



Environmental Public Health Indicators in a Tribal Setting

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Project Objectives

1. Establish EPHIs for Coast Salish communities that reflect the communities' meanings and prioritizations of health
2. Test the tribal-specific indicators by assessing the health status of the tribal communities
3. Evaluate the efficacy of the tribal-specific indicators by reviewing the health status results with Tribes.



Alternative Approaches to Defining Health

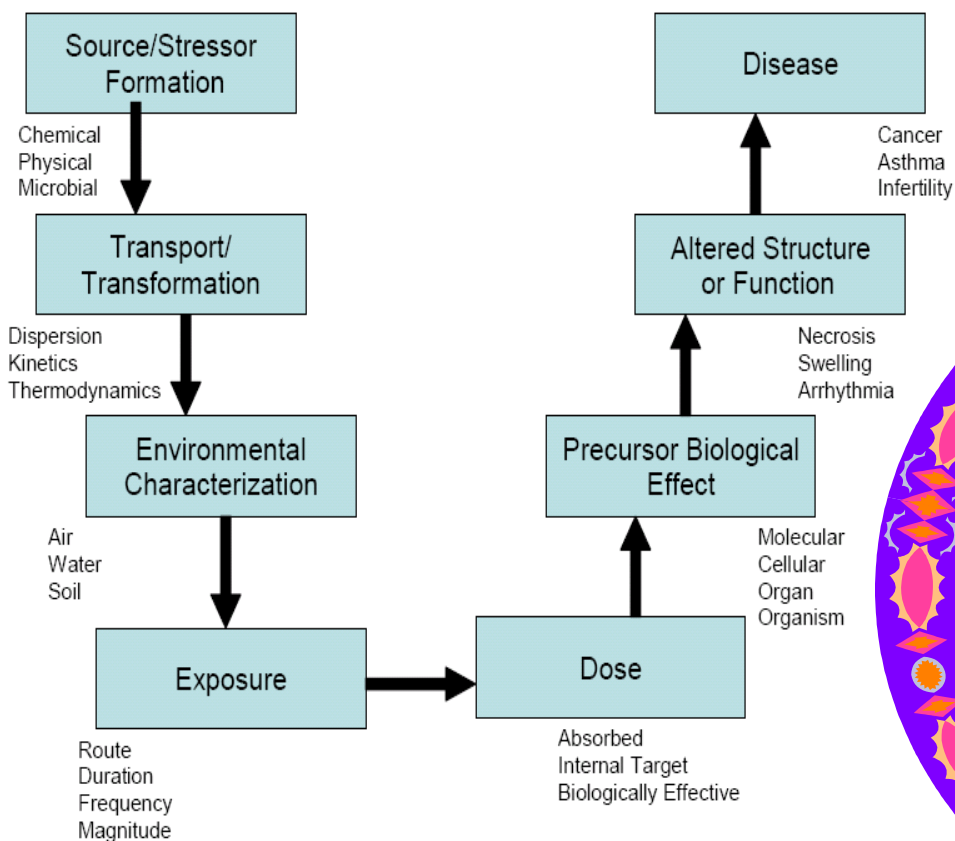
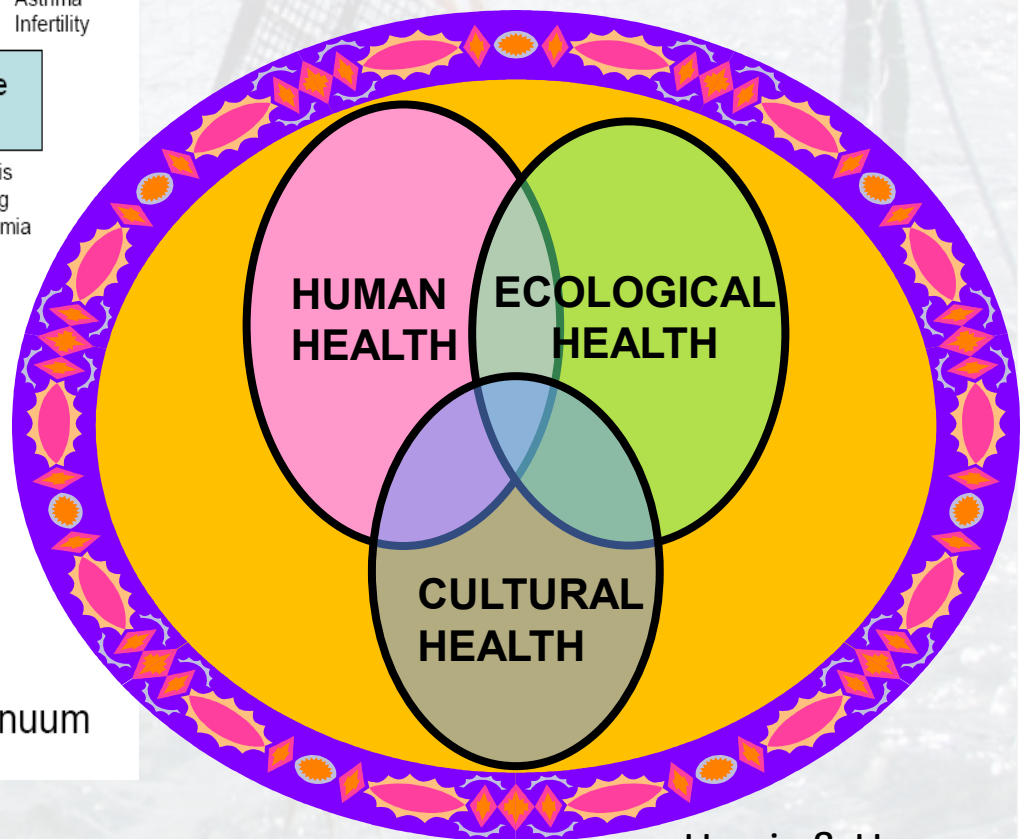


