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**DRAFT REPORT**

**OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE**

**ON TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

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January 7, 1990

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The value of traditional knowledge is increasingly being recognized in the Northwest Territories and internationally. A formal and broad-based commitment by the Government of the Northwest Territories is required to create a climate where traditional knowledge can be used to solve northern problems.

Rapid social change and the death of more aboriginal elders each year add to the urgency of documenting and increasing traditional knowledge use. Aboriginal peoples consider the preservation and use of their information and view of the world as critical to their survival as distinct cultures, and to determining for themselves a place in the modern world. Non-aboriginal institutions and people are acknowledging that traditional knowledge has practical applications in today's society, particularly in efforts to responsibly manage the environment and renewable resources.

The Leader of the Government of the Northwest Territories has recognized that traditional knowledge has wider applications in the north. He established the Ministerial Committee on Traditional Knowledge to define traditional knowledge, examine its current and potential use, and identify obstacles and solutions which will increase its influence in northern society.

### The Meaning of Traditional Knowledge

The traditional knowledge of the Dene, Inuit, Inuvialuit and Metis has roots firmly based in the northern landscape. Traditional knowledge offers a view of the world, aspirations and an avenue to "truth" different from those held by Euro-Canadians whose knowledge has its source in Judeo-Christian philosophy.

Traditional Knowledge is knowledge that derives from, or is rooted in the traditional way of life of aboriginal people. Traditional knowledge is the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe. This encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, relationships between people, and, is reflected in language, social organization, values, institutions and laws.

### Current Use of Traditional Knowledge

Efforts to determine in a comprehensive manner the current use of traditional knowledge were hampered by the lack of time available

to the Committee to do the necessary research, and a lack of common understanding about traditional knowledge, how it is transmitted, its role in northern society, or appropriate ways to integrate it.

Use of traditional knowledge is clearly increasing within the NWT. The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, the Departments of Education, Culture and Communication and Renewable Resources, and Arctic College are among the institutions attempting to use the traditional assumptions, values, perceptions and information which aboriginal societies have to offer. However, there is no criteria for determining appropriate use. While standards have to be flexible to accommodate a variety of situations, activities and the desires of aboriginal peoples and communities, guidelines are essential to provide direction and for evaluation and monitoring of increased use.

The appropriate use of traditional knowledge can best be determined by aboriginal people.

### Potential Use of Traditional Knowledge

The attempts so far to use traditional knowledge have not yet met the aspirations of aboriginal peoples. Further potential exists in all institutions, in the laws and policies which affect the development of programs and services. The preservation and appropriate use of traditional knowledge must become a guiding principle. All laws, institutions, programs and research have a cultural base. The influence and use of traditional knowledge must increase within the GNWT if it is to reflect the people it serves.

The challenge is to openly examine and record traditional values and approaches to knowledge, as well as Euro-Canadian social and institutional structures. Elders who participated in the work of the Ministerial Committee identified priorities for increasing the influence of traditional knowledge. They want to formally resume their responsibilities in providing guidance to leaders, communities and individuals to solve today's problems. They want institutions to reflect aboriginal values, and schools to educate young people in both the traditional and Euro-Canadian knowledge systems. Elders also place importance on having their view of the world, their values and their traditional lifestyles documented for the use of future generations and to make them accessible and credible today.

### The Obstacles

The integration of traditional knowledge into northern society currently relies on individual initiative, abilities and priorities, or the strength of community pressure. There is no formal commitment or support to balancing the use of traditional knowledge with Euro-Canadian goals, priorities, structures or

institutions. The use of traditional knowledge at the political level is limited with no formal avenue for elders to provide advice.

Despite the aboriginal majority in the NWT population, there is widespread ignorance about traditional knowledge, why it is important to promote its use, or its potential benefit for northern society. There are few opportunities for holders of traditional knowledge and professionals and government employees to exchange information and experiences which would increase their understanding of different forms of knowledge and the values and perceptions which they produce.

Appropriate use of traditional knowledge, in schools and elsewhere, relies on information about traditional perceptions, ways of living and values. There is a shortage of research and documentation of traditional knowledge, and its implementation. Such research can be a sensitive matter and no guidelines exist. The information which does exist is often inaccessible.

Promotion of traditional knowledge is primarily the responsibility of aboriginal peoples. However, the resources for aboriginal people to effectively increase its influence are scarce. The vitality of aboriginal languages is necessary to maintain traditional knowledge.

#### The Solutions

The Ministerial Committee recommends that the GNWT make a formal commitment to apply traditional knowledge within legislation, policy, programs, services and constitutional development initiatives. The Committee acknowledges that a long-term development process within northern communities and institutions is required before this commitment can be fully realized. Broad-based increases in the use of traditional knowledge will also depend on increased co-operation and sharing of resources between government, aboriginal cultural organizations and holders of traditional knowledge.

It is recommended that a Territorial Elders Council and a government/non-government Traditional Knowledge Co-ordinating Committee be established to co-ordinate implementation plans to fulfil the GNWT commitment. Increased financial support is required for aboriginal cultural organizations to work together with the GNWT to oversee research into the current and potential use of traditional knowledge, the financial, political and social benefits, and to develop guidelines for traditional knowledge research.

The Ministerial Committee also recommends that the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories take responsibility for the collection, cataloging and distribution of traditional knowledge information to increase its access. In the critical area of

education, traditional knowledge research must be included in the mandate of Centres for Teaching and Learning so that the development of appropriate curriculum and learning materials is not delayed by the lack of appropriate research.

