



# Indigenous Land-Based Knowledge

Thinking generally about these concepts, Indigenous land-based knowledge includes a vast, diverse and sophisticated body of knowledge of a group of peoples that has been generated over thousands of years, is passed down from one generation to another, and continues to evolve over time. It is knowledge that pertains not only to cultures and beliefs, but also physical space, environments and place. As noted by the Assembly of First Nations:

“Although there is no universally accepted definition of “traditional knowledge”, the term is commonly understood to refer to collective knowledge of traditions used by Indigenous groups to sustain and adapt themselves to their environment over time. This information is passed on from one generation to the next within the Indigenous group. Such Traditional Knowledge is unique to Indigenous communities and is rooted in the rich culture of its peoples. The knowledge may be passed down in many ways, including storytelling, ceremonies, dances, traditions, arts and crafts, ideologies, hunting and trapping, food gathering, food preparation and storage, spirituality, beliefs, teachings, innovations, medicines.”

The term Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is perhaps the most popular term used to refer more directly to the knowledge that First Peoples' have in relation to the natural world, and specifically the distinct ecosystems and landscapes in their traditional environments. In this learning bundle we use the phrase Indigenous land-based knowledge in place of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Our rationale is that the way in which TEK is usually taken up ignores the spiritual nature of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. There is not a universally recognized definition of Indigenous land-based knowledge, but in helping students understand this concept, the following points may be useful:

- Indigenous land-based knowledge is local knowledge pertaining to the particular territories in which people live, which has been (and continues to be) passed down from generation to generation. While Indigenous groups share some common values and worldviews, local knowledge captures the nuances and specifics of place, about local ecosystems, sustainable use of resources and the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things.
- Indigenous land-based knowledge is knowledge about how to live and thrive in a particular place. For Indigenous peoples around the world, Indigenous land-based knowledge has allowed communities to flourish for thousands of years, with knowledge passed on from one generation to the next.
- The environmental knowledge of generations, about a specific local place is a component of Indigenous land-based knowledge and is very important in the study of science, and thus this aspect Indigenous land-based knowledge (commonly referred to as TEK) is used widely in various fields of science, such as resource management, climate change and sustainability. (greatbearssea.net)



It is important to recognize that Indigenous Knowledge or Traditional Knowledge does not just encompass Indigenous land-based knowledge, but also a variety of other systems of knowledge including (but not limited to) cultural, historical, economic, political and societal information belonging to a group of peoples. (greatbearsea.net)

An important part of Indigenous Land-Based Knowledge is knowing the timing of events in the life cycles of plants and animals. For example, certain species act as signals for other life cycle events or natural phenomenon. Part of Indigenous land-based knowledge involves observing the signals and relating it to food harvesting. For example, some people watch for the emergence of strawberries in the spring because it indicates that many other plant relatives will soon reveal themselves. Others may look to the time at which ice recedes from a lake. This indicates that fish will soon be ready to be caught. Signals can also be read in the sky, such as the phases of the moon, the appearances of stars and the position of the sun. (greatbearsea.net)

Other signals can be read by those who have the knowledge to predict changes in the weather, or the abundance of a certain species in coming seasons. In the calendars of both the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee, many months or seasons are named for significant plants and animals. Recently the seasonal indicators upon which Indigenous land-based knowledge depends have become less predictable and reliable. For instance, In Inuktitut (the Inuit language) July means “the time when the lake and seacoast ice will break up”. It is reported, however, that this process is now often completed by the end of June. Climate variability and impacts of environmental changes have caused considerable concern for First Nations. There have been increased observations of environmental change which is concerning to First Nations who rely on their resilient relationship to the land. These observations and perspectives are important to include to discussion and considerations of global climate change.

Some questions that can guide your thinking about Indigenous Land-Based Knowledge include:

- What is your relationship to land? How do you sustain this relationship?
- Have you been disconnected to the land you are on, in any way?
- What actions can you take to reconnect yourself to land?
- How do you practice gratitude and reciprocity with the land you are on?
- What has the land where you come from, taught you so far in your life?
- How does Indigenous Land-Based learning benefit every student?

## A Few Resources to Guide Your Thinking

### Great Bear Sea

<https://greatbearsea.net/about/>

### Indigenous Land-Based Learning

[https://etfofnmi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Book\\_Land-Acknowledgement.pdf](https://etfofnmi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Book_Land-Acknowledgement.pdf)

### Land as Teacher: Understanding Indigenous Land-Based Education

<https://en.ccunesco.ca/ideallab/indigenous-land-based-education>

### Learning the Land

<https://learningtheland.ca>

### Introduction to Land-Based Education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F6hg8uwZuQ>

### What is Land-Based Learning? A Digital Forum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOUBbsNswLY>