for what is happening when development impacts a community and how those impacts are perceived by Indigenous people. Impacts from major projects cannot be taken in isolation from the colonial history that Indigenous peoples have experienced in Canada and continue to experience today. The impacts of colonialism continue to manifest in Indigenous communities as a consequence of structural determinants of health - the historical, ideological, political, societal, and economic structures within which Indigenous people try to survive (Reading, 2018). These determinants contribute to ongoing health inequities because they target and harm Indigenous worldviews, spirituality, and self-determination (de Leeuw, Lindsay, & Greenwood, 2018).

Context

As will be repeated over and over, IA processes fail most Indigenous populations because Indigenous peoples do not see themselves, or their knowledges, reflected in the results that are generated from their participation in these processes; they worry that when they share their knowledges, their knowledges will be appropriated, misinterpreted, or misused (Baker & Westman, 2018; Booth & Skelton, 2011; Eckert et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2020a). The IAAC practitioner has to consider IK as more than points on a map, it is a value system, inseparable from those who hold it (Government of Canada, 2017a).

*If the IAAC is to truly achieve a **(w)holistic understanding of Indigenous mental health and well-being**, then the western framework under which IA proceeds needs to be flexible enough to assess the positive and negative effects of a project on Indigenous knowledge (IK) systems. This training module is a methodological guide for how to engage with IK as systems of knowledge. Only then will the deep, integral connections between place and Indigenous health, wellbeing and identity be accurately and meaningfully represented in impact assessment.*

The challenge for most practitioners is that when Indigenous peoples share how they are impacted from project development, their perspectives are filtered through a western frame of reference that is not able to capture Indigenous peoples' relational accountability, and the responsibilities and ethics that flow from a relational worldview. Environment as a 'thing' distinct from humans is a western construct that does not capture the concept of 'all of my relations' (McGregor, 2018b, p. 16). Let's look at how the *Canadian Environment Assessment Act* (2012) and *Impact Assessment Act* (2019) define the various terms that have been used for IK over the years.

*   **Relational accountability** is a way of expressing one's place in the universe, a worldview in which the individual is related in kinship to all living organisms and is in a relationship of respect for taking care of 'all our relations'; this interconnection among all living things is essential for life and must be honoured and respected (Wilson & Wilson, 1998, p. 157). The Mi'kmaw word for All my relations is Msit No'kmaq. Msit No'kmaq reflects the Mi'kmaw philosophy "that understand[s] life as a broad and complex process of the interconnectedness, an extensive web of relations to all animate and inanimate forms— people of all races, plants, animals, and everything in the natural world stem from one Mother; our Mother Earth" (Root, 2020, 5-6).*

The *Reference Guide Considering Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge in Environmental Assessment Conducted under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* defines Aboriginal traditional knowledge (ATK) as "knowledge about the local environment, how it functions, and its characteristic ecological relationships", a cumulative body of knowledge built up over

generations of living in close contact with nature, and part of a body of knowledge encompassing knowledge about cultural, environmental, economic, political and spiritual inter-relationships (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 1). "Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is often used interchangeably with ATK; for [impact assessment purposes] TEK can be considered a subset of ATK that is primarily concerned with the environment" (Government of Canada, 2016, p. 2). The challenge, however, is that the term 'traditional ecological knowledge' is a western construct for the acquisition of Aboriginal traditional knowledge, one that has only been in existence since the 1980s, and has become entrenched in environmental decision-making (McGregor, 2004). In a Eurocentric understanding, TEK is "the knowledge of Native people about their natural environment (McGregor, 2004, p. 393). In an Indigenous understanding, TEK is a way of life, the "cultural and spiritual ways in which Indigenous people relate to their ecosystems – it is the relationship – the people, the knowledge, and the land are an integrated whole, inseparable; one cannot be extracted from the other, therefore capturing any one aspect of IK is difficult (McGregor, 2004, 393-395). What McGregor (2004) argues, therefore, is that if TEK is seen as a subset of IK, then it too cannot be separated from the individual who holds it.

> Please read: McGregor, D. (2004). Coming full circle: Indigenous knowledge, environment, and our future. *American Indian Quarterly*, *28(3/4), 385-410.*

The *Impact Assessment Act*, 2019 defines IK as "the IK of the Indigenous peoples of Canada" (Impact Assessment Act of Canada, 2019, p. 6). The *Guidance on Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in Impact Assessment* section of the *Practitioner's Guide to Federal Impact Assessments Under the Impact Assessment Act* (Practitioners Guide) provides that the Government of Canada will accommodate issues of concern to Indigenous communities and will integrate IK into the decision-making process; the role of the Indigenous community may vary, for example, depending on the type and seriousness of potential or cumulative impacts on a community and rights (Government of Canada, 2021b). Section 3.6 of the Practitioner's Guide (Guidance: Indigenous Knowledge under the Impact Assessment Act: Procedures for Working with Indigenous Communities) emphasizes the inclusion of IK, "based in the worldview of an Indigenous people—First Nation, Inuit or Métis" (Government of Canada, 2021b, para. 4).