Developing awareness of traditional knowledge and its potential requires promotion aimed at the general the public. The contributions of traditional knowledge must be promoted and healthy public discussion encouraged. The demand for formal opportunities for professionals and government employees to experience traditional teaching and learning methods while increasing their awareness must be met. As well, the GNWT must recognize the value of traditional knowledge by accommodating employees who pursue traditional activities. The importance of aboriginal languages to traditional knowledge must be recognized in the Aboriginal Languages Implementation Plan and in the identification of GNWT positions where aboriginal language fluency is essential to the increased use of traditional knowledge.

While, much needs to be done within the north to remove obstacles to the increased use of traditional knowledge, the GNWT and aboriginal cultural organizations must also aggressively advocate increased use of traditional knowledge by the federal government and other institutions whose actions affect northerners.

## INTRODUCTION

The survival of Inuit, Inuvialuit and Dene depended for thousands of years on their knowledge, special relationship with their environment, their ways of organizing themselves, and their values. Traditional knowledge was passed on from one generation to the next. It was based on thousands of years of observation and testing.

In the relatively recent history of the Northwest Territories, western assumptions and the accumulated knowledge of Euro-Canadians have come to form the basis for most of the institutions, laws, programs, activities and policies of both government and non-government organizations.

While physical survival is no longer a daily struggle, northern aboriginal peoples have become aware that the preservation and continued use of their traditional knowledge is fundamental to their cultural survival as distinct peoples in the modern world.

The majority of the population of the Northwest Territories is aboriginal. Despite their numbers, Inuit, Dene, Metis and Inuvialuit residents have had limited success in incorporating their world view, aspirations, assumptions and ways into the institutions operating in the north.

### A Matter of Urgency

Preserving traditional knowledge has become a matter of urgency. More and more aboriginal elders die each year without passing on their traditional knowledge to younger generations. The preservation and use of traditional knowledge is threatened by rapid social change and the difficulty of aboriginal peoples to control the pace and direction of change in their lives. As well, the current economic situation and necessity for the NWT to pay more of its own way mean there is no longer money for programs or solutions to problems which are inappropriate for the majority of northern residents.

Just one example of the economic and social cost of ignoring community values and knowledge is the construction of Edzo 20 years ago. The costs of building a new community were enormous. As predicted by community leaders during the numerous community meetings 20 years ago, the majority of people refused to move to Edzo, away from easy access to their fish nets and other renewable resources and their traditional travel routes.<sup>1</sup> The social disruptions of building Edzo include the bussing of Rae students 24 kilometres to school which continues today. In the meantime, huge new investments have resolved the original public health and other problems in Fort Rae.

Attempted community moves are perhaps the most dramatic and costly examples in the north of failures to recognize and accommodate the



perceptions and aspirations of aboriginal peoples. The limited success of northern institutions, to accommodate the goals, priorities and assumptions which result from the differing world view of Inuit, Dene, metis and Inuvialuit, continues today. The social provisions aboriginal peoples have negotiated in final and tentative land claims agreements, on-going demands for self-determination, and the nature of the unresolved social, economic and political problems within the north illustrate this lack of success.

#### Northern and International Recognition of Traditional Knowledge

The pressure to formally recognize and increase the use of traditional knowledge within public institutions is growing, not only in the Northwest Territories, but around the world in areas where aboriginal people have become marginalized from the dominant society. The proposed current draft of a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the need to promote and protect the rights and characteristics which stem from indigenous history, philosophy of life, traditions, culture, and legal, social and economic structures.

Aboriginal rights struggles focus on the connection between traditional knowledge and aboriginal aspirations for self-determination and maintaining distinct identities and cultures. Within society at large it is becoming widely accepted that traditional knowledge can be of practical and valuable assistance in solving local and global problems, often at a savings of public money.

Political and financial costs are associated with failures to acknowledge and accommodate traditional systems of wildlife management.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of crime patterns among aboriginal people in Manitoba between 1970 and 1984 found a decrease in crime rates in communities which had resumed traditional methods of social control.<sup>3</sup>

International interest in traditional knowledge was fuelled by the 1980 World Conservation Strategy, which suggested part of the means of achieving sustainable development lie in traditional knowledge as an important source of ecological information, and in the direct involvement of local people in managing natural resources. The 1987 Bruntland Report, Our Common Future, echoed this approach. It identified aboriginal communities as "repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience" which can teach the rest of society much about sustainably managing very complex ecological systems. The Bruntland Report clearly acknowledged aboriginal institutions as crucial to the ability of aboriginal peoples to maintain harmony with nature and the environmental awareness which characterizes the traditional way of life.

In 1988, NWT Government Leader Dennis Patterson interpreted the

Report as emphasizing the importance of traditional knowledge and the leadership role it must play in "saving a planet on the brink of ecological destruction."<sup>4</sup>

At the 30th annual meeting of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO held in Yellowknife, Mr. Patterson announced his intentions to establish a traditional knowledge working group in the NWT. The use of traditional knowledge in managing the environment and renewable resources is just a first step, he said. "There is a wide spectrum of areas where traditional knowledge may have an influence on government policy and programs."

In October, 1989 the Department of Culture and Communications was directed to co-ordinate the efforts of the Ministerial Committee on Traditional Knowledge, (For Terms of Reference see Appendix A) and its first meeting was held in February, 1990.

