

## **Northwest Territories policy 51.06: Traditional knowledge**

Government of the Northwest Territories, Canada

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The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes that the aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Territories have acquired a vast store of traditional knowledge through their experience of centuries of living in close harmony with the land. 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.

This Policy is based on the following principles:

1. The primary responsibility for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge lies with aboriginal people.
2. Government programs and services should be administered in a manner consistent with the beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and languages of the people being served.
3. Traditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of Government programs and services.
4. The primary focus of traditional knowledge research should be the aboriginal community.
5. Traditional knowledge is best preserved through continued use and practical application.
6. Oral tradition is a reliable source of information about traditional knowledge.

### ***Reference***

For elaboration of this Policy, refer to Directive.

## **SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all departments, agencies and employees of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **1. *Aboriginal cultural organization***

Any local, regional or Territorial organization which promotes aboriginal culture in the Northwest Territories.

### **2. *Program department***

A department of the Government which delivers programs to the public.

### **3. *Research Institute***

Includes universities, research associations affiliated with universities, and government sponsored research organizations.

### **4. *Traditional knowledge***

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.

## **PROVISIONS**

### **1. *Authority and Accountability***

#### **(a) *Executive Council***

Approves government-wide traditional knowledge initiatives.

#### **(b) *Ministers***

(i) Consider recommendations from communities and aboriginal cultural organizations regarding the incorporation of traditional knowledge into the design and delivery of government programs, and take action as appropriate;

(ii) Respond to requests for in-kind support from nongovernmental organizations.

#### **(c) *Minister of Renewable Resources***

(i) Responsible for coordination of Government of the Northwest Territories traditional knowledge initiatives approved by Executive Council;

(ii) Ensures that traditional knowledge about the natural environment is taken into consideration in all environmental management actions and decisions of the Government.

*(d) Deputy Ministers: Program Departments*

(i) assign responsibility for traditional knowledge coordination within their departments;

(ii) Identify program areas where the study or application of traditional knowledge is appropriate;

(iii) Make recommendations to Ministers with regard to the incorporation of traditional knowledge into the design and delivery of programs;

(iv) Make recommendations to Ministers with regard to requests for in-kind support from nongovernmental organizations.

*(e) Deputy Minister of Renewable Resources*

In consultation with other Deputy Ministers, coordinates the implementation of government-wide traditional knowledge initiatives.

*(f) Traditional Knowledge Coordinators*

At the direction of the Deputy Ministers:

(i) Monitor traditional knowledge projects, studies and other initiatives relevant to the program areas of their departments;

(ii) Participate in the ongoing exchange of information about traditional knowledge research and developments;

(iii) Provide support upon request to communities, aboriginal cultural organizations and research institutions conducting traditional knowledge studies or projects, as time and resources permit;

(iv) Identify areas where traditional knowledge could successfully be incorporated into the design or delivery of a government program, and make recommendations.

*(g) Science Institute of the Northwest Territories*

(i) Licenses all scientific research in the Northwest Territories in accordance with the Scientists Act;

(ii) Maintains a data base of traditional knowledge research conducted in the Northwest Territories;

(iii) Promotes and supports the study, documentation and application of traditional knowledge;

## ***2. Support to Initiatives***

The Government may provide, upon request, in-kind support to communities, aboriginal cultural organizations and research institutions which wish to conduct studies or projects related to traditional knowledge in the Northwest Territories. Such support might include: providing information, assisting with literature reviews, assisting with program design, or assisting with access to government or nongovernment funding.

Requests for such support should be directed to Ministers of the appropriate program departments. Provision of in-kind support will be at the discretion of the Minister. Should the requests involve a substantial amount of staff time or departmental resources, Ministers may request written substantiation of requests.

## ***3. Prerogative of the Executive Council***

Nothing in this Directive shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take actions, with respect to traditional knowledge, outside the provisions of this Directive.