

# INDIGENOUS-LED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## What is Impact Assessment (IA)?

Impact Assessment is a process that helps evaluate the potential consequences—both positive and negative—of a proposed project before it moves forward. The goal is to make informed, evidence-based decisions that minimize harm and maximize positive outcomes. This includes proposing mitigation strategies and follow-up measures to ensure the project's impacts are managed effectively.

**Indigenous-led Impact Assessment (ILIA)** empowers Indigenous communities to lead the assessment of projects affecting their lands, cultures, and ways of life. This approach ensures that development aligns with Indigenous values, worldviews, and governance systems, promoting long-term sustainability, justice, and respect for Indigenous rights.

## KEY TOOLS IN INDIGENOUS-LED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ILIA utilizes various tools to enable Indigenous communities to take charge of the assessment process.

Key tools include:

**Framework Agreements** – Establish terms for power-sharing between Indigenous nations, governments, and industries, ensuring assessments reflect Indigenous rights and concerns.

**Customized Review Panels** – Community-based panels incorporate Indigenous knowledge, culture, and governance into project evaluations.

**Land Use and Consultation Policies** – These policies guide land-use decisions and ensure consultations align with Indigenous governance and cultural values.

**Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs)** – IBAs define fair compensation and benefits for communities affected by development, ensuring Indigenous priorities are met.

**Land Use Planning** – Using strategies that reflect Indigenous needs and values, promoting sustainable land management.



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## CHALLENGES

While ILIA offers significant advantages, it faces challenges, including:

**Legal Constraints** – The lack of a true consent mechanism under settler legal systems limits Indigenous authority.

**Land Status** – Legal authority varies depending on the land's status (e.g., unceded territories, treaty lands, or reserve lands).

**Secondary Role in Decision-Making** – ILIA is often triggered by external proponents' plans, making it secondary to Crown-led processes.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIGENOUS-LED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ILIA transforms the impact assessment process by **prioritizing Indigenous governance, knowledge, and worldviews**. It allows communities to assert control over their lands, ensuring **development aligns with cultural and environmental goals**.

Despite legal and political challenges, ILIA has the potential to revitalize Indigenous laws, strengthen communities, and reshape resource governance.

Indigenous-led Impact Assessment is a critical step toward **empowering Indigenous communities**, ensuring development respects their rights, values, and long-term sustainability goals. By integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, ILIA contributes to a more **just and decolonized approach** to resource management and decision-making.



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