The Ministerial Committee involved aboriginal elders, the primary holders of traditional knowledge, as much as possible in its meetings, through consultation on an individual basis, and in reviewing a draft of this report. Elders were enthusiastic about the opportunity to express their opinions and work together with elders from other cultures.

They shared their ideas on the importance of traditional knowledge, how its current lack of recognition affects both the young and the old, and how it could be integrated into the GNWT and non-government organizations. Some of the elders' suggestions for using traditional knowledge would require structural changes to government which are beyond the mandat. of th. Ministerial Committee. These are therefore not reflected in the recommendations.

#### THE MEANING OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The lack of common understanding about the meaning of traditional knowledge is frustrating for those who advocate or attempt in practical ways to recognize and use traditional knowledge.

For some, traditional knowledge is simply information which aboriginal peoples have about the land and animals with which they have a special relationship. But for aboriginal people, traditional knowledge is much more. One elder calls it "a common understanding of what life is about." Knowledge is the condition of knowing something with familiarity

gained through experience or association. The traditional knowledge of the Dene, Inuit, Metis and Inuvialuit has roots based firmly in the northern landscape and a land-based life experience of thousands of years. Traditional knowledge offers a view of the world, aspirations, and an avenue to "truth," different from those held by Euro-Canadians whose knowledge has its source in Judeo-Christian philosophy.

Typical of the knowledge systems of other cultures, traditional knowledge is value-laden. Values universally influence the pursuit of knowledge and the perceptions of cultures. The Ministerial Committee has therefore not attempted to separate values and understandings from science, or what one knows, in its definition of traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge influences the way aboriginal people choose to run their lives. It also influences one's sense of self and how one presents oneself to others. Traditional knowledge, including beliefs and skills must be recognized and used by aboriginal people for them to be assured a future place, as defined by themselves, within northern society.<sup>5</sup>

The Ministerial Committee endeavored to develop a definition which will enhance both the understanding of traditional knowledge, and its use within the Northwest Territories.

Traditional Knowledge is knowledge that derives from, or is rooted in the traditional way of life of aboriginal people. Traditional knowledge is the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe. This encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, relationships between people, and, is reflected in language, social organization, values, institutions and laws.

The term, local knowledge, is sometimes used and intended to mean the local expression of traditional knowledge. At other times it refers to knowledge which is geographically based, rather than culturally based. This might be local, but perhaps non-aboriginal, knowledge about the location of berry patches within a specific community. The Northwest Territories Sustainable Development Policy refers to "local knowledge, values and experience," without defining local knowledge. The potential for confusion has prompted the Ministerial Committee to suggest a definition of local knowledge.

Local Knowledge is a body of knowledge specific to a geographical location or period of time and may be closely intertwined with traditional knowledge.

## CURRENT USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

One of the tasks of the Ministerial Committee was to report on the current use of traditional knowledge within specific government departments and non-government organizations.

Attempts were made by Committee members to obtain and present such information on behalf of the departments or organizations they represent. Such research was severely limited by: the lack of awareness and agreement on what is the traditional knowledge of the Dene, Metis, Inuvialuit and Inuit; the absence of agreement on what constitutes use of traditional knowledge; and, time constraints.

Few departments or non-government organizations have addressed traditional knowledge in a general way, let alone researched how it is transmitted, its role in northern society, or developed implementation strategies for its use. While the use of traditional knowledge is increasing, it is difficult to determine where it is being integrated within many institutions when mandates and activities are expressed in several different terms, such as community consultation, cultural relevancy, preservation and promotion of culture, and promotion of cultural diversity. These contrast sharply to the annual reports of The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories which explicitly recognize traditional knowledge, and to one of the Institute's objectives which is overcoming the obstacles to collaboration between western science and traditional knowledge.

While it is unable to provide comprehensive research on current use, the Ministerial Committee offers some specific examples of attempts to use traditional knowledge within some institutions in the Northwest Territories.

- \* Going Fishing, is a cross-cultural science camp for young students, operated annually by the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories since 1989. It brings together Dene elders, government biologists and conservation specialists who teach both traditional and western knowledge about fish, fishing and the use of this natural resource. The sharing of information, values, skills and understandings is not only with students, but also between the Dene and non-aboriginal instructors.

The land-based camp project has been recognized by Unesco (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as an official activity of the UN's World Decade for Cultural Development. TWO camps, one in the Baffin and one near Yellowknife, are planned for 1991.

\* The Kw'atindee Bino Community Teacher Education Pilot Project based in Edzo has been submitted by the Department of Education for recognition as a Decade for Cultural Development activity. The pilot project is open to aboriginal language speakers and uses alternative teaching methods. Its' heavy emphasis on practical teaching means it could be delivered in communities rather than on the campus of an educational institution. It's aim is to develop the aboriginal language, cultural and other skills required of teachers to successfully work within the social realities found in small northern communities.<sup>6</sup>

\* The ethnoarchaeological work carried out co-operatively by Department of Culture and Communications archaeological staff and Dene in the Mackenzie Valley is a first step toward projects initiated by the Dene themselves to examine their past.

Elders have participated in the field work offering insights which have increased the accuracy of findings and approaches by archaeologists. A field school for Dene students was developed at Drum Lake in 1985 and 1986, using the traditional Dene teaching method of observation. As well as creating capable field assistants, the training goals include creating community-based heritage advisors who can assist the Dene to take a larger role in managing their cultural resources. To spread information about the field work and training to other residents within regional communities, videos have been produced in co-operation with the Department of Culture and Communications Language Bureau and Film and Television Unit.'

