

TITLE: Reframing Health- How can assessment frameworks better serve the needs of tribal governments?

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STUDENT SUBMISSION: Yes

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Topic: Tribal health, linking health and culture

Target audience: policy makers, researchers

ABSTRACT: Assessment frameworks like Health Impact Assessments fall short of capturing culturally specific notions of health held by many indigenous communities. These frameworks are designed to assess the impact of environmental, housing and transportation projects, yet often are considered insufficient by indigenous communities whom consider health to be a holistic concept encompassing mental, traditional, cultural, environmental, and community health.

This research evaluated the potential of assessment frameworks to incorporate cultural impacts. This includes linking impacts to the ecosystem as well as impacts to human health.

The prevalence of 11 assessment frameworks was measured using PubMed (2007-2016). A gap analysis compared the specific health determinants within each framework.

Ecological Risk Assessment was the most prevalent framework. The most prevalent assessment frameworks do not adequately address an indigenous perspective of health. Frameworks that focused on qualitative indicators (i.e. Cultural Impact Assessment) were least prevalent or unused. Newer frameworks such as Cultural Impact Assessments and Human Rights Impact Assessments include indicators that link culture and wellness and have potential to holistically evaluate health impacts.

Assessment frameworks with flexibility to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems may improve the decision making of tribal governments and allow for incorporation of their epistemology into health policy decisions.

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss challenges to Native American Tribes in assessing the health impacts of proposed projects using existing impact assessment frameworks that assume Western epistemology.

Identify which assessment frameworks include health determinants and procedures that could best incorporate Indigenous Health Indicators, as well as the gaps that need to be filled.

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