

“Traditional Knowledge involves the practices of the Elders and is based upon customary law. The essence of TK is found in the language of the people. . . . [TK includes, among other elements:] ceremonies, language, teachings, dance & drum, hunting, housing, planting, harvesting, arts and crafts, storytelling, technology, governance, sacred sites, songs.” (Centre for Traditional Knowledge, nd)

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“Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and

“The GNWT [Government of the Northwest Territories] policy defines traditional knowledge as ‘[k]nowledge and values which have been acquired through experience, observation, from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another.’ ” (Abele 1997:iii)

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“Traditional Ecological Knowledge is a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature. Traditional Knowledge is cumulative and dynamic. It builds upon the historic experiences of a people and adapts to social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political change. The quantity and quality of Traditional Knowledge differs among community members according to their gender, age, social standing, profession and intellectual capabilities. While those concerned about biological diversity will be most interested in knowledge about the environment, this information must be understood in a manner which encompasses knowledge about the cultural, economic, political and spiritual relationships with the land (Brockman and Legat, 1995). ‘It provides a distinctive worldview of which outsiders are rarely aware, and at best can only incompletely grasp’ (Greaves 1996).” (Brockman and others 1997:n.p.)

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“Aboriginal traditional knowledge is based on direct experience, testing, observation of patterns over long periods of time, and teachings and recording in the collective memory through oral tradition, storytelling, ceremonies and songs. Its validity is demonstrated by the survival techniques that have been successfully used by countless generations of Native Americans. it does not, therefore, need to be authenticated by using the criteria of modern occidental science.” (Augustine n.d.)

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“A host of definitions contain some reference to the fact that traditional knowledge is handed down through the generations, can be acquired through first hand experience, has a spiritual component, is dynamic and evolving, etc. While there is a near universal agreement that Aboriginal elders and people closest to the land have more TK than younger Aboriginal people, such definitions fail to consider that TK exists within a larger system of understanding and cultural context from which it cannot and should not be separated.” (Stevenson 1998:n.p.)

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“. . . [W]hat is ‘traditional’ about traditional knowledge is not its antiquity, but *the way it is acquired and used*. In other words, the social process of learning and sharing knowledge, which is unique to each indigenous culture, lies at the very heart of its ‘traditionality’. Much of this knowledge is actually quite new, but it has a social meaning, and legal character, entirely unlike the knowledge indigenous peoples acquire from settlers and industrialized societies. This is why we believe that protecting indigenous knowledge necessarily involves the recognition of each

peoples' own laws, and their own processes of discovery and teaching.” (Four Directions Council 1996:5; emphasis in original)

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“Traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) is generally defined as the body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, empirical observations about the local environment, and certain rules and views that affect resource use.” (Beverly-Qamaniruaq Caribou Management Board 1996:s1.7)

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“The indigenous people of the world possess an immense knowledge of their environments, based on centuries of living close to nature. Living in and from the richness and variety of complex ecosystems, they have an understanding of the properties of plants and animals, the functioning of ecosystems and the techniques for using and managing them that is particular and often detailed. In rural communities in developing countries, locally occurring species are relied on for many – sometimes all – foods, medicines, fuel, building materials, and other products.

intimate knowledge of the land, its physiographic and natural features, climate, and wildlife, and the relationships between all aspects of the environment. Although in many uses it refers to knowledge of Indigenous peoples, others with intimate knowledge and experience of the land also have developed traditional ecological knowledge. (FSC Canada 2004:144)

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“ Includes, but is not limited to knowledge of:
behaviour, distribution or cycles of fish, wildlife and plant life;
broader climatic changes or cycles;
local or geomorphologic responses to natural or human disturbances;
population densities or changes in fish and wildlife;
qualitative information about the utility of a variety of medicinal, edible, or material resource plants;
requirements or activities needed to maintain or enhance local .” (FSC Canada 2003:41; emphasis in original)

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“The following list of characteristics of traditional ecological knowledge is adapted from the research and writings of Clarkson et al. (1992); Berkes (1993); Doubleday (1993); Tyler (1993); Wavey (1993); Mitchell (1994); and Cole (n.d.).The list incorporates a non-indigenous view of traditional ecological knowledge but is based on discussions with, input from, and writings by indigenous people. Traditional ecological knowledge is:

- Holistic*: all things are interconnected and nothing is comprehended in isolation;
- Intuitive*: based on deeply held holistic understanding and knowledge;
- Qualitative*: knowledge is gained through intimate contact with the local environment, while noting patterns or trends in its flora, fauna, and natural phenomena. It is based on data collected by resource users through observation and hands-on experience;
- Transmitted intergenerationally by oral tradition*: teaching is accomplished through stories and participation of children in culturally important activities;
- Governed by a Supreme Being*: the Creator defines a moral universe with appropriate laws;
- Moral*: there are right ways and wrong ways to relate to the environment;
- Spiritual*: rooted in a social context that sees the world in terms of social and spiritual relations among all life forms. All parts of the natural world are infused with spirit. Mind, matter, and spirit are perceived as inseparable. Traditional ecological knowledge, in practice, exhibits humility and a refined sense of responsibility; it does not aim to control nature;
- Based on mutual well-being, reciprocity, and cooperation*: these promote balance and harmony between the well-being of the individual and the well-being of the social group;
- Non-linear*: views time and processes as cyclical;

Often contextualized within the spiritual: may be based on cumulative, collective practical and spiritual experience. Traditional ecological knowledge may be revised daily and seasonally through the annual cycle of activities (as required);

Communal: general knowledge and meaning are shared among individuals horizontally, not hierarchically; and

Promoting of stewardship: takes a proactive approach to environmental protection and an ecosystem approach to resource management.” (Clayoquot Sound Scientific Panel 1995:14)

effective coordination and cooperation (rules and taboos); and the fourth is referred to as the worldview or ‘cosmovision’ (religion, belief, and ethics). . . .

. . . . Lastly, it is important to realize the important role of language in the transmission of TEK, the vehicle by which taxonomic systems, metaphysical perceptions, and codified knowledge are passed from generation to generation. Thus, in order for TEK to survive (and prove itself useful in the modern world) so must the language to which it is intricately linked. Although the TEK community is beginning to recognize ‘the inextricable link between cultural and biological diversity’, linguistic diversity is often not on the agenda of many global forums.” (Indigenous Peoples’ Restoration Network 2006:n.p.)

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“Western science has been defined as a systematic approach, a methodological approach to answering questions. Science is equated with knowledge, and it is the development of knowledge that promotes the solution of problems. The ‘western’ scientist knows that science is based upon the principles of repeatability and predictability. In terms of the northern experience, science also equates to traditional knowledge, and southern scientists must never forget that traditional knowledge is science.” (Hobson 1992:n.p.)

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