\* The Dene Cultural Institute was instrumental in the establishment of the Denendeh Elders Council in 1989. Efforts to support the Council are consistent with the Instituters mandate to promote aboriginal culture, language, identity and values. The Dene Cultural Institute seeks advice from the Denendeh Elders Council, and follows its direction in developing priorities and workplans.

\* The Department of Renewable Resources has incorporated into the Caribou Management Plan for Southampton Island traditional knowledge on caribou population trends obtained through interviews with Inuit harvesters. Some interviews, for example, attempted to find out if Inuit had knowledge of any advance signs of a decline in caribou populations on Coates Island. The objective was to see if there was any way to anticipate future population declines. Inuit hunters reported changes in the behaviour of the caribou and in the contents of their stomachs. The information tied in with what biologists themselves would look for, a fact that was illuminating for both the biologists and the Inuit hunters.

- \* Arctic College's Environmental Technology Program at the Nunatta Campus in Iqaluit has begun a Traditional Knowledge Project together with the Native Studies Program of Trent University. Attempts will be made to involve Inuit elders and community members in developing and delivering curriculum. Documentation has already begun on Inuit science philosophies and Inuktitut names for animals, resource harvesting techniques and places. It is expected that increasing the traditional knowledge component of the Environmental Technology Program will make western science easier to understand if it relates to the knowledge students already possess. It should also help students to translate western science concepts to people within their communities.
- \* The Department of Culture and Communications Language Bureau seeks the advice of elders in developing aboriginal language words and terms to express concepts in the areas of health, science and the law. The objective is to improve the accuracy and quality of the translation of these concepts into aboriginal languages. To involve a wider selection of elders and other community residents in the development of terminology, the Department continually solicits feedback on new terms. The additional input is considered, and information about new aboriginal language terminology distributed annually to communities.

These few examples of the use of traditional knowledge illustrate attempts to reaffirm what aboriginal people know, their perceptions and values. They acknowledge that traditional views and information have value in today's world.

#### ASSESSING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE USE

The use of traditional knowledge is increasing within the Northwest Territories beyond the few examples highlighted above. In the absence of any generally accepted criteria for determining appropriate use, it is difficult to assess where it is being used successfully. Examples of use provided to the Ministerial Committee raised a number of issues.

#### Co-Management Boards

The most extensive attention to traditional knowledge has so far been in the area of environmental knowledge and resource management. Such traditional knowledge, its role, and attempts to incorporate it into state systems, in Canada and elsewhere, have been widely documented. Several co-management regimes for wildlife and other resources have been established. Wildlife management boards, seen as a combination of aboriginal and state systems, are attempts at using traditional knowledge which have improved communication and co-operation between hunters, aboriginal communities, biologists and wildlife managers.

Co-management boards have been disappointing in other respects. The burden often still rests with individuals, outside and within government, to argue the case for the use of traditional perspectives and information, without the resources which support western approaches. Current co-management systems do not use traditional knowledge in decision making, have advisory powers only and are hampered by being simple attachments to existing systems. This restricts changes in the direction of research and in the assumptions about wildlife management which are the basis for activities and decision making. And, aboriginal input can be limited to validating government programs.<sup>8</sup>

### Aboriginal Representation

Another issue surrounding use of traditional knowledge is aboriginal representation on boards, elected bodies, or within staff complements. Since not all aboriginal people are holders of traditional knowledge, participation of aboriginal people does not guarantee the use of traditional values, perspectives, information or assumptions. At the same time, unfamiliar or culturally inappropriate structures reduces the influence of aboriginal people capable of transmitting and encouraging the use of traditional knowledge.

### Research and Documentation

While research and documentation of traditional knowledge does not constitute use as such, they pave the way for successful implementation. Initiatives such as those of the Dene Cultural Institute in the areas of medicine, justice and environmental traditional knowledge research are critical to successful future attempts to use traditional healing, social control or resource management methods and philosophies.

### **SUMMARY**

The use of traditional knowledge happens at different levels. It can be specific and formal or informal and diffuse. Appropriate use will depend on the situation, activity, and most importantly, the wishes of the aboriginal people affected. Some aspects of traditional knowledge may be inappropriate in at least some situations or for some communities.

The level of traditional knowledge use will determine whether the change occurs in goals, how decisions are made, how programs are delivered and why, and in the results. By including information about traditional Inuit lifeways within classrooms, Inuit students may become more familiar and confident about their culture. Incorporating land-based education into school curriculum might go further to meet the objectives of many Inuit parents that school prepare students to not just be responsible adults, but give them

a strong sense of what it means to be an Inuk in a northern settlement. Students should be capable of success in both worlds that the north has to offer.<sup>9</sup>

It will be a long-term process to have traditional knowledge recognized and used equally with other forms of knowledge in the north. Ideas about what constitutes use of traditional knowledge may change over time. Criteria have to be flexible to accommodate a variety of situations, activities and desires on the part of aboriginal peoples and communities. Holders of traditional knowledge must work together with government and non-government organizations to examine not just traditional concepts and use, but also the structures currently in place.

Information on how traditional knowledge is being used is necessary in the short term. It can provide models and ideas for both individuals and institutions. As well, future increases in use cannot be measured without a current information base for comparison.

