

Notions of Well-being in the Canadian North: Research Perspectives

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*Nunatsiavut
Nunavik
Nunavut
Northwest Territories
Yukon
ISR*



- As with community perspectives, definitions in scholarship are diverse & cross cutting
- Culturally constructed and considered through Indigenous lens
- Current research:
 - Quality of life; 'good life' (Parlee & Fugral, 2012)
 - Healthy land = healthy being
 - Participating in traditional activities (land based activities, cultural events, traditional food harvesting) (Richmond, 2009)

Defining Well-Being

- Speaking one's language, having social support (Kral et al., 2011)
- Practicing Traditional Knowledge (Inuit or First Nation)
- Talking and communicating with family
- Sharing food, being with family
- Acknowledging complex relationship between social, spiritual, economic, political and culture determinants (Kwiatkowski, 2009)

Defining Well-Being



- Impacted by complex, cumulative and non-discrete factors
 - Changes to land (climate & resources)
 - Socio-economic changes (influx of population, income, economy)
 - Access to food (food security/insecurity) (Nilsson et al., 2013)
 - Poverty (Housing)
 - Impacts of colonial legacies (Czyzewski, 2011)
 - Climate Change (Ford, 2012; Ford et al., 2010)
 - Physical health (chronic disease, etc)

Understanding Well-Being

- Challenges
 - Stress
 - Dietary changes
 - Resource development (Bradshaw et al. 2014)
 - Shift/erosion of traditions and culture (Richmond, 2009)
- Strengths
 - Resilience
 - Drawing on TK (Pierce et al, 2012)
 - Adaptive capacity (including through resource development)
 - Self determination (Parlee & Furgal, 2012)

Changing North



- Research on well-being draws from multi disciplines (Parlee & Furgal, 2012)
- Recognizes and addresses complexities
- Changes in research approaches:
 - Increase use of participatory approaches
 - Reliance on community knowledge and collaborations
 - Synergy between Traditional Knowledge and western science (Parlee & Furgal, 2012)

Changing Research

- Development of organizational capacity at the community level
- Researcher role changing
 - Support knowledge mobilization/translation
 - Synthesize community successes
 - Evaluate mechanisms that assess well-being
- Data needs to meaningful and useful (Harper et al., 2012)

Changing Research

- Recognize complexity and impact of legacies on current well-being (Czyzewski, 2011)
- Give attention to community defined threats and circumstances
- Focus on cumulative impacts
- Reconcile natural science research with socio-economic realities (Parlee & Furgal, 2012)

Going Forward

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