

Baffled systems or culturally competent impact assessment?



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To colonise

To subjugate a country or establish control over foreign territories or peoples for the purposes of settlement

Colonised impact assessment

To ~~subjugate a country~~ set up
dominant institutions that
establish control over ~~foreign
territories~~ complex knowledge
systems or ~~peoples~~ worldviews
for the purposes of settlement
impact assessment

Culture



Why it matters

Many projects disturb land to which First Nations people retain relationships and stewardship

“For Aboriginal people, a key purpose of SIA is to help end their marginalisation from decision-making about development on their ancestral lands” (O’Faircheallaigh 2009)

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is a starting point

Aashukan Declaration 2017

Why it matters

“Indigenous People’s rights are the foundation upon which all discussions must be initiated. Following international best practice, this includes territorial Rights, the Right to self-determination and the Indigenous Right to say YES or No.”

“We may support development, but not at any price!”

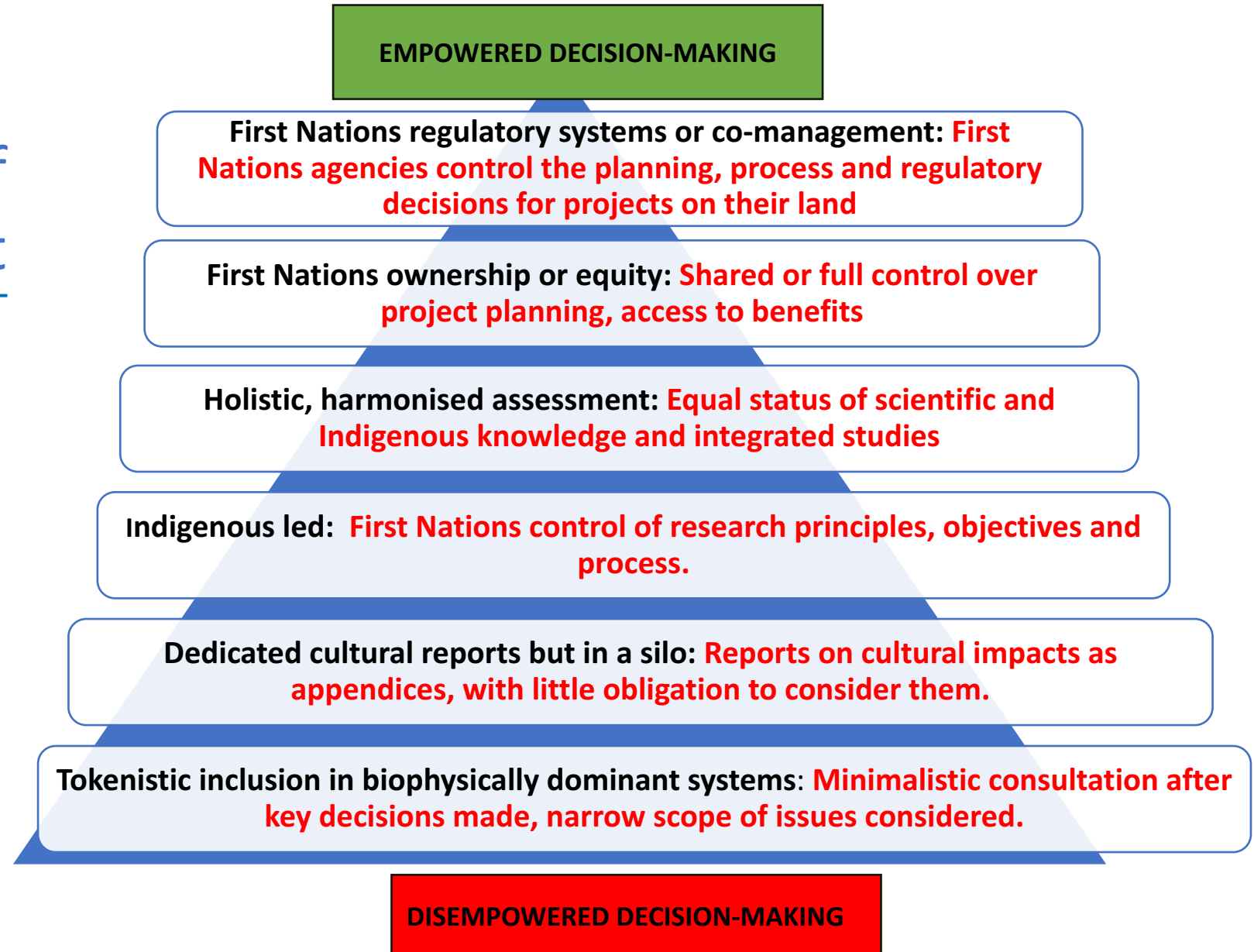
“We welcome Impact Assessment, but not of any kind!”

Requires a system where:

Self-determination

- First Nations people have agency
- Shared decision-making draws on cultural authority and knowledge
- First Nations control or co-manage impact assessment **systems** (not just studies)

Hierarchy of empowerment



A culturally competent system

Key components

A mandate: To consider broader values and impacts

Governance structures: To provide real influence over planning, process and decisions

Screening out: Early power to say no

Communities benefit: Based on strategic resource planning and community aspirations









Intercultural capacity: Systems have the skills, knowledge and aptitude to incorporate First Nations' holistic knowledge systems and worldviews

Intercultural spaces: Individuals have the capacity to work in the intercultural spaces where impacts occur and co-production of knowledge evolves

Barriers or cultural deficits

Baffled systems

- **Cultural capture:** Biophysical impact assessment systems that privilege quantitative, Western science over insightful, community-driven social and cultural impact assessment
- **Organisational:** the degree to which leadership and an agency's workforce reflect the affected population
- **Institutional:** including diversity
- **Structural:** bureaucratic processes and communication

Colonised		Empowered
Silos		Holistic, seamless
Purpose is approval, outcome is a document		Outcomes are community wellbeing, shared benefits
Western science, rational		Shared knowledge systems
Knowledge is appropriated		Knowledge is shared
Power is with the developer		Power is with the community
Peripheral to decisions		Strong influence on decisions
Bureaucratic		Grounded in cultural authority
Tokenistic consultation		First Nations control, agency

THANK YOU

Guideline on Social Impact Assessment:
www.truenorthcomm.com.au/news/guide-to-sia

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Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA24 app.



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