#### THE POTENTIAL FOR THE USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Although the use of traditional knowledge is increasing within both government and non-government organizations, aboriginal people, especially elders, are clear that the existing systems which affect their lives are still unable to provide the stability they want to see in their communities.

The use of traditional knowledge in northern institutions will have to increase to meet the demands by aboriginal peoples to regain control over social change and the evolution of their cultures. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement on a land claim for the Western Arctic and Agreements in Principle negotiated by the Dene and Inuit have highlighted some potential areas for using traditional knowledge in northern institutions. The Tungavik Federation of Nunavut agreement in principle if ratified, for example, gives Inuit the opportunity to participate in developing social and cultural policy and designing programs and services in the Nunavut Settlement Area. It will also obligate the government to reflect Inuit goals and objectives in social and cultural policies, programs and services. The negotiation of these provisions says a great deal about how such current government programs are perceived by Inuit negotiators.



The Ministerial Committee was unable to research in a comprehensive way potential uses of traditional knowledge within the specific institutions they represent. In many cases the constraints which limited research on the use of traditional knowledge came into play - the lack of time, resources and common understanding of traditional knowledge. It also became clear that potential use exists in more than just program areas. Indeed, increased use of traditional knowledge is required in the institutions themselves, and in the laws and policies which affect the development of programs.

Whether the suggestion is revisions to the Education Act which identify formally elders as traditional knowledge educators, or placing equal legitimacy on the environmental knowledge of aboriginal residents as that given to western scientists in environmental impact assessments, potential uses of traditional knowledge cannot be identified in isolation.

The specific people affected by changes to our current institutions, holders of traditional knowledge, and in many cases other departments or governments must be part of identifying potential areas of use, priorities and deciding how aboriginal assumptions, perceptions and values can be applied most appropriately.

There is often inadequate research to determine potential areas where traditional knowledge can be used, or how that potential can best be realized. For example, the chief coroner for the NWT may well be able to integrate aboriginal values and knowledge to increase the effectiveness of her policies and work. However, there is an inadequate information base on traditional knowledge about death and dying among the Inuit, Dene, Inuvialuit and Metis on which to propose specific changes.<sup>10</sup>

The approach of both government and non-government organizations should be one where it is assumed that there is potential to integrate traditional knowledge in all decisions and programs affecting northern aboriginal peoples. The challenge facing aboriginal people and non-aboriginal northerners is to openly examine and record traditional values and approaches, as well as the Euro-Canadian social and institutional structures. Balancing the use of traditional knowledge with other forms of knowledge will be a long-term developmental process. It requires a long-term commitment from aboriginal peoples and the institutions operating in the north.

## THE PRIORITIES OF ELDERS

The elders who participated in the work of the Ministerial Committee were clear that traditional knowledge is not something that can be integrated into laws, policies, decision making or programs in a piecemeal manner. "We've got to make it more concrete, where it becomes more of a statement, so that it becomes a guiding principle for anything that has to be done."<sup>11</sup>

Outlined below are statements describing the priorities for the use of traditional knowledge as presented by the small group of elders working with the Committee.

### Leadership

Government leaders must follow more closely the traditional ways for the future of our young people.

The leaders in communities and at the territorial level are the role models for young people. The degree to which traditional knowledge is reflected in the attitudes, actions and values expressed by leaders influences not only their decisions and laws, but also the respect for, and use of traditional knowledge within families and communities.

### Role of Elders

Elders need to have a strong voice with respect to traditional knowledge. MLAs should recognize, encourage and financially support the efforts of elders willing to actively promote and teach traditional knowledge.

The Ministerial Committee was told that while many elders attempt by example and teaching, to pass on their traditional values, understandings, and skills, they want a formal advisory role, support, encouragement, and financial assistance for their efforts to keep traditional knowledge alive.

Elders have the potential to be a valuable resource to young people, aboriginal organizations, government and communities. And, many want to regain their traditional roles and responsibilities, such as providing guidance on policy and law making, teaching, and resolving conflicts and social problems.

Elders find themselves in a position where they are criticizing both elected leaders and young people. At the same time, they feel ignored and powerless to participate in decisions or give advice on how to improve things. "We can't just delegate work to educators or to government representatives. And, after delegating the work away, it seems like we sit back and watch."<sup>12</sup>

Elders appreciate that not everyone can learn the traditional ways and thinking the way they did, on the land. Modern life limits opportunities for land-based activities for young people who time spend so much time in schools and communities. As well, the written word is perceived as a process to legitimize traditional knowledge. "Our sons and grandsons don't know about what's in our heads. They haven't seen it. If we just tell them this is the way it used to be, they wouldn't believe it because they are taught to read, and whatever is written down is what they believe in."<sup>18</sup>

#### PRINCIPLES FOR THE PRESERVATION AND USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The following principles emerged from the work of the Ministerial Committee. They provide a framework for detailed recommendations, and for the joint efforts of government and non-government organizations.

1. All laws, institutions, programs and research have a cultural base.
2. GNWT programmed and services should be delivered according to the manner, values, customs and knowledge of the people being served.
3. Effective northern government and a socially and economically healthy society is best achieved by incorporating traditional knowledge into decision-making.
4. Decision making should rest as closely as possible with those affected.
5. The GNWT recognizes the urgency of preserving the traditional knowledge of the north.
6. Traditional knowledge can best be preserved and promoted by aboriginal people.
7. Traditional knowledge is best preserved through use.
8. Knowledge bases must be recognized and actively supported to grow and flourish.
9. The use of traditional knowledge concepts depends on the maintenance of aboriginal languages.