IK is a (w)holistic system embedded in the various cultures of different Indigenous peoples. For the purposes of assessment processes under the IAA, generally, IK is understood as a body of knowledge built up by a group of Indigenous people through generations of living in close contact with the land. IK is cumulative and dynamic. It builds upon the historic experiences of a people and adapts to social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political change. While the term "traditional knowledge" is often used interchangeably with IK, the IAA

uses the term IK in order to recognize that the **knowledge system** evolves and is not set in the past, as the word "traditional" may imply. (Government of Canada, 2021b, para 5).

IK "provide evidence and understanding related to the biophysical environment; to social, cultural, economic, and health issues; as well as to Indigenous governance, traditional laws, customs and use of resources" unique to each Indigenous community and in their own unique contexts (Government of Canada, 2021b, para 7-9).

> ***Indigenous knowledge systems*** *reflect the diverse cultural and spiritual based way that Indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems. These systems of knowledge are embedded within Indigenous societies, are governed through social, political, economic, and spiritual institutions, and include the norms for who is considered an expert and what and how IK is shared (McGregor, 2018a).*
>
> *You may see Indigenous knowledge systems referred to as **Indigenous traditional knowledge** (ITK), **traditional ecological knowledge** (TEK), or as in this manual, **Indigenous knowledge** (IK). These terms are used interchangeably, however they can sometimes limit Indigenous knowledge to the past (ITK) or to only ecological issues (in TEK). It is integral that IK is considered to be (w)holistic, and comprehensive.*

The training module will be a methodological guide for how to engage with IK as **systems of knowledge,** to get to an understanding of what is happening when major projects have the potential to disrupt Indigenous people's connection to place. The basis of the methodological guidance is that what is being proposed here is not an 'Indigenizing' of the current IA methodological approach, but rather operational guidance to develop distinct frameworks to reflect the many distinct and diverse worldviews of Indigenous peoples across Canada. The guidance will further demonstrate how this knowledge can be respectfully shared in environmental assessment documentation.

Through an heuristic process of centering Indigenous perspectives of how a community may experience impacts of being displaced and dispossessed of their connection to their lands and environment, **we have developed a methodological approach that can reflect what western epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies miss** when assessing mental health impacts, one which can be adapted to the diverse and distinct local contexts in which a project is being proposed, guided by the worldview of the local Indigenous group, and in their own language.

The research team have developed methodological guidance to understand why impacts from major project development manifest as mental impacts such as, for example, stress, worry, or anxiety. Any development that impacts place impacts IK. But trying to present IK through western constructs in impact assessment is enacting, what Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) term 'epistemic violence', when someone attempts to fit the interpretation of IK into western interpretive models (p. 96).

> *We hope that you will come to understand through this training module that Indigenous peoples are harmed when they cannot engage in their knowledge systems or when development renders their knowledge systems less meaningful.*

This methodological guidance has been developed based on the principle that Indigenous people are already sharing what it means to not be able to engage in their knowledge systems, or what it means when connection to place disrupts their knowledge systems. The stories that are shared, however, are seemingly not understood. Booth and Skelton (2011), share a story of an Elder saying, "[t]hey spoil our fishing…You really kill the moose…You get the hell out of here…" (p. 53). The Elder is not concerned about the fish or the moose in a 'goods and services' context; they are sharing their concern for what the lack of access to fish and moose will mean for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, or what it means to the practice of language, spirituality and ceremonies. They are exhausted, "tired of expressing the same concerns and telling the same stories, which seem to have no effect on the course of development" (Baker & Westman, 2018, p. 3).

To address the challenges that Indigenous communities have expressed (incompatibility of worldviews, exhaustion), this methodological guidance is intended to build the capacity within the IAAC to engage in a more effective manner with Indigenous communities.

> *The Preamble of IAAC 2019 states the following:*
>
> *Whereas the Government of Canada is committed, in the course of exercising its powers and performing its duties and functions in relation to impact, regional and strategic assessments, to ensuring respect for the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and to fostering reconciliation and working in partnership with them.*

As McGregor (2018b) notes, "[r]econciliation as conceptualized ontologically by Indigenous peoples (as distinct from state-conceived and –sponsored frameworks) requires reconciliation beyond the human dimension to include 'relationships with the Earth and all living beings'" (p. 9). The context is there, but the methodological guidance for how to operationalize reconciliation in respect to the protection of IK is needed.

At this point, we ask you to start the StoryMap (if you haven't already). Find it at: https://indigenousimpacts.uwo.ca

Chapter 2: More-than-mental health

In Chapter 1, we note that when Indigenous peoples share how they are impacted, their perspectives are filtered through a western frame of reference that is not able to capture Indigenous peoples' relational worldview. This chapter intends to make this statement more explicit. The *Expert Panel Report Building Common Ground: A New Vision for Impact Assessment in Canada* reflects some of the issues Indigenous peoples face: they feel their IK is misunderstood and marginalized, or it is confused with traditional land use, and that there is a lack of guidance in how to collect and integrate IK in assessment processes (Government of Canada, 2017a). In Indigenous worldviews, "the physical geography (soil, earth, mountains, rivers, non-organic matter) are animate and powerful, constitutive of human life…non-subordinated to humans and human (or social) systems" (de Leeuw, 2018, p. 193).

