

INDIGENOUS AWARENESS TRAINING FIELD BULLETIN

TRADITIONAL FOREST-RELATED KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous Peoples hold deep traditional forest-related knowledge due to countless generations building a relationship with the forest for subsistence and well-being. Respecting Indigenous Peoples' traditional forest-related knowledge is an essential part of sustainable forest management.

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL FOREST-RELATED KNOWLEDGE?

For millennia, Indigenous Peoples have maintained deep relationships with nature and the forests in which they live. In addition to being an important source of food, medicine, and materials for everyday life, forests are an important space for education, healing, and spiritual connection.

Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge evolved from these forest relationships and has been passed from generation to generation to today. It is defined by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification standards as, "Forest-related knowledge owned and maintained by Indigenous Peoples as a result of their traditional use of or tenure on forestland."

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The term "traditional" should not be interpreted as exclusively knowledge or Indigenous practices performed using ancient tools or methods. Canadian law recognizes that Indigenous knowledge and practices evolve over time, alongside new technologies or insights. Accordingly, **forests inspire culture and "traditional" means a practice or activity that is long-established and deeply embedded in Indigenous cultures and ways of life.**

RESPECTING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Traditional knowledge is a source of **highly specialized local information, gathered through many generations of unbroken observation and experience.** It greatly benefits sustainable forest management plans and practices, and should be treated with deep respect.

Many culturally important sites and Indigenous practices observed in the forest, such as trapping and berry picking, are grounded in traditional knowledge. These practices may also be protected Aboriginal or treaty rights. **Respecting traditional knowledge is therefore an essential part of sustainable forest management.**

Visit forests.org/indigenous-online-courses to learn more.

USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous Peoples have an absolute right to ownership, control, access, and possession of their traditional knowledge. This includes the right to share as much or as little as they deem necessary protect the value of culturally important sites and practices, and to do so in ways that knowledge-holders deem appropriate.

Forest managers that recognize and respect local traditional knowledge have a strong foundation for meaningful relationship building and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. Traditional knowledge shared by Indigenous Peoples does not become the property of the recipient. Recipients can only use and share traditional forest-related knowledge through the consent of the original Indigenous knowledge-holder.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Traditional knowledge is held by Indigenous Peoples over countless generations of cumulative relationships with forests and may be tied to protected rights.
2. Traditional knowledge can provide highly specialized local forest-related information that greatly benefits sustainable forestry planning and practices.
3. Indigenous Peoples have an absolute right to their traditional knowledge and must consent to its ongoing use, even after it is shared.



TAILGATE DISCUSSION

Are you aware of any forest management planning or practices that have been informed by traditional knowledge?

In what ways could local traditional forest-related knowledge improve our forest practices?