

INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN WELL-BEING

What is Human Well-Being (HWB)?

Human well-being, also known as community well-being, is a fancy term for talking about the health of people and communities. And since so many different aspects of our lives can affect our health and happiness, human well-being (HWB) is a concept that reflects all of the economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects of our lives.

Economic components of human well-being include access to employment, opportunities for income generation, and job satisfaction. For example, whether or not we have jobs, and the degree of stimulation and enjoyment derived from these jobs, impacts our human well-being.

Our place in our community, and the ways in which we interact with our neighbours, have an impact on our human well-being. Social components of HWB include access to education, access to health care, health of community members, sense of place, sense of community, and ability to influence decision-makers in your community.

Our connections to our culture provide a sense of identity and can influence our human well-being. Ways in which cultural identity can be maintained, thus contributing to well-being, include but are limited to access to seasonal camps and food harvesting sites, access to cedar for traditional uses (e.g. weaving, carving, construction), and participation in cultural events.

And ultimately, much of our physical health, employment opportunities and cultural practices depend on the health of the ecosystems in which we live. It is important to remember that our human well-being is dependent upon ecological factors, such as the availability of fresh water, abundance of cedar trees, and strength of the salmon runs.

How is Human Well-Being a part of Ecosystem-Based Management?

The goals of Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) are to maintain healthy ecosystems and improve human well-being.

People, animals, plants, soils, rivers, lakes, and oceans are all connected. EBM respects and sustains this web of life. This goal of healthy ecosystems and sustainable resource use provides the base on which human well-being can be improved.

All people have the right to a happy, healthy life. EBM brings income and new economic opportunities to individuals and communities. EBM also supports and strengthens cultural traditions and First Nations decision-making. In the context of EBM, human well-being has been defined as *“a condition in which all members of society can determine and meet their needs and have a large range of choices and opportunities to fulfill their potential.”*

What are the connections between Human Well-Being and Ecological Integrity?

Achieving high levels of human well-being requires that we ensure the health of coastal ecosystems, because our health, happiness and well-being cannot be separated from the health of the ecosystems where we live. Properly functioning ecosystems maintain the clean air, clean water and food sources on which the life of communities depends. EBM maintains the integrity of these ecosystems, providing a base on which individuals and communities are able to improve their well-being.

How can the implementation of EBM improve Human Well-Being?

- EBM maintains and restores the health of ecosystems. This ensures access to natural resources for cultural purposes, employment opportunities related to sustainable resource use (for current and future generations), and sources of food and fresh water.
- First Nations communities are engaged in decision-making about the land and resources, enhancing the social and cultural aspects of human well-being.
- Portions of the land base have been designated as conservancies, protecting the health of natural ecosystems while providing employment opportunities for First Nations in monitoring, management and use of these areas.
- Through Coast Opportunity Funds, First Nations have the ability to access funding to create new businesses and employment opportunities that are consistent with ecosystem health.

To achieve the goal of increased human well-being, six core objectives have been identified (by the Coast Information Team) as related to EBM:

- Recognize and accommodate Aboriginal Rights and Title, and interests;
- Achieve the health, wealth and education status required for a high quality and secure life for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal people;
- Build stable, resilient, well-serviced, and peaceful communities in coastal British Columbia;
- Create a strong, diverse economy and mix of businesses in communities and across the region;
- Create a strong and diverse mix of non-profit and voluntary organizations and a vibrant set of traditional, cultural, and non-market activities within communities and across the region;
- Ensure a fair distribution of benefits, costs and risks across all parts of coastal British Columbia, including aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.