In recent years, Indigenous researchers are using an 'heuristic approach' (Berbés-Blázquez et al. 2014) "as a translative tool for the purpose of illustrating what has been missed in non-Indigenous approaches to interpreting the impacts of **land displacement** and **environmental dispossession** on Indigenous peoples", when the western constructs are insufficient to help contextualize complex socio-ecological interactions for the non-Indigenous reader (Lewis et al., 2020a, p. 5). We use the western term 'ontology' to help explain this. Ontology is defined as ways of being, the nature of reality (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). For Indigenous peoples, the ways of being are in relation to something else, whether it be animate, inanimate, spiritual (Wilson, 2008), and ways of being are unique to each group.

> *Land displacement* can be characterized by environmental contamination or resource extraction that results in a physical separation from use of the land, or from disputes over land usage (Tobias & Richmond, 2014).
>
> *Environmental dispossession* is the process in which Indigenous people's cultural connections between land and resources is compromised such that environmental dispossession and loss of cultural identity undermines health (Richmond & Ross, 2009; Tobias & Richmond, 2014).

For example, the Mi'kmaw word for nature, the place of creation, is *kisu'lt melkiko'tin*, meaning an "ecological order or vantage point from which [the Mi'kmaw people] construct

their worldview, language, knowledge and order" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 257), illustrating the importance of connection to place. It is the basis of Mi'kmaw epistemology (Lewis et al., 2020a). Creation stories are the "ontological and epistemological frameworks", the theoretical frameworks from which everything can be explained, taught, and experienced - they hold an Indigenous understanding of ethics, relationships, responsibilities (Simpson, 2011, p. 40). IA processes fail most Indigenous populations because they do not see their 'ontologies and epistemologies' reflected in results that are generated from their participation in these processes.

CREATION STORIES

Here are the links to several Creation Stories for you to listen to. Each of these Creation Stories will highlight the importance of place and the interconnected relationships. Each Creation Story contains teachings, norms, values, and ethics, and the principles "such as respect, coexistence, cooperation, honor, thanksgiving, reciprocity, balance and harmony, and recognition of interrelationships among all of Creation are still very relevant and needed in contemporary times" (McGregor, 2004, p. 389).

- *Haudenosaunee Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSzDM7Jmg94*

- *Cree Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn0zJ1QH2Zc*

- *Mi'kmaq Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCVIUYlD3qs*

- *Ojibway Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etn92Ms8plo*

- *Haida Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxA1W7XiteY*

- *Inuit Creation Story - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ARA73hfIsA*

Indigenous worldview

In the following section, we describe several Indigenous worldviews and case studies of the failure of Western impact assessment for Indigenous communities. Each example highlights the importance of place and the interconnected relationships. The worldview examples are meant to illustrate how nations are guided by their own knowledge systems. Prior to colonial settlement, Indigenous societies were self-governing through social, political, economic, and spiritual institutions that continue to inform life today and the way that nations relate to their ancestral lands (Daigle, 2016); these place-based relational ontologies and lived practices can guide us as we think about place, land, and Indigenous responsibility. We must note that these descriptions draw from published accounts of Indigenous worldviews and are provided here simply as snapshots; we cannot capture the entirety, nuance and diversity of worldviews in a couple of paragraphs. The case studies are meant to illustrate the impacts to community when

development fails to properly assess and address community concerns and worldviews and prevent impacts to communities.

Mino-mnaamodzawin (Living well with the world)

Mino-mnaamodzawin or "living well with the world" is the "mutually respectful and beneficial relationship that Anishnabek have with 'all of our relations', all living and non-living entities, living in balance on respectful and reciprocal terms with all of Creation on multiple planes (spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical) and scales (family, clan, nation, and universe)" (McGregor, 2018b, p. 10). Land is the living entity providing the underpinning and interconnectedness of all of life and Anishnabek law provides the guidance (theoretical and practical) to how this is accomplished, what is appropriate and what is forbidden (McGregor, 2018b, pp. 14-15). How to prevent an environmental impact then is to consider how relations between, and responsibilities and obligations to, all of Creation will be impacted. "All beings have the potential to realize *mino- mnaamodzawin*" (McGregor, 2018b, p. 19).

Stories hold insight. For example, in the ancient migration story of the Anishinaabe, as ancestors moved from the Atlantic coastal region to the Great Lakes, one of the stopping points was where food grew on water (*manoomin* - good berry/wild rice). The birds showed people that they could eat the berry and showed them the places berries grew best. Wild rice feeds humans, animals, birds, provides cover for fish and birds, supplies materials for muskrat lodges, and supports clean water. Protocols of sharing and respecting were developed to protect the web of life, and special responsibilities were delegated to women and specific clans to guide harvesting and habitat protection. The people created ceremonies to honour the wild rice. This story reveals several things: migration story, adapting to new environments, respect for interrelationships, and the development of responsibilities and obligations. And settlement and development have the potential to inflict harms – to the interrelationships, to the moral obligations, to the responsibilities for the Anishinaabe people (Whyte, 2018).

