Yuneŝit'in First Nation Project Monitoring and Evaluation Tool

INDIGENOUS HOME-LANDS INITIATIVE
PREPARED FOR: YUNESIT'IN GOVERNMENT

Accreditations

This report and accompanying tool was prepared by the Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative team at Ecotrust Canada, through funding from Social Innovation Canada. Lewis Muirhead led the research and drafting of the tool, with direction and oversight support from Anthony Persaud and Russel-Myers Ross. The creation of this tool would not have been possible without the collaboration of Yuneŝit'in First Nation staff and community members, as well as the various partners, consultants, and participants involved in other related research activities, including at the Tŝilhqot'in Nation level.

The cover is an image of the Yuneŝit'in Guest House. The structure was built with Leading Edge Wood Products Ltd.'s heavy wood flooring, and the walls and frame are made from cut timbers cut produced at the local mill in the Yuneŝit'in community.

Content

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Introduction

With partner Yuneŝit'in First Nation, the Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative (IHL) at Ecotrust Canada has developed a tool to support project design, monitoring, and evaluation within the community of Yuneŝit'in and across Tŝilhqot'in territory. The tool is designed to serve as a resource to generate new project ideas as well as improve accountability by offering a simple, intuitive, and appropriate way for staff and decision-makers within the community to recollect community priorities and goals, and to cross-check plans, activities, and outcomes against a set of values and metrics that have been established by and for the community.

For Yuneŝit'in and other Indigenous communities, the relationship to land, water, animals, and each other, beyond purely economic means, is of immense importance to individual and community well-being. By supplying a supplementary and alternative set of markers to conventional M&E metrics, this tool will give decision makers clarity to plan, chart, and track progress beyond purely economic cost-benefit analyses.

The purpose of this document is to elaborate the methodology in developing the tool and describe the potential uses of the tool both within Yuneŝit'in and beyond. In doing so, the hope is that other First Nations can engage in similar processes to develop their own ways to monitor and evaluate projects, utilizing this tool as a framework for adapting and/or building upon. The current tool is intended to be a lasting resource for Yuneŝit'in and other Tŝilhqot'in leaders as they move forward in imagining and implementing their visions for housing and economic futures.

Background

This knowledge product was developed with and for the community of Yuneŝit'in First Nation, in the central interior of British Columbia. Yuneŝit'in is one of six First Nations communities forming the Tŝilhqot'in Nation, with whom IHL maintains a long-term partnership. The socially innovative economic and housing efforts being undertaken within Yuneŝit'in and across the Tŝilhqot'in Nation was the impetus for the development of this tool.

Specifically, the tool was developed with the aim of realizing connections between locally derived values and housing-related projects within Yuneŝit'in. However, the use-cases of this tool can be diverse, as reflected in Table 1.

USER	USES
Economic Development Officers/ Managers	• Supports a community-based rationale for the development of specific projects. • Contributes to 'full feasibility' understandings and 'full cost' accounting of economic and housing-related projects. • Enables an easy way for those developing business plans to measure the effectiveness of their plans against more than just financial metrics (community values).
Housing Manager/Coordinator/Committee	• Supports the rationale for continued funding of housing-related socio-economic projects. • Enables (by demonstrating the importance and value) the connection of housing projects to other activities and processes in the community and territory.
Land Use planners	• Enables a community value-driven marking system for ranking the different uses of land/zoning. • Can support innovation in land use designations.
Tribal/Nation-level Governments	• Can contribute to the design, monitoring, and evaluation of Nation-level economic and housing plans and strategies.

USER	USES
Housing Authorities/Societies	• Easily weigh potential housing developments/ projects against community values and visions.
Supporting organizations	• Demonstrates the full value/impact of external support/funding. • Allows for appropriate evaluation of organizational efforts.

Yuneŝit'in Guest House

Methodology

This work was led by the inquiry into how decisions could be grounded in culturally appropriate values and be directly informed by community voices. Methods included an extensive review of the literature, both academic and grey, including resources and reports from Yuneŝit'in and the Tŝilhqot'in Nation. This was followed by interviews with nine key informants and supplemented by informal conversations with many others.

