Health Impact Assessments:

CHECKLIST FOR PRACTITIONERS

A **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** is a tool for Indigenous Peoples and communities to learn about and share information on the health impacts of proposed projects in their regions. **Any community can initiate an HIA.**

This checklist is a flexible guide for communities to use to develop an **HIA** in a way that reflects preferred knowledge systems, governance, values, and priorities. There are many ways to do an **HIA**, so communities may adapt or change the process as they choose.

	TO DO:	TO CONSIDER:
1: Define the Purpose and Scope	• Identify the project, policy, program, or issue. • Clarify why the HIA is being done. • Discuss purpose and expectations with leadership, Elders, and Knowledge Holders. • Define the zone of interest.	• Purpose may be protective or transformative. • Zones of interest may follow watersheds, ecozones, species, harvesting areas, or seasonal use. • Scope should reflect community relationships between land, health, and well-being.
2: Form a Community HIA Team	• Identify participants (Elders, youth, leaders...). • Clarify roles and responsibilities. • Identify whether external support is desired.	• Leadership endorsement adds legitimacy. • Inclusive participation brings lived experience and diverse knowledge. • Teams may use a representative or advisor, or be governance-led.
3: Gather Background Information	• Identify existing information and relevant knowledge types. • Compile Indigenous Knowledge, oral histories, and lived experience. • Define access, ownership, and sharing conditions • Identify information gaps.	• Data includes social, cultural, environmental, and land-based knowledge. • Indigenous determinants of health frameworks may be used. • Gaps can be addressed through community research or partnerships.
4: Identify Determinants of Health & Potential Impacts	• Identify community-defined determinants of health. • Identify effects on physical, mental, emotional, cultural, spiritual, social, environmental, and economic well-being. • Consider cumulative or intergenerational effects.	• Cumulative effects are a core perspective. • Pathways may be non-linear or story-based. • Impacts do not need to be framed as risks and benefits.
5: Develop a Workplan & Process Design	• Describe goals, key questions, and methods. • Decide how community input will be included. • Identify decision points or opportunities to adapt.	• Plans should remain flexible and iterative. • Community-defined milestones may be more important than rigid timelines.
6: Engage, Consult, and Communicate	• Identify engagement approaches. • Hold meetings, sharing circles, or gatherings. • Communicate regularly with leadership and the community. • Define how findings will be shared.	• Engagement does not need to follow formal consultation models. • Trust considerations vary depending on whether the HIA is community-led, co-developed, or externally required.
7: Identify Resources & Supports	• Identify financial, technical, or human resource needs. • Contact municipal, provincial / territorial and federal governments for funding. • Explore partnerships and networks.	• Many organizations support an Indigenous-led HIA. • Learning from other communities reduces burden and builds confidence.
8: Start Where You Are & Build Over Time	• Begin with a single, focused issue. • Reflect on lessons learned. • Apply learning to future HIAs or governance work.	• Each HIA strengthens governance, confidence, and decision-making. • The process itself has value and capacity builds over time.

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Local Changes, Local Impacts:

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH PATHWAYS

A **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** is a tool for Indigenous Peoples and communities to learn about and share information on the health impacts of proposed major projects relevant to your community.

An **HIA** examines how a single change can flow through the environment and community to affect health and well-being over time. **Here are examples of how that may happen:**

1: New Industrial Development or Land Use Change

ENVIRONMENT / SOCIAL CHANGE:
- Reduced access to land
- Changes to water, air, and noise
- Disruption to cultural sites

IMPACTS ON DAILY LIFE:
- Less time on land
- Disruptions to cultural practices
- More stress, disconnection

HEALTH IMPACT:
- Reduced emotional well-being
- Impacts on cultural identity
- Increased chronic stress and strain on mental health

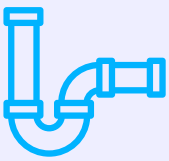
2: Housing Developed in Unsafe Areas

ENVIRONMENT / SOCIAL CHANGE:
- Increased exposure to flooding
- Damage to housing or property
- Emergency evacuations

IMPACTS ON DAILY LIFE:
- Frequent displacement
- Reduced quality of life
- Heightened stress and uncertainty

HEALTH IMPACT:
- Mental health strain
- Impacts children's development
- Reduced sense of safety and security

3: Oil Spills or Other Pipeline Change



ENVIRONMENT / SOCIAL CHANGE:
- Risk of oil leaks or spills
- Impacts to water and soil
- Ecosystem and wildlife harm

IMPACTS ON DAILY LIFE:
- Threatens harvesting
- Impacts to fishing, water
- Reduced land confidence

HEALTH IMPACT:
- Anxiety about contamination
- Food insecurity
- Community mental health and well-being at risk

4: Industrial Air or Chemical Pollution Change

ENVIRONMENT / SOCIAL CHANGE:
- Reduced clean air
- Water quality changes
- Exposure to pollutants

IMPACTS ON DAILY LIFE:
- Difficulty breathing
- Clean water unavailable
- Increased exposure to toxins or contaminants

HEALTH IMPACT:
- Respiratory illnesses
- Decreased overall wellness
- Increased risk of chronic illness