The law of awawanenitakik

In this example, Daigle (2016) turns to her own experience of living self-determination through the law of *awawanenitakik* as Omushkegowuk Cree from Achikamaw (Constance Lake First Nation), in the Treaty 9 territory, "by actively upholding our responsibilities to our ancestral lands by engaging in place-based customs such as learning and speaking Omushkego, the Cree language, taking part in our annual ceremonies, and harvesting and sharing our local foods" (p. 261). *Awawanenitakik* can be translated as the importance of living an Omushkegowuk Cree way of life by acting according to our ancestors' ontologies and the values and everyday actions that arise from such worldviews (Daigle, 2016, p. 265). The way of life includes kinship relations and the relations with the natural and spirit worlds to uphold the law of *awawanenitakik*. Land is central to these laws – it is an animate being, a relative, a provider, and a teacher (Daigle, 2016, p. 266). Continual practice cultivates ontologies, and the transmission of ontological and legal orders is learned through ceremony about the intimate relationships one builds with the land.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) - Inuit worldview

IQ is more than a philosophy. It is an ethical framework and a detailed plan for having a good life. It is a way of thinking and living in respectful relationships with all things, as if they were living things, whether they be animate or inanimate, including the air, land, and water, and seasonal change – these are not objects for the benefit of human. There are four cultural laws or *maligarjuat,* ethical principles and commitments: working for the common good and not personal gain, living and being in respectful relationships with all living things, maintaining harmony and balance, and planning and preparing for the future. Not living according to these laws puts everyone in danger. *Piqujarjuat* are the instructions to be followed. Technological innovation challenges these laws as technologies can have serious environmental consequences; ancestors have laid out these laws as they know them to be true. Mining, for example, means a loss of harmony and balance; it leaves a negative impact on the world. Resource development has serious consequences for the Inuit as it disrupts the laws that have protected the Inuit for millennia. Inuit believe that living well does not leave a footprint on earth. For Inuit, social well-being comes about as a result of living these laws. (Source: Karetak et al. 2017).

As impact assessment works only from a Western worldview, Indigenous worldviews, like those described above, are not represented. This can have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of communities, including their mental health. The following case studies describe how two communities, Pictou Landing First Nation (PLFN) and Akwesasne faced significant health and wellbeing impacts when their worldviews were not addressed in impact assessment.

## Case Study: The Mi'kmaw community of Pictou Landing First Nation

The following example encapsulates Mi'kmaw worldview, epistemology, and ontology, which is articulated through the Mi'kmaw language (Lewis et al., 2020a). PLFN is a community in Nova Scotia that has been impacted by the dumping of 85 million litres of pulp and paper mill effluent every day for over 50 years into a tidal estuary bordering their community. The body of water was culturally significant to PLFN; they called it A'se'k, which translates to 'the other room' in the Mi'kmaw language (Lewis et al., 2020a). In a recent study conducted at the request of the community, researchers collected oral histories from the Knowledge Holders.

One story was told over and over by the Knowledge Holders. When the effluent started to flow into the body of water, community members went down to the shores and watched helplessly as the fish started to die. Recalling this memory seemingly triggered painful memories, as Knowledge Holders tearfully shared their stories almost fifty years later. Lewis et al. (2020a) developed a conceptual framework for Mi'kmaw ontology and epistemology (See Figure 1) to understand this memory, so that the relational worldview conveyed in the story about this fish could be illustrated, and the relationship to healthy lands and water could be conveyed.

We previously explained the significance of the term *kisu'lt melkiko'tin*. Here are a few more concepts you need to understand. *Weji-sqalia'timk* translates to "where we sprouted or emerged from" and expresses the Mi'kmaw understanding of the origin of its people as rooted in the landscape and nowhere else: [Mi'kmaq] cultural memory resides in the landscape (Sable

