

5b. *Introduction to social effects assessment. Speaker: Patt Larcombe*

a) What are the important social effects assessment concepts?

- Complete human dimensions addressed, broad social assessment on all aspects of social impacts, identifying project/human/environment interactions
- Importance of scale and scope – looking at broad and fine, results in better use of resources
- Community and researchers becoming a team
- Equitable approach
- Micro view of assessment, not lost in macro
- Consultation with those most affected
- Social benefits and impacts on community
- Predicting the consequences of projects on the human environment
- The most affected people must have the most input
- Approach each community as a unique entity
- Look at communities previously impacted by similar project types
- Good project descriptions are essential to good process, make them in plain language for communities.
- Use base line information that matters
- Time – society is dynamic and changes over time and project influences
- Having sufficient time and resources to complete the assessments
- Effects identification
- Use caution with formal datasets
- Community based
- Invite public knowledge where people feel comfortable and secure traditional knowledge in a manner that is acceptable to the First Nation.
- Community contact and contact with knowledge keepers and those who hold the data.
- “significance” is a social construction
- Important to develop the ability of people from the Yukon who can do the assessments themselves.
- Meaningful participation of community individuals and understanding what and why something is significant
- Understanding community values
- Distribution of benefit/costs across society, space and time.
- Cumulative effects
- Using history and existing data
- Issues validation process
- Mitigation design
- Compare with similar projects in other areas
- Gathering and analysis of baseline data and using data gap analysis on small scale / community level effects as well as large scale.
- Residual effects assessment
- Need for resources to develop capacity
- Expectations for timelines are sometimes unrealistic
- People can talk, fish can't...

b) What questions do you still have about social effects assessment?

- What weight is given to socio-economic effect – long and short term?
- Where is the balancing of social benefits and social adverse effects?
- How do we avoid duplicating evaluation / consultation with gathering information at the scoping, assessment and mitigating stages?
- Needs to be sensitivity around gathering data – having the data at a usable focus without giving out confidential information. What is the balance between privacy and data collection (who collects it – private industry or government)?
- How to reconcile the “timelines” with need for extensive data collection?

- If proponent is responsible for gathering this baseline info, trust will be an issue, particularly if development is unpopular.
- How are the impacts measured? How do you narrow down what is examined? How -do you weigh impacts and effects, e.g. more jobs but more crime – which effect is more significant/valued?
- How do you mitigate social effects, implement feasible mitigation and find reasonable mitigating strategies?
- Where does social end and economic begin?
- How do you define/chose the communities you will consult with? Will data be collected from every single group? What about areas that are less populated – should social effects be looked at the same way with the same weight?
- Are stakeholders different from the community as a whole?
- What is the social effect of NO development?
- How important is it to examine alternatives, e.g. provide employment over 10 years instead of 5 years?
- How many people in the government and communities know what this really entails and means?
- Exploration of social and community benefits.
- How are socio-economic zones of influence established?
- What are the criteria for quantifying value of observations?
- How accurate and reliable is the baseline data? How variable? Is the term “baseline” still to be used? What are the appropriate indicators? Baseline data is missing in the Yukon or not specific to regions.
- How to separate trends from previous project impacts?
- When does the clock start for baseline? Does the proposal or announcement of a project constitute an effect and is it considered?
- How to deal with the polarization in a community (over a project)? How do you reconcile values (between youth and elders, etc)?
- How to you gain trust of the community?
- How do you measure change and its significance?
- The inability to assign costs to various effects.
- Training needs to be done to ensure that communities have the capacity to benefit from development and to be able to provide “meaningful” input into the development assessment (social, economic and environmental effects) – what training is available?
- How can First Nations with limited resources stretched beyond reasonable capacity be able to participate significantly in assessments?
- Who gathers the data information and who is responsible for it? How can an outside researcher utilize a community or community members to assist in the research – ideas?
- How do we ensure marginalized people have a voice? How to ensure values are not ignored.
- How greatly will the community values be respected?
- Who does the assessment and interpretations of the data - and is there a certain someone or Board above it all?
- Will significant social implications relative to the project be included?
- Who pays for this?
- Is the information that is collected required to be factored into the decision process?
- Issues of impact on health
- How much community participation is sufficient?
- Follow-up and adaptive approaches?
- How to assess whether predictions were accurate/inaccurate?
- How to determine significance?
- How to deal with social effects that are both positive and negative?
- Scope of effects vs. scope of assessment?
- How do you measure the “quality of life”?
- How do we do the cost/benefit analysis on industry, e.g. forestry vs. oil?
- Who will collect data so that it is accessible to all – will YESAA D.O.'s be depositories of information?
- How do you assess the social values for the future as the values change?