

CONTACT INFORMATION

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GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE POLICY

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



Photo: Sahtu Renewable Resources Board

In 1997, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) established a government-wide Traditional Knowledge Policy, currently referred to as Traditional Knowledge Policy 53.03. According to this Policy:

The Government recognizes that Aboriginal traditional knowledge is a valid and 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, and will incorporate traditional knowledge into government decisions and actions where appropriate.

The definition of traditional knowledge guiding the Policy is:

...knowledge and values, which have been acquired through experience, observation, from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another.

The Traditional Knowledge Policy calls upon the GNWT to adhere to the following principles:

- the primary responsibility for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge lies with Aboriginal people;
- government programs and services should be administered in a manner consistent with the beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and languages of the people being served;
- traditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of government programs and services;
- the primary focus of traditional knowledge research should be the Aboriginal community;
- traditional knowledge is best preserved through continued use and practical application;
- oral tradition is a reliable source of information about traditional knowledge.





TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

The GNWT has determined that improved application of traditional knowledge in government programming and service delivery requires the following strategic initiatives, all of which are addressed in the Traditional Knowledge Policy Implementation Framework below:

- better overall government coordination of Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation;
- more consistent orientation, awareness, and training opportunities relating to traditional knowledge;
- development of stronger and more effective collaborative relationships with the holders of traditional knowledge through their Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies;
- greater acknowledgement and promotion of successful traditional knowledge initiatives;
- ongoing departmental support and guidance to personnel with respect to traditional knowledge implementation issues;
- clear commitment of the resources required to implement the Traditional Knowledge Policy; and
- measures to monitor and report on traditional knowledge implementation initiatives.



TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

This Implementation Framework provides direction to GNWT departments and agencies for effective, respectful, and appropriate incorporation of traditional knowledge into government programs and services. The GNWT recognizes that some departments and agencies have a greater obligation than others to incorporate traditional knowledge into program and service delivery.

Coordination:

GNWT departments will participate in an Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group coordinated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR). This Working Group will discuss, plan, and review government-wide initiatives associated with the Traditional Knowledge Policy. This Working Group will report to the Senior Management Committee of Deputy Ministers.

Awareness and Training:

The GNWT will identify and initiate staff orientation, awareness, and training activities that will result in greater understanding of the value and appropriate application of traditional knowledge in government program and service delivery.

Collaboration:

As an essential component of Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation, GNWT departments and agencies will maintain strong working relationships with Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies that represent the holders of traditional knowledge. Collaborative research and programming initiatives are encouraged.

Promotion:

GNWT departments and agencies will document, acknowledge, and report on traditional knowledge initiatives on a regular basis.

Support and Guidance:

GNWT personnel preparing to incorporate traditional knowledge information in their work will have reasonable access to appropriate information sources and materials.

Resources:

GNWT departments and agencies will carry out a realistic appraisal of their obligations under the Traditional Knowledge Policy and resource traditional knowledge initiatives as warranted.

Accountability:

GNWT departments and agencies will maintain accountability for Traditional Knowledge Policy implementation, depending on the nature and extent of individual departmental and agency obligations, through measures that include:

- identifying and monitoring traditional knowledge initiatives as a component of the standard business planning process;
- developing and implementing consistent departmental traditional knowledge planning documents;
- contributing to an annual report on GNWT traditional knowledge initiatives.