et al., 2012). Landscape is integral to the cultural and spiritual psyche of the Mi'kmaq, to their language, to their social order, and to their way of being (Sable, et al., 2012; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). *Tlilnuo'lti'k* reflects Mi'kmaw ontology and translates in several ways. It means "how we maintain our consciousness" (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 35), 'how we will be Mi'kmaq' or 'how the Mi'kmaq will maintain their worldview' (Sable et al., 2012; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). *Netukulimk* embodies relational accountability, a value system or a set of rules and obligations that reflect the cultural norms for being on the land (Prosper et al., 2011).
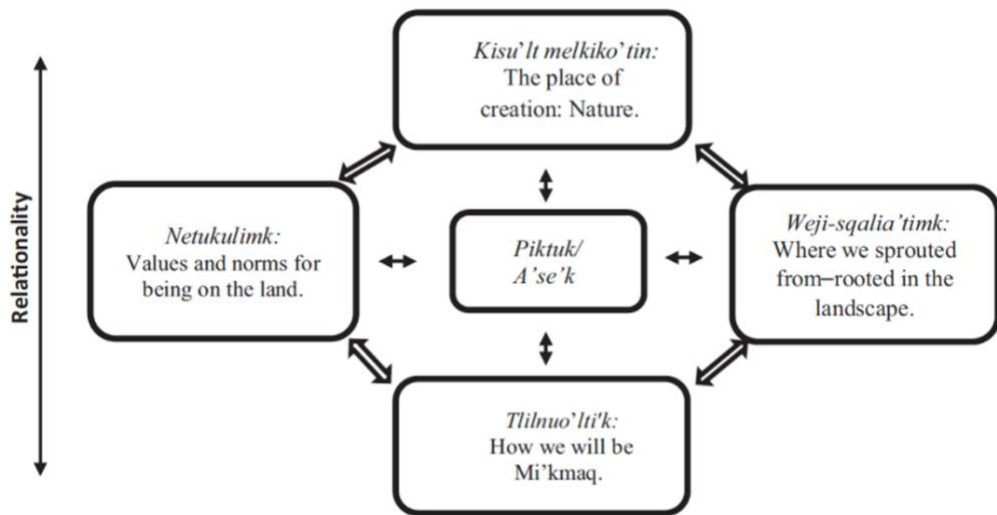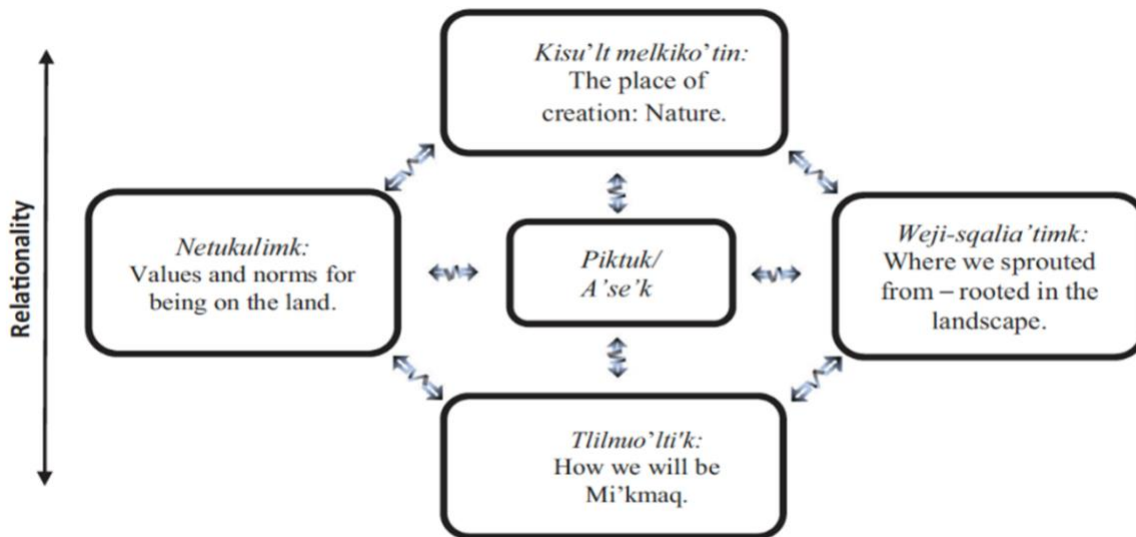

FIGURE 1: HEALTH ENHANCING CONNECTION TO PLACE (SOURCE: LEWIS, 2018; LEWIS ET AL., 2020A)

Once the effluent started to flow, the community was no longer able to fulfill their relational obligations to the fish - 'all their relations', and the healthy connection to the land and water could no longer be sustained. Figure 2 reflects that disruption in connections.

FIGURE 2: HEALTH DISRUPTING CONNECTION TO PLACE (SOURCE: LEWIS, 2018; LEWIS ET AL., 2020A)

Knowledge holders worried what losing their cultural connection to A'se'k meant, and what implications this would have for language, cultural practices, spirituality, and traditions, all important to the overall health and wellbeing of PLFN (Lewis et al, 2020a). So, drawing on the wisdom of the Knowledge Holders in the community, and the heuristics literature as a translative tool to illustrate what the western-centric approach misses in interpreting impacts of land displacement and environmental dispossession on Indigenous peoples, Lewis et al. (2020a) were able to privilege concepts in the Mi'kmaw language, to get to a more appropriate analysis of the impacts the Knowledge Holders were experiencing, and to produce results where the Knowledge Holders finally saw the outcomes as relevant to their lived experiences.

Further, PLFN community members became afraid of how the contaminants might affect their medicines, berries, and other foods they accessed around A'se'k, so Lewis et al. (2020b) asked them if they were afraid of the air, land, and waters surrounding their community.

Table 1
Fear of Environment and Health Outcomes (Source: Adapted from Lewis et al., 2020b).

Measure	Health Rating Good to Excellent		Depressed		Happy		Spirituality Important	
	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)
Environment								
No	12	88	*37	*63	12	88	33	67
Neither	50	50	*50	*50	9	91	25	75
Yes	55	45	*16	*84	15	85	15	85

***p< 0.001; **p <0.01; *p < 0.05
Note: Source: EHS, 2014
Note: NA/DK/Ref/Missing are suppressed.
n = 126

The results in Table 1 demonstrate that the impacts of being fearful are not experienced uniformly across the four dimensions of Indigenous health (see NAHO definition of health on page 25) and are especially experienced as impacts to mental health. According to the data (see Lewis et al., 2020b) 88% of participants report good to excellent physical health when they are not fearful of their environment, yet only 45% report good to excellent physical health when they are fearful. 84% are depressed when fearful compared to only 63% when they are not fearful. Being fearful of the environment seemingly does not affect happiness, but this could be considered a coping strategy. Finally, spirituality is more important (85%) to those who are fearful of their environment than to those who are not (67%).