Through the wide net that the researchers cast, it was determined that a decision-making tool that would facilitate the translation of existing knowledge and wisdom to the housing process was most appropriate. From this decision-point, data was gathered to inform the various metrics to be included in the tool.

General values – "Honouring the work of the past"

A comprehensive review of the multiple reports and studies done by and for Yuneŝit'in and the Tŝilhqot'in Nation allowed us to establish a preliminary understanding of the values connected to culture and land. Previous work done for the Dasiqox Tribal park was identified as the most appropriate source for agreed-upon values. The report, *Nexwagweẑʔan — Community Vision and Management Goals for Dasiqox Tribal Park* involved 70+ interviews with community members from Yuneŝit'in and Xeni Gwet'in and now serves as perhaps one of the most comprehensive common

ground acknowledgments of Tŝilhqot'in values. Therefore, utilizing these values as an 'initial' baseline filter was agreed to be an appropriate starting place for evaluation of any project. An additional benefit of using these pre-established community values is that they can be applied to other realms of decision-making beyond housing across the Tŝilhqot'in Nation.

This tool will be the first attempt at universalizing these principles beyond the work done for the Dasiqox Tribal Park. The ability to hold these principles up to potential projects, and project components, will help to align all activities with these fundamental values. Throughout the interview process we heard support for the integration of honouring spirit and utilizing traditional values as a way to guide decision-making. In conversation with former Yuneŝit'in chief Russell Myers-Ross, he recognized the process of going through these principles as akin to holding ceremony and honouring the work of the past as a part of decision-making.

Housing values

To build the understanding of appropriate measures for housing-related projects, interviews, conversations, and report/literature review findings were triangulated and values established. The extensive research done on the future of housing in Yuneŝit'in in collaboration with IHL-Ecotrust Canada served as a starting place. To supplement

and hold to a community-led ethos, nine in-depth interviews were conducted to inform direction of the tool. In addition, the *Yuneŝit'in Housing Ecosystem Overview and Strategy Development* reports, related to the Forest to Frame program and Leading Edge, all influenced the selection of values included in the tool. After carefully composing these values, they were validated through engagement with leaders and key contacts within Yuneŝit'in.

Phase 1 - Project scoping

DESCRIPTION	METHOD	NOTES
• Clarify study purpose • Develop data collection plan • Identify project objectives and use cases	• Desktop research • Review existing work on culturally aware/ appropriate M&E frameworks	Shifted focus from a generalized 'framework' to a specific tool that can be applied to decisions relating to housing.

Phase 2 - Understand the context

DESCRIPTION	METHOD	NOTES
• Define what is being valued	• Interviews with members of the Yuneŝit'in community • Review of past work done in the communities	Through extensive reading and initial interviews, the importance of this alternative measuring process was firmly established. The unique nature of housing on reserve and the desire to decolonize the process of decision-making is considered.

Phase 3 - Identify and characterize affected values

DESCRIPTION	METHOD	NOTES
• Elicit values from community through conversation and understand the impact of the Forest to Frame program	• Interviews, conversations • Collection of previous documentation • Triangulation of research and interview findings	Through a triangulation process of interviews and research, an initial set of values were included in the tool. Draft definitions were created to test with a case example.

Phase 4 - Develop tool

DESCRIPTION	METHOD	NOTES
• Creation of tangible, usable tool to test with an example project	• Outlining values and metrics in a process format • Drafting minimum viable product (MVP) to test against existing projects • Test tool with community leaders	In response to the needs of Yuneŝit'in, the tool is built in sections, allowing it to be modular and adjustable.

Phase 5 - Report

DESCRIPTION	METHOD	NOTES
• Synthesize results and present tool back to wider community	• Produce written report • Explain the results of trial run of the tool • Provide detail on utilization	The final report came together through a number of revisions. Emphasis was focused on usability and uptake for stakeholders to put the tool into use.

