

BV Research Centre
Suggested Traditional Knowledge Research Protocol
(DRAFT)

Background:

Traditional knowledge (TK) can be broadly defined as a cumulative, collective body of knowledge, experience and values held by societies with a history of subsistence. Aboriginal people have acquired TK through centuries of living on their territories. This knowledge is an essential source of information about the natural environment and its resources, the use of natural resources, and the relationship of people to the land and to each other.

In recent years, awareness of the value of TK has continued to grow, supported by legal decisions (i.e. *Delgamuukw*, *Sparrow*, etc.), land claims and treaty negotiations (i.e. Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement, Nunavut, etc.), and the increased role and voice of Aboriginal people in environmental research, governance, and decision-making. Various projects and legal agreements – including the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and proposed *Species at Risk Act* – recognize the fundamental importance of TK and participation of Aboriginal people in environmental decision-making. This increased recognition has fostered an effort to link TK with science, particularly in natural resource management.

Environment Canada has attempted to incorporate greater TK into management research, planning, and decision-making (ex. / Northern Contaminants Program) and suggests two main reasons for doing so:

- a) “a greater breadth and depth of environmental information can be brought to bear, along with a more holistic understanding of the relationships among living beings and their environments... TK either on its own or in conjunction with science can greatly aid in predicting and preventing the potential environmental impact of development, as well as informing wise land-use and resource management.”, and;
- b) “environmental decision making has historically been the domain of government bureaucrats and managers trained in the scientific tradition, who may have little understanding of the cultural context in which Aboriginal people live. With the advent of increased self-determination in many regions (e.g., land claims, treaty entitlement settlements), Aboriginal people are seeking to increase their role in environmental decision making, particularly as it directly concerns their traditional lands.”

The recognition and use of TK in environmental management and research will allow for an increased role for Aboriginal people which results in capacity building in Aboriginal communities. Most importantly, such recognition of TK allows First Nations people and communities to effectively contribute to resource decision-making processes on their traditional territories.

In areas of Canada where Aboriginal treaties have been negotiated (i.e. Yukon, NWT, Nunavut) and in areas where co-management agreements exist between Aboriginal governments and federal and/or provincial governments (i.e. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve), Aboriginal participation in research, planning, and decision-making has been prevalent.

Traditional Knowledge, Scientific Research, and Funding Agencies

Since TK has become more prevalent in many aspects of resource management, negotiations and consultation with First Nations and new policy and legislation (i.e. BC government New Relationship), funding agencies are now shifting their program focus. For example, the Sustainable Forest Management Network is incorporating specific research programs around TK and incorporating it into

standard “western-based” scientific research. Furthermore, sound and comprehensive research should consider all perspectives and data. Since TK is sometimes not considered, some research strategies may be neglecting a key perspective.

Bulkley Valley Research Centre TK Policy:

Based on respect for Aboriginal peoples, recognition of past legal decisions regarding Aboriginal title and rights (i.e. *Delgamuukw and Gisdaywa v. the Queen*, *Haida Nation v. Province of BC and Weyerhaeuser*, *Taku Tlingit v. BC Environmental Assessment Office*, etc.) and potential for future treaties, co-management agreements, and/or legal decisions, the BV Research Centre should adopt a TK Policy in order to further our directive for good research practices. Our TK Policy should consider the following principles and best practices.

Principles:

- (1) Traditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of BV Research Centre programs, projects, and services.
- (2) When traditional knowledge is involved and incorporated into programs, projects and services it should be administered in a manner consistent with the beliefs, customs, knowledge, values, and languages of the traditional knowledge holders involved.
- (3) Oral tradition is a reliable source of information about traditional knowledge.
- (4) The primary responsibility for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge lies with Aboriginal people.
- (5) The primary focus of any traditional knowledge research should be the Aboriginal community.

Best Practices

- Respect the ownership, source and origins of the knowledge and the needs and sensitivities of its holders, and obtain their approval and involvement.
- Take the time needed to establish a strong, trusting relationship based on honesty, openness and sharing.
- Work on projects of common interest and benefit.
- Continuously foster communication between partners
- Provide value-added knowledge back to the community in the form of useful products and services, and share equitably with the TK holders any benefits arising from the use of TK.