Elders want the opportunity, a formal advisory role, and the resources to actively participate in helping solve today's problems.

#### Institutions

**Government** should not dictate to us what our needs are. **We are** alive today because we were able to look after ourselves, and we survived because of our traditional knowledge. Respect for traditional ways is important so that elders will have control over their own lives.

Elders told the Ministerial Committee that survival has always depended on co-operation, sharing and self-reliance. Traditional values and knowledge have stood the test of time. Their use guaranteed survival as a people and gave expression to the purpose and fulfillment of life. Their use remains essential today as the means for aboriginal people to regain control of their own lives. "

Elders say there are a lot of different cultures on the land now, but "it's only our way of thinking that divides us."<sup>13</sup> By working together institutions can be changed to accommodate traditional knowledge and thinking. Changes should respect and foster traditional values of self-reliance, co-operation, self-respect, equality, pride, and respect for the land and all living things.

#### Education

Traditional knowledge should be formally included as part of the education of young people. The goal must be to educate young people who are able to live in both the traditional and Euro-Canadian worlds.

Elders place a great deal of importance on the education of young people. However, parental and community support for schools and students is contingent on community and parental aspirations for their children being met by the system. Those aspirations include the ability of young people to appreciate, understand and live a life which incorporates traditional values, thinking, customs and culture while participating in the industrial labour force within a rapidly changing world.

A recent survey on education by the University of Waterloo within six Dene communities found a high degree of similarity between the educational goals of Dene students and adults. The students and adults interviewed agreed that education should provide students with an understanding and ability to function in both the Dene and Euro-Canadian worlds.

Elders want their children to be teachers, doctors and lawyers, but success, whether on the land or in a profession, depends on students having a strong sense of who they are, and where they have come from. In the words of one elder: "Those who are aware and who are in school usually receive a good education and use it wisely, but those who get an education without having the consciousness and the level of understanding towards life are different, and they end up destroying what they are trying to build."<sup>14</sup>

The entire educational system must confirm and validate the experiences and knowledge of aboriginal learners, as well as the cultural context in which those experiences and knowledge exist. Increasing the involvement of elders and local people in schools would make the teacher another authority figure, rather than a replacement for traditional ones. If schools generate respect for elders and community leaders, they consequently increase the likelihood of compliance with traditional social norms within communities.

Elders told the Committee that traditional knowledge must be integrated into the curriculum and teaching materials so that it will be part of the schools, whatever the cultural background of the teacher. When possible, formal education should include traditional on-the-land activities. Elders say that this experience is the best way for young people to appreciate and understand the relationship between the traditional lifestyle and the knowledge and value system it has produced. As well, they stress the practical value of learning basic survival skills - where the good campsites and trails are, how to build a signal fire, the location of areas where there is always thin ice in winter.

Many members of the generation now having young children of their own lack a basic understanding of traditional knowledge. Elders are concerned that opportunities be made available for adult education in this area. "We don't really feel comfortable in giving them the responsibility of enhancing and preserving the culture and carrying it on. They are not ready. How do you give something as big as that away to somebody who is not responsible, especially to themselves."<sup>15</sup>

### **Social Problems**

Social problems should be handled within communities, with the assistance of elders, rather than separating people from the community or one another.

Traditionally northern aboriginal people had no choice but to solve their problems on their own w-within-their communities. The problems of alcoholism, high rates of incarceration, family violence, and

family breakdown in today's communities illustrate clearly to elders and justice and social service professionals, that the current systems are not working for aboriginal people.

"We have to start talking to one another and saying, look at this young man, this young woman is having problems. We can't just continue to have them taken out of the community, thrown away, locked away. That really hurts us."<sup>16</sup>

Elders want to be informed of, and help deal with problems before they become large. They are saddened that not only do young people not come to them with their problems, officials don't even inform them before taking young people to jail, or shelters outside the community. They told the committee that resolving social problems is traditionally the responsibility of elders, and they are willing to resume that role.

#### Renewable Resources

Because the managing of the land and the wildlife is no longer done in a traditional way and has been replaced by the government way, we' do not participate in the decisions they make. This has to change.

The Ministerial Committee was told elders cannot have their traditional knowledge about the land and animals ignored any longer. When clashes occur between government regulators and aboriginal users, because of differing information and priorities, aboriginal people begin to feel harassed.

"Then we tend to overreact and actually do the opposite of what is required under the regulations. It would be better, if, in consultation with elders, they decide what rules and regulations to enforce."<sup>17</sup>

Elders talked about how the animals are part of their life, and given to them free, not to be studied as a curiosity, or marketed for profit. They insist that efforts at co-management must be expanded to give them more say in the use and management of resources.

#### Documentation

As well as passing on knowledge orally and by example, elders are adamant about the importance of putting in writing their view of the world, their values, and information about traditional lifestyles. Their interest is twofold; to ensure their knowledge is preserved in writing for future generations, and to increase understanding, credibility and accessibility today for the youth and non-aboriginal people.

10. Oral tradition is a reliable source of information and knowledge.
11. Cultural groups are best able to identify holders of their traditional knowledge.

#### OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO THE USE OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

This Chapter addresses the obstacles to realizing the potential for using traditional knowledge within northern institutions and suggests solutions. Specific recommendations are summarized at the end of the report.

The major obstacles to the practical application of traditional knowledge within northern institutions relate to the lack of a co-ordinated effort, to the deficiency in information related to traditional knowledge, and to access and sharing of the information which does exist.