Draft definitions for each value were created to provide a minimum viable product (MVP) to test the tool against the Tŝilhqot'in Prototype Wildfire House. A testing session was conducted on September 21 with the Housing Manager, Ashley Quilt and former chief Russell Meyers-Ross. Feedback on the individual values and process flow was provided to improve the effectiveness of the tool.

Underpinning the creation of this tool is the ability to measure projects beyond merely their financial impact. To create the indicators, the research was triangulated to absorb the multitude of data available. The tool is thus structured to include a variety of alternative measures to inform socio-economic and housing decision-making. The following section will provide an overview of the tool, including how each section was comprised, and how it can be utilized.

M&E Tool Description

The purpose of the tool is to provide a decision-making matrix in which past, present, or future projects can be input and assessed against a number of factors. To allow for ease of use and adaptability, the tool is in the form of an Excel spreadsheet.

The tool offers four distinct assessments:

1. Initial Analysis
2. Needs Analysis
3. Values Analysis
4. Design Analysis

The Initial and Needs Analyses can accommodate the measuring of a variety of projects, while the Values and Design Analyses are focused specifically on housing-related projects. The idea is that the values in the initial assessment must be considered for a project to go to the next level of assessment. Following this initial assessment, there is a series of follow-on assessments for alignment with the needs of the community, values associated with the construction process, and design elements for the built environment. This multi-layered process gives those involved in project design and decision-making a chance to reflect and ask questions about the planning process. Based on the scores in the tool, adjustments can be made to the project plan before large investments are made.

1. Initial Analysis - Community Principles

The initial analysis begins by examining a potential project through the lens of alignment with community principles developed through the previously completed Dasiqox Tribal Park research, where 70+ community members were interviewed in Yuneŝit'in and Xeni Gweti'in.

1. INITIAL ANALYSIS

Potential Projects	Rating guide: potential violation of community principle receives a 0 while no violation receives a 1								
	Alignment with Community Principles								Tally; minimum 8/8
	EVERYTHING IS INTERCONNECTED	WATER IS LIFE	RESPECT	HEALING, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING	HONOURING SPIRIT	CARETAKING	THRIVING CULTURE	SHARING KNOWLEDGE	
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

In this analysis, satisfying a principle criterion is done by a qualitative determination that it is either sufficiently satisfied, or not satisfied. The action being analyzed will be given a 1 for compliance or a 0 for non-compliance. The action must be determined to satisfy all the principles for it to be accepted and taken to the next round of analysis. Through this method, project planners avoid any wasted energy on actions that will ultimately violate the most important principles to Yuneŝit'in.

If not all principles are met, projects can then be adjusted and retested to achieve a pass.

2. Needs Analysis - Community Specific Needs

The next level of analysis considers alignment with community needs. These are requirements determined to be important markers for aligning a project with the needs of the community. The assessment conditions for these are also binary, either the project sufficiently addresses the need or it does not.

1. Substantially addressing community needs is an essential element for a project to be considered on the right trajectory. The community needs identified for this tool are as follows:

   Trauma-informed process

   - Being aware of the trauma some individuals may have and how this should be considered in context is ideally the baseline for any and all work. Project planners need to have an awareness of trauma and a plan ready to address it.

2. Allows for skills development within community

   - This refers to projects which increase the potential for skills to be developed locally in relation to the surrounding land and local economy.

3. Continuous Improvement Plan

   - With the varied projects that the community is taking on, feedback and improvement is essential. This could mean simply that thought is put into how any project tracks learning throughout and makes adjustments.

4. Alignment with Nenqay (Lands) Department Plans

   - Making a connection and sharing details of this project with the Nenqay department will prevent the siloing of plans and ensure the consideration of the connection with the land, water, air, plants, animals, people, and all relations.

5. Inclusion of community members in the design process

   - This requirement is ideally included in all plans. What the inclusion process looks like is up for discussion and will vary based on the impact of the project.

6. Creates space for knowledge sharing with visitors

   - Intentionally designing the project so as to include space for knowledge transfer related to tourism, education, and other communities. This could mean working out in the open, hosting tours, writing public pieces, or sharing openly on social media.