(adapted from Environment Canada - <http://www.ec.gc.ca>)

Methodology for TK Consideration in BV Research Centre Projects

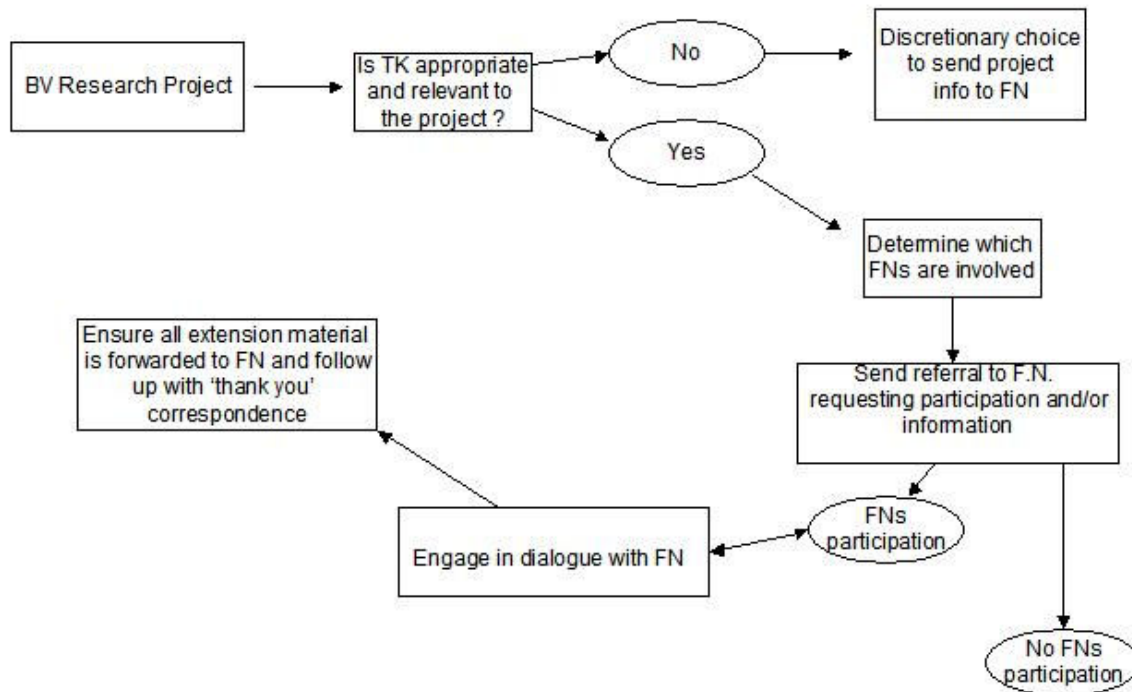
Consideration for incorporating TK into BV Research Centre projects will need to begin at the proposal writing stage and approximate the steps outlined in the flowchart below. Projects that will involve fieldwork must consider First Nations consultation, with the first step determining which First Nation traditional territory the fieldwork will occur within. Once the FN's groups have been defined, we should:

- Send referral letter to First Nations with the following info:
 - Research area, research topic, intent of research, date of inception and completion, and proposed deliverables.
 - Ask First Nations if they have any information that they would consider relevant to the project, and/or mutually define a FN's participation strategy regarding the project(s).
- If First Nations are interested, The BV Research Centre may submit a short general summary of work for First Nation newsletters and other communications.

- If First Nations provide information, the BV Research Centre will incorporate into project when possible.
- Ensure interested and participating First Nations are included in all extension work and project deliverables.
- Upon completion of the project, send participating First Nations letters of appreciation.

Budgetary considerations will need to be incorporated into BV Research Centre projects at the proposal writing stage. This process can be implemented once for several BV Research Centre projects. BV Research Centre staff and researchers will perform it jointly.

Table 1. Draft TK Policy Flowchart



Note: This process can be done once for several BV Research Centre projects