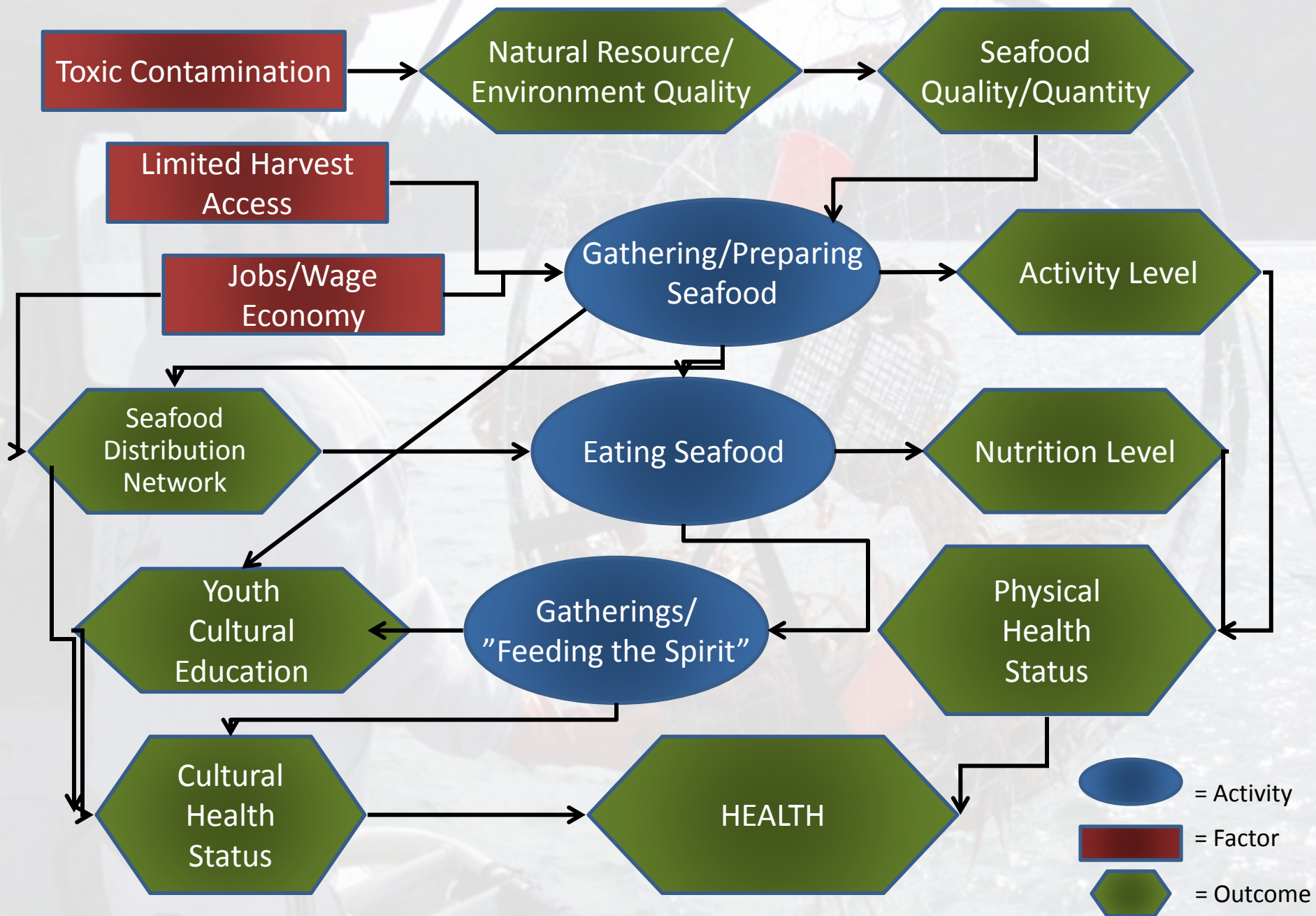
Figure 2. The Source-Exposure-Dose-Effects Continuum