Most of the Ministerial Committees recommendations focus on the Government of the Northwest Territories. The fact is, territorial institutions provide the services or regulate the areas where the absence of traditional knowledge use has the largest impact, such as renewable resources, justice, education, health and social services. While aboriginal people have primary responsibility for ensuring the continued vitality of their societies, often a prerequisite to their successful use of traditional knowledge is the removal of obstacles imposed by government.

The efforts of elders, parents and community leaders to pass on and reinforce traditional values, lifestyles, thinking and perceptions are undermined if schools, local governments, social service policies and other government actions do not support, or directly oppose these attempts.

The GNWT also plays a significant role in establishing precedents which other governments, organizations and industry, feel compelled to follow, in such areas as labour relations and salary scales and benefits. The GNWT has a responsibility to become the model for innovative and wide-spread incorporation of traditional knowledge within the north. Its ability to represent the people it governs depends on such a commitment.

## FORMAL RECOGNITION AND COMMITMENT

While aboriginal people form a majority of the population and a majority of the elected officials in the Legislative Assembly, traditional knowledge use is limited by government mandates which reinforce western institutions and concepts. Northern institutions are based on models not derived from aboriginal cultures. It is difficult to incorporate traditional knowledge in an appropriate way into often inflexible policies, programs or systems.

Currently there is no formal or explicit commitment on the part of government departments and agencies, and organizations and contractors receiving government support to a broad-based use of traditional knowledge. Many of the attempts to use traditional knowledge, whether in a land-based learning experience for children, or in archaeological field work, are the result of personal initiative, sensitivity, openness to the right to aboriginal self-determination and respect for the knowledge of aboriginal peoples. The use of traditional knowledge relies on the personal choice, abilities and priorities of individuals who receive little formal encouragement or support, and the strength of community pressures.

Commitment to increasing the use of traditional knowledge must be accompanied by a commitment to make the required legislative, constitutional and policy changes. The Ministerial Committee heard from elders who say they have had little success in attempts to have their local school integrate traditional knowledge and learning approaches. Their experience has made them unwilling to accept simple assurances, or even policy and laws which are not backed up by adequate resources. After years of talking, they say they, "are back to square one."<sup>19</sup>

Fundamental change to encourage commitment within the public service is just one example of where policy changes could increase the use of traditional knowledge. Career paths, opportunities for promotion, job evaluations and professional development must place tangible value on attitudes, skills, experience and work records which demonstrate traditional knowledge awareness and appropriate use.

The diversity of Inuit, Dene, Inuvialuit and Metis forms of traditional knowledge, and the ability of government to accommodate the needs of non-aboriginal people in service and program delivery, demands flexibility in approaches, programs, legislation and policy.

The absence of local control and involvement in decision making and program delivery hinders the appropriate use of traditional knowledge. This fact was recognized in discussions on northern participation in the Decade for Cultural Development during the 30th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO in



Yellowknife. A summary statement dealing with education noted that "unique cultural learning will increasingly depend on community-based and local level involvement in teaching, language preservation and special schooling: this is a balance to imposed and highly structured multicultural systems."

To a large extent aboriginal communities have over time abdicated many of their traditional responsibilities. The Ministerial Committee agrees with elders that the cycle of dependency is difficult to interrupt, but that the key to regaining self-reliance is greater control over the decisions which affect peoples' lives.

#### ELDERS COUNCILS

Currently there is no formal access to traditional knowledge at the political level, where laws and financial priorities are determined. Nor are there opportunities for elders to exercise their traditional role of providing guidance to leaders. As one elder told the Committee, "according to the laws and according to the budget, our whole life is based on that."<sup>20</sup>

Those concerned about the integration of traditional knowledge view elders as the major source of this knowledge with a critical role in maintaining the vitality of aboriginal societies and transmitting knowledge to future generations.

The summary of debates and discussions at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO included a statement about the importance of elders among aboriginal cultures. "In most non-western cultures, elders are the memories, the mythologies, and consequently, the true guides to a balanced and continted existence. Elders offer a wisdom which is too scarce and valuable a resource to squander. In light of some recent cultural tragedies -- gradual erosion and loss of language, values, and most important, identity -- there is a real need, an immediate need, to draw on this collective wisdom. A true leadership role for elders around the world must be created."

While not all elders are holders of traditional knowledge, and not all holders of traditional knowledge are elders, a forum for elders to be heard and influence decision making is required. The contributions of elders cannot be limited to such forums as elders councils. Many elders, with much to contribute to researchers and others, are unwilling and uninterested in attending meetings or working within non-aboriginal systems. Elders councils can help identify these other elders and appropriate ways to approach them for assistance in understanding and using traditional knowledge.

## CREATING AWARENESS

Despite the aboriginal majority in the NWT population, there is widespread ignorance about traditional knowledge. There is little information, discussion or opportunity to learn about the significance of traditional knowledge to aboriginal peoples, why its use in northern society is important, or about how cultures evolve.

Public discussion about the concept, principles and specific proposals to use traditional knowledge and change the way we do things is healthy and fundamental to the future social, economic and political development of the territories. While economically, the Northwest Territories is compared to a Third World country, there is little appreciation that culturally it also differs from mainstream Canada.