Case Study: Conveying impacts of industrial development on the Akwesasne Mohawk community

As described in Arquette (2002), industrial development around the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne has impacted the community beginning in the 1950s, endangering the traditional uses of the land, cultural practices, and subsistence lifestyles. Potential exposures to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) was a concern to the community. A toxicologist, invited to speak to the community, applauded residents, including women of childbearing age, for changing their traditional practices to virtually eliminate fish and wildlife from their diet in order to protect their health, not understanding that the loss of the opportunity to fish or hunt was perceived as a negative impact. Further, a change from a traditional diet often leads to an increase in consumption of foods that are less nutritious and high in calories, resulting in health impacts such as type II diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer, and obesity. Moreover, fear of pollutants on traditional medicines that a community is dependent on to heal has significant impacts on communities that are medically underserved. Akwesasne presentations about the social, cultural, and health effects that members were experiencing as a result of contamination were misunderstood, met with resistance or called 'nice stories', and even met with eye-rolling by those 'experts' who heard them (Arquette, 2002).

Although this case is almost twenty years old, this is often the experience of many communities. You can read Booth and Skelton (2011) and Baker and Westman (2018) to know that communities continue to express their concerns about impacts on intergenerational transfer of knowledge and are exhausted from sharing the same stories that seemingly have no effect on the course of development.

How to put Indigenous paradigms into perspective

Indigenous peoples learn their norms, values, and ethics by being on the land and pursuing traditional activities; any reduction in being on the land and engaging in traditional activities alters Indigenous peoples' ability to convey their cultural norms, values, obligations, and knowledge through subsequent generations (Lewis et al., 2020a, p. 72). The example of PLFN noted above is a good example to illustrate how health is impacted when people become afraid of their environment. Activities such as harvesting and gathering are not only functional in terms of providing sustenance, but are activities that meet many Indigenous peoples' physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs (Wilson, 2003).

Think about this: **Indigenous peoples are not meant to be afraid of their environment.** Yet *in PLFN, people are, and it affects their overall health as understood from an Indigenous perspective. Participants reported worse physical and mental health outcomes when they reported they were afraid (Lewis et al., 2020b).*

The cumulative impacts of Canada's colonial history and the ongoing impacts on the land have further displaced and disconnected Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories. Cajete (2000) uses the term 'ensoulment' to capture the deep metaphysical and psychological attachment to the land. Any disconnection of that attachment leaves a community and its members wounded (Duran & Duran, 2000). The mental health impacts from the cumulative legacy of being exploited, marginalised, disenfranchised from lands, and having ones' culture attacked must be understood in this colonial context (Bombay (2015).

Turn to the StoryMap now to learn more about traditional territories and to hear an Elder speak about the impacts of reserves and the pass system on Indigenous communities.

Chapter 3: What rights are relevant to know when working with Indigenous peoples in Canada?

Indigenous peoples have constitutional rights

Indigenous peoples have rights beyond state-sanctioned rights, rights that are embedded in place and that flow from the land, the Creator, and the spiritual realm and convey our relationships for and responsibilities to each other, the natural world, our ancestors, the spirit world and to future generations (McGregor, 2018b, p. 14).

Section 25 of the Constitution Act, 1982 states that:

The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including

(a)   any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and

(b)   any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 states that:

(1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

(2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

Who is defined as Aboriginal by the Constitution Act, 1982?

- Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada
- Indian as defined in the *Indian Act* is "a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian" (Indian Act, 1985);
- Inuit is defined by the Government of Canada (2020a) as the Indigenous peoples of the Arctic;
- The Métis National Council defines Métis to mean a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation (Métis National Council, 2021).

The *Impact Assessment Act, 2019*, defines Indigenous peoples of Canada to have the same meaning assigned by the definition aboriginal peoples of Canada in subsection 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Important terms and definitions: rights and title

Aboriginal Right	An Aboriginal right is an inherent collective right that flows from the continued use and occupation of the land and predates European settlement, that is, they are rights that have not been granted by an external source.
Treaty Right	Treaty rights are those that flow from promises (written and oral) made in historic and modern-day treaties, or land claim agreements.
Aboriginal Title	Aboriginal title is a pre-existing (inherent) collective Aboriginal right over ancestral lands. If treaties have not been negotiated that specifically deal with land, the Indigenous group continues to assert their Aboriginal title to their ancestral territory.

> Turn to the StoryMap now to see the patchwork of treaties covering what is now known as Canada.

Indigenous peoples have treaty rights

When you go into Indigenous communities, make sure you know the history of treaties – the promises made, the promises broken. This section is not meant to be exhaustive; it is only meant to illustrate how promises made in the past continue to have relevance today. Indigenous peoples in Canada are aware of these issues and this impacts the relationship you are trying to establish.

Peace and Friendship Treaties – Atlantic Canada

In the Supreme Court of Canada case, *R. v. Marshall*, [1999] 3 S.C.R. 456, signatories to the Treaty of 1752 were recognized to have a treaty right to a moderate livelihood from the fishery. That was twenty-two years ago. The federal Crown has failed to recognize that decision. Tired of the lack of action, Sipekne'katik First Nation launched a moderate livelihood fishery in the fall of 2020. This conflict has played out in the media since, and it continues to reverberate today. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is holding Canada to account on failing to protect the Mi'kmaw fishers from the violence that erupted when they attempted to implement their treaty right. Sipekne'katik is the same community that is protecting their rights in the Alton Gas Project case study.