Progress to Date

- Toxics in local seafood found to pose physiological health risks, yet eating less or substitute foods poses significant cultural health risks (EPA STAR grant #R-82946701, 2002-2006)
- Swinomish began developing health indicators reflective of health on a community scale:

“a healthy community encompasses all aspects of tribal relationships and tribal priorities that affect a community.” Ranco, 2009



Key health indicators in defining and assessing health

Food security

- Availability
- Access
- Sharing

Ceremonial use

- Gatherings & ceremonies
- Giving thanks
- Feed the spirit

Education

- The Teachings
- Elders
- Youth

Community cohesion

- Participation & cooperation
- Roles
- Familiarity

Self Determination

- Healing
- Restoration
- Development

Food Security:

- **Availability**

“...you dig, you get a lot of oil filled shells and sand in your clam shells and you don’t have no more clams left... It [pollution] depletes our clam beds.”

- **Access**

“...that was all tidelands that we should be able to go and dig on any time we want. You get out to other places that we’re supposed to dig too and they’ve got signs all over the place.”

- **Sharing**

“I’ve had an elder tell me that she was really wishing for sea eggs [urchins] and she didn’t know how to get them. There are things that are missing such as that.”

Ceremonial Use:

- **Gatherings & ceremonies**

“If there wasn’t seafood to be eaten, we really couldn’t have that ceremony [blessing of the fleet]. We’re not going to celebrate going crabbing with a slice of steak or piece of pork.”

- **Giving thanks**

“You talk about your processed food... it’s like we lack the prayers for gathering this food.”

- **“Feed the Spirit”**

“..they lose the power and the success and the spirit of the ceremonies and of the gatherings without the traditional foods, because it’s all central. It’s like when people come... and you feed their spirit with the stuff... Their soul... the spirit is hungry for that...”

Education:

- **The Teachings**

“I think its accessibility and I think that there has been a loss in that consistency from generation to generation that it hasn’t been passed from one generation to the next.”

- **Elders**

“The government imprisoned our elders for teaching the old ways... and so people became afraid of the traditional way[s] of life and would stay from them...”

- **Youth**

“A lot of our youth don’t know some of the things... like octopus, sea eggs, or sea urchins... they have no clue as to what it is or even how to eat it.”

Community Cohesion:

- **Participation & cooperation**

“We are more concerned about our own immediate family and not our part of the community...”

- **Roles**

“We still have our fisherman. We still have our clam diggers.”

- **Familiarity**

“...[if] it's purchased, it doesn't come from anywhere we're familiar with... I don't know where those clams came from in that store.”

Self Determination:

- **Healing**
 - the availability of and access to healing opportunities such as traditional medicines, language programs and other culturally integral community health
- **Development**
 - the ability for a community to determine and enact their own, chosen community and economic enrichment activities in their homelands
- **Restoration**
 - the ability for a community to determine and enact their own, chosen environmental or habitat restoration programs

Next Steps: Our new EPHI grant

- Establish a Coast Salish tribal rep group to refine the indicators and assess the current health status of tribal EPH based on the indicators
 - Rank indicators on descriptive scale (i.e., good to poor)
 - Possibly weight the indicators
- Review and verify results with Elders, cultural groups and tribal councils in Salish Sea region

*“Like we say, it’s our spiritual food [seafood] so it feeds our soul; so it might poison our body, but then we’d rather nourish our soul.”—
Swinomish elder*

Thank you.



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