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Health Impact Assessment:

GETTING STARTED

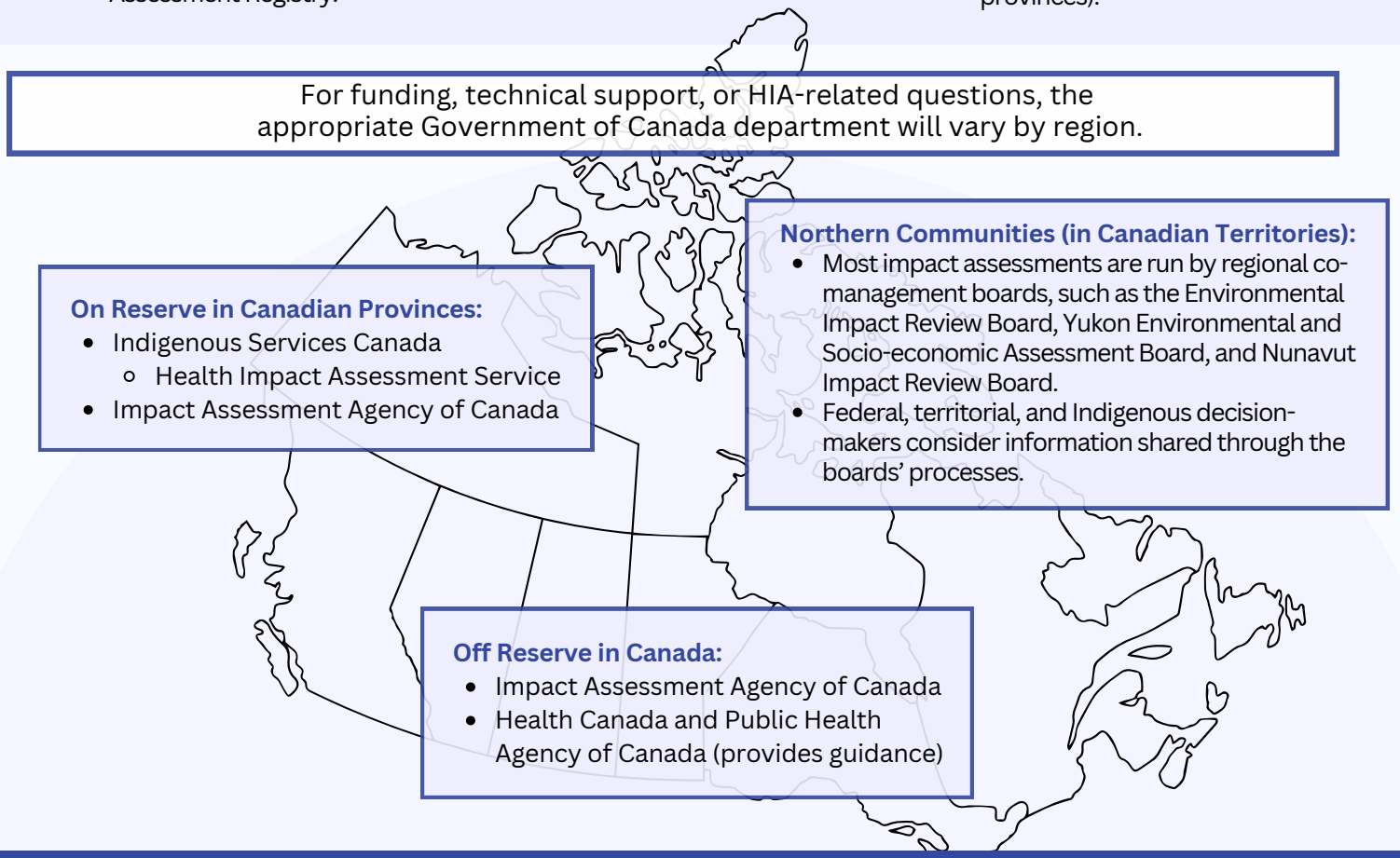
A **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** is a tool for Indigenous Peoples and communities to learn about and share information on the health impacts of proposed projects in their regions.

An **HIA** that is initiated and led by Indigenous Peoples and communities is known as an **Indigenous-led Health Impact Assessment (IHIA).**

An HIA or IHIA can be considered within the Impact Assessment decision-making process. Advocate your needs by the following:

1. Sharing community health concerns directly with Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) through consultation sessions, correspondence or the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry.
2. Requesting health focused meetings and engagement sessions with the proponent.
3. Working with federal departments to amplify your concerns through departmental submissions and advice (for example, the ISC-HIAS team supports communities in Canadian provinces).

For funding, technical support, or HIA-related questions, the appropriate Government of Canada department will vary by region.



On Reserve in Canadian Provinces:

- Indigenous Services Canada
  - Health Impact Assessment Service
- Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

Northern Communities (in Canadian Territories):

- Most impact assessments are run by regional co-management boards, such as the Environmental Impact Review Board, Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, and Nunavut Impact Review Board.
- Federal, territorial, and Indigenous decision-makers consider information shared through the boards' processes.

Off Reserve in Canada:

- Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
- Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada (provides guidance)

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