3. Values Analysis - Construction Values

This section is designed to provide a rating on construction-related values. There is a rating scale for each value and users of the tool assign a number to each marker's section. A score of up to 4/4 is assigned for each value based on evidence and research for the potential project. Data may need to be gathered to substantiate the score for these values. Making a best approximation may also be appropriate depending on context.

1. Local materials

   - Research and interviews emphasized the importance of using local materials. The Forest to Frame program is evidence of this in practice; by using local materials, additional funds and resources were kept in the local economy.

2. Local suppliers

   - Upon review of the tool, the importance of using local suppliers was raised. Looking outside of the immediate surroundings but ideally within the Tŝilhqot'in Nation would be the standard for 'local' in this case.

3. Local labour

   - Programs to train local carpenters have been successful in the past in Yunesit'in. Interviews provided evidence that there is continued interest in these programs. Additionally, other communities in the Tŝilhqot'in Nation are in need of workers and a continued lack of local labour was raised as a significant issue. A recurring theme in interviews was that through participating in the construction of local housing, pride in the buildings may

increase, leading to better maintenance over time.

4. Local mill

   - Specific to lumber, using a local mill to supply wood products is seen as an important aspect to the construction process in the programs being developed, and if planned right can lower the cost of building, create jobs and build skills, and instil pride in community members.

5. Longevity/Quality

   - This is essential to build-in upfront by carefully evaluating the quality of materials, maintenance factors, and energy calculations over the lifetime of the build.

6. Limiting waste

   - During the construction process, construction waste can be immense. Developing a plan for reduction, recapture, and reuse of materials requires up-front planning.

7. Pride in construction

   - The quality of the build is related to the pride the workers have invested in the process. Utilizing local labour and materials ensures those engaging in the work feel connected to the result and know that it will directly benefit their community.

8. Partnerships

   - Building relationships over time is important for the community. Having the ability to reciprocate support by

partnering with other communities, groups, organizations, individuals, governments, will enable larger economies of scale and allow for a greater impact as community partnerships evolve. This value was identified throughout the interview process.

4. Design Analysis - Design Elements

Design elements are specific building features that inform the direction of the design process for housing. The included elements were selected through review of the existing design work for buildings recently constructed in Yuneŝit'in, alongside the desires recorded during the interview process. Multiple factors may have influenced the inclusion of an element; for example, the inclusion of a fireplace is informed by the need to honour ancestor spirits as well as a functional way to heat through the cold winter.

Due to the wide variation in measurability, these elements are monitored by a checklist; as long as these items are considered, a check can be applied and a point assigned. If a point is assigned, a rationale should be included as to how the element has been considered.

4. DESIGN ANALYSIS

Other Considerations

Use cases

The tool can be used in a variety of circumstances depending on the project:

Project planning

- In the planning and pre-planning phase of a project, the tool can be applied with a group of stakeholders to ensure a wide variety of factors are considered before major investments are made.

Idea generation

- When brainstorming a wide variety of initiatives, this tool can be used to filter and prioritize activities that align with values and needs.

Baseline setting, monitoring, and evaluation

- Running through the tool at the outset of a project in order to create a score/assessment allows for a baseline upon which the project can be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

Note taking

Depending on the application, the tool can be used with varying levels of rigour. The team or individual running the evaluation process can decide whether detailed notes are kept throughout the process or if a more cursory application of the tool is appropriate.

Facilitation options

Running through the tool can be aided by a third-party facilitator or anyone not directly involved in the project(s) being assessed. It can also be used internally on a team and then kept as a reference point to track progress.

Mindset and collaboration

The intent behind the tool informs the mindset for its use. With the intent being to filter and analyze projects against the specific needs of the community, varying interpretations of the value definitions are bound to arise. Because of this, an adaptive mindset is required so as not to be bogged down in the various meanings.

Stakeholders using this tool and working collaboratively will ideally allow for all voices to be heard and recognized as equal.

Contact

The Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative (IHL) is open to feedback on this tool and accompanying report as we continue to update and improve it.

For further information on this process or how IHL can support your community in developing a similar tool, please contact:

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Yuneŝit'in community mill

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