Upper Canada Treaties – Ontario

In 1850, the Robinson Huron and Robinson Superior Treaties were signed by Canada. In the treaties, Canada agreed that the signatories would benefit from an escalator clause that would result in higher annuity payments, should revenue from resources extracted in the territory increase. The escalator clause was never honoured. Currently, the Ontario government is challenging their own Court's decision that the signatories are entitled to an increase in annuities from the time the treaties were signed until today. The treaties cover a wide area north of Lakes Huron and Superior, an area of significant development.

Numbered Treaties (1871-1921)

Treaty 1 (Stone Fort Treaty) and **Treaty 2** (Manitoba Post Treaty) 1871:

Oral promises included assurances to be free to continue to hunt (Miller, 2009, pp 164-165). Oral history and speech records reflect that it is unlikely that the Cree and Saulteaux agreed to surrender their traditional territory, rather they agreed to share. Reserved lands would be for the exclusive use of the Indians and the Chiefs would select them. Remaining lands would remain under joint jurisdiction of Indians and Crown and farmlands would be set aside

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for settlers. At no point was there discussion of the ceding or surrendering of lands (Krasowski, 2019, p. 73).

Treaty 3 (Northwest Angle Treaty) 1873:

Treaty text reflects guaranteed hunting and fishing rights throughout the tract surrendered subject to regulations. Oral promises reflected assurances to be free to continue to hunt (Miller, 2009, pp 168-173).

Treaty 5 (Lake Winnipeg Treaty) 1875:

 Promise to hunt and fish subject to regulation. Oral version does not include hunting and fishing subject to restrictions (Miller, 2009, pp 174-175).

Treaty 7 1877

Oral history recalls a treaty of peace and friendship, not a land surrender. (Krasowski, 2019, p. 266-267; Miller, 2009, pp 181-183).

Treaty 9 1905

Oral promise that hunting and fishing rights would not be interfered with; written version not as generous (Miller, 2009, pp 209-213).

Treaty 11 1921

More twine and net provided under this treaty than any other seemingly supports oral history that hunting, trapping and fishing would not be interfered with; written version reflects hunting, trapping, and fishing subject to regulation (Miller, 2009, pp 218-221).

For more information on treaties:

The Government of Canada (2020b) has a website that provides lots of information on treaties and modern-day land claim agreements: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231#chp3*).*

You can read the actual treaty texts here: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1370373165583/1581292088522*.*

Library and Archives Canada also provide an Aboriginal Documentary Heritage of Treaties, Surrenders, and Agreements (see https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aboriginal-heritage/020016-3001-e.html*).*

Krasowski, S. (2019). No surrender: The land remains Indigenous. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.

Miller, J.R. (2009). Compact, contract, covenant: Aboriginal treaty-making in Canada. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press

International rights

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021 and is now enshrined in Canadian law.

The Preamble of UNDRIP states: Recognizing and reaffirming that Indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that Indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples,

Article 7: Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

Article 21 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 24: Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.

Indigenous individuals have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. States shall take the necessary steps with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of this right.

Article 29: (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

(3) States shall also take effective measures to ensure, as needed, that programmes for monitoring, maintaining and restoring the health of indigenous peoples, as developed and implemented by the peoples affected by such materials, are duly implemented.

To see the full UNDRIP text, visit:

https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Chapter 4: What are the key take-ways?

We preface this chapter with the following:

In an Indigenous-led process for the development of indicators, indicators will reflect the unique and local experiences of Indigenous communities who are participating in impact assessment processes. But Indigenous sovereignty over information must be respected, as Indigenous communities are distrustful of sharing their information with government, fearing that the information they share will be used negatively against them (Dewar, 2019). By now, we hope that you understand that there is no one indicator for mental health impacts that Indigenous peoples experience when confronted with major project development. Indicators should reflect the impacts of the colonial experience that Indigenous people have endured, ensure the protection of the rights that Indigenous people hold that no other Canadian holds, and encompass the epistemic and ontological foundations that ground Indigenous peoples in place. The use of indicators to quantify impacts in a western context is seen as an objective and neutral way to measure (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2015); in an Indigenous context, Indigenous peoples have come to be wary of the Western ontological base that underpins an analysis of what indicators reveal (Walter & Andersen, 2013).

Understanding that mental health is about balance

When you get to this point in the training module, it may seem as if we have only focused on the impacts of development on IK. Or it may seem that we are focused on overall health and not just mental health and wellbeing. But this is not the case. We hope that we have told a story to bring you to an understanding of what being '**mentally well**' means for Indigenous peoples.

Let's recap how the definition of Indigenous health has come to be understood.

- In 2007, the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) defined Aboriginal health as "the balance among the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms, as well as the environment, culture, family, and community, and that First Nation well-being flows from balance and harmony among all these elements of personal and collective life" (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007, p.1).
- Further, as a colonial state, we need to consider 'distal' determinants of health, determinants that reflect the political, social and economic reality within which Indigenous people survive in Canada (McCormick et al., 1997; Reading and Wien, 2009).
- Reading (2018) focuses on the oppressive colonial structural determinants, the historical, ideological, political, societal, and economic structures within which Indigenous people try

to survive, as contributing to the ongoing health inequities. Reading argues that there are the deeply embedded health determinants at the structural (distal) level (Indigenous worldviews, spirituality, self-determination) that have been, and continue to be, harmed by these colonial structures (Reading, 2015).

> *Mental health is intimately interconnected with physical, emotional and spiritual health (Castellano, 2018; Reading, (2018) as well as the health of the environment (air, land, and water), culture, family, and community; well-being flows from balance and harmony among all these elements of personal and collective life. When one of these aspects is out of balance, all will be out of balance. We are not talking about developing indicators to measure anxiety or depression; we are talking about what protecting IK means for the overall health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada, when all is in balance.*

To emphasize this point one final time, in a western worldview, land is seen "as a parcel of space, devoid of meaning"; Indigenous people see "land as intricately linked with the practice of everyday living, including the acquisition and sharing of Indigenous knowledges" (Richmond, 2018, p. 180). Richmond (2018) recommends that [people] work with communities to understand the multiple meanings and functions of the land to Indigenous overall health and identity. Relationships are key to Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies; nothing exists outside of relationship (Steinhauer & Lamouche, 2018). Relationship is medicine – being in relationship is the first step in improved wellness for Indigenous peoples (Walker & Behn-Smith, 2018, p. 330).

McGregor (2004) argues that IK must not be distilled, made scientifically palatable, assimilated into western knowledge systems, or made into data or statistics that can be analyzed through a western lens, that once that happens, Indigenous peoples no longer see themselves reflected in the results. But Lewis et al. (2020b) would argue that there are strategies to use proxies to measure connection to environment as demonstrated in Table 1. As noted throughout the training manual, Indigenous peoples are not meant to be afraid of their environment; they are mean to have their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs met by activities such as harvesting and gathering. Since the *Impact Assessment Act, 2019* requires that the Government of Canada assess the potential impacts on the health of Indigenous peoples – this means, it must be health as understood by Indigenous peoples.

Be prepared

It was noted in the *Expert Panel Report* that federal government has a poor understanding of Indigenous peoples' culture, traditional knowledge and rights and that

improved training and education would better position government to engage and consult with Indigenous peoples more effectively and efficiently (Government of Canada, 2017b).

We have provided what we feel is a basic overview to guide those who may not be as familiar with Indigenous paradigms, constitutional rights, treaty rights, or aboriginal title. It is important to know what is written in the treaties, and what is reflected in oral history. The unwritten text has been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada as having equal weight as the written text. Do not expect the Indigenous community to educate you, that is not their job.

IK is a knowledge system, not points on a map. Do not reflect IK in terms such as epistemology or ontology – that is enacting what Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) term "epistemic violence", when someone attempts to fit the interpretation of IK into western interpretive models (p. 96). Do not say, "explain to me so I understand". It feels like assimilation when Indigenous peoples are asked to explain – some things are not meant for you to understand. In our approach, we advocate for the Indigenous-led development of indicators specific to the Indigenous community being impacted by a project.

Recognize that colonialism remains an ongoing process

Colonialism is not over. Settler colonialism has tried to eliminate traditional landholding practices and impose a new political and spiritual order with new values and cultural practices often with disastrous results for Indigenous peoples. Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between the settler and Indigenous peoples.

To understand the intergenerational impacts of this relationship, please refer to the following sources:

- *Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2017). Perspectives on intergenerational transmission of trauma: The case of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In T. V. Cooper, M. C. Skewes, K. B. Schmaling, & A. W. Blume (Eds.), Social issues in living color: Challenges and solutions from the perspective of ethnic minority psychology: Promoting health and well-being (p. 171–196).*

- *Matheson, K., Foster, M. D., Bombay, A., McQuaid, R. J., & Anisman, H. (2019). Traumatic experiences, perceived discrimination, and psychological distress among members of various socially marginalized groups. Frontiers in psychology, 10, 416.*

- *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report at https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/*

- *O'Neill, L., Fraser, T., Kitchenham, A., & McDonald, V. (2018). Hidden burdens: A review of intergenerational, historical and complex trauma, implications for indigenous families. Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, 11(2), 173-186.*

- *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Volumes 1-5) at Library and Archives Canada: https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx*

- *The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Reports at https://nctr.ca/records/reports/*

Include gendered impacts

The Practitioner's Guide provides guiding principles and tools to practitioners, proponents and participants so they can successfully apply Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to impact assessment. This is not appropriate in an Indigenous context. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) understands that mainstream GBA+ frameworks "do not include a cultural or historical perspective, nor do they account for the intersecting aspects that make up the identity of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, or gender-diverse people" (NWAC, n.d., para. 3).

> *The vision statement of NWAC reads:*
>
> *NWAC supports the implementation of impact assessment legislative and policy frameworks to ensure Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people are protected from the negative effects of industrial projects. These frameworks must guarantee benefits for Indigenous communities from economic activities undertaken on their traditional lands and territories. The frameworks must include the voices and concerns of Indigenous women, respect for Indigenous self-determination and decision-making, and reflect Indigenous knowledge (Native Women's Association of Canada, n.d.).*

Indigenous women have a special relationship with and responsibility to place. "Responsibility to the land and non-human entities means ensuring they are healthy and viable for future generations" (NWAC, n.d. p.10). NWAC has developed a downloadable *Culturally-Relevant Gender Based Analysis* guidance document (https://www.nwac.ca/browse/ - found on page 2 of

Publications and Resources in English and French) to guide the reader through a culturally-appropriate way to work on issues that impact Indigenous women.

If you are unable to access any of the suggested readings or reference sources, or have any questions, please email:

Dr. Diana Lewis at diana.lewis@uwo.ca

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