For most non-aboriginal northerners, it is currently only informally and through individual initiative that familiarity with traditional knowledge can be acquired. The need for awareness and education extends as well to many aboriginal residents, who may want to know more about their own culture, or those of other aboriginal peoples. Even where a group of government employees, as in the Department of Health, have expressed a desire for information about traditional healing, there are no formal opportunities to meet that need. While individuals may seek to learn traditional knowledge on their own, time, opportunities, and cross-cultural "listening" skills are demanded.

Increasing the use of traditional knowledge within the NWT depends on people knowing what using traditional knowledge means, what the benefits are and for whom, where it is possible and desirable, how it can be done, and who is responsible. Appropriate in-service training for government employees depends on the involvement of northern cultural organizations in the design and delivery of such training. Emphasis should be placed on the delivery methods, as well as content. For example, the traditional way of learning, by experience, and a land-based location would assist government employees to understand the alienation of aboriginal people from Euro-Canadian systems. By reversing the dependencies which often exist in northern society, government employees can appreciate the difficulties which many aboriginal people, especially elders, experience trying to cope within institutions based in cultures other than their own.

## IMPROVING ACCESS AND SHARING OF RESOURCES

It is difficult to use something not easily accessible, so people and institutions often do not make the effort. Until accessibility improves, the use of traditional knowledge will remain outside the mainstream of northern society.

Access to information on traditional knowledge, its appropriate use, and available resource people is a major obstacle to increasing its use by people who themselves are not holders of traditional knowledge. For example, several government departments maintain that inaccessibility to traditional teaching and learning methods is an barrier to utilizing traditional knowledge in such areas as education, human resource development, and professional co-operation.

There is no central registry of available community sources of traditional knowledge, nor guidelines on how and when to use such a registry. It is difficult to determine what research has been done, or by whom, and to get copies or originals.

The ownership of artifacts and archival materials by institutions and individuals outside of the NWT also restricts accessibility to those who want to know more about traditional knowledge in order to integrate it here.

Integration efforts are ad hoc and if documented, not available for the information of all government departments or non-government organizations. This is a costly inefficiency if duplication of research, methodology, planning and program design results. Sharing as widely as possible the scarce information available is critical to reducing the costs of using traditional knowledge.

A central place for collecting, storing and distributing traditional knowledge information is required to avoid duplication and improve accessibility. To reduce unnecessary expenses, The Ministerial Committee has identified an existing independent, non-profit agency, the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, which it believes can successfully carry out this role.

#### RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

The Ministerial Committee recognizes the key role which research and documentation can and will play in the use of traditional knowledge by both aboriginal and public institutions. The urgency of research and documentation is obvious as each year more and more elders die without passing on their knowledge. Without adequate research, information will be lost to future generations, and its validity unconfirmed within professional circles.

Aboriginal people are eager to have traditional knowledge researched. Research is critical to ensuring traditional knowledge is applied in an appropriate manner. The potential for haphazard, unsuitable, though perhaps well-meaning, use increases with a continuing shortage of solid information. The innovative, successful and practical application of traditional knowledge within the NWT, must be documented and awareness created of these examples territorially, nationally and internationally.

There are some areas, such as curriculum development, where the use of traditional knowledge is severely hampered by the lack of appropriate research. The mandates for Centres for Teaching and Learning do not include research, although it is required before culturally appropriate learning materials can be developed.

Research is often painstakingly slow, and not all elders have the interest or ability to spend the time required to pass on their knowledge. Conflicts can emerge between elders and the research methods of western researchers. Fear and apprehension about how traditional knowledge will be interpreted and used and the personal consequences of sharing sensitive information can also limit the openness of some holders to share this knowledge.

Research is often deemed credible only when performed by someone who has obtained a Masters Degree or Doctorate at a recognized southern university. Aboriginal northerners, while often having a distinct and underrated advantage of aboriginal language fluency and cultural sensitivity, are not recognized as capable researchers, and have inadequate opportunity to acquire and refine these skills.

Research and documentation opportunities must be identified and maximized. During aboriginal language terminology workshops, for example, elders present valuable information which is not recorded and then must be researched at another time. A multi-disciplinary approach to research about traditional knowledge and its application is also required. For example, biologists may have better success investigating traditional wildlife management systems and their current use if they work together with anthropologists.<sup>21</sup>

Some existing research is not comprehensive and does not include databases and identified community-based resource people. The usefulness of research is undermined if the practical application of traditional knowledge is not a primary objective, or if documentation efforts are undertaken to validate or meet the exclusive needs of the existing "southern type" institutions within the NWT. Traditional knowledge must also influence the direction of research.

The criteria for northern health research, developed at a Health Research Priorities North of 60 Conference in June, 1989 in Yellowknife, could contribute to discussions on guidelines for traditional knowledge research. The conference recommendations include: that research reflect community needs and involvement; that traditional aboriginal health practices and resources be identified and incorporated into efforts to improve the health system, and, that new approaches identify, adapt and reinforce traditional values, customs and institutions which have a positive influence on community and individual self-esteem and well-being.

## SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Inuit and Dene Cultural Institutes, the Inuvialuit Social Development Program and Metis Heritage Council have been established and given mandates to work on behalf of aboriginal peoples in the area of traditional knowledge use.

The cultural organizations have perhaps the greatest expertise, as well as commitment on the use of traditional knowledge of any northern institutions. They are well-placed to continue, or assume responsibilities in the areas of community researcher training, development of research and evaluation methods and guidelines, and development and/or review and assessment of educational curriculum and traditional knowledge training courses and methods.

The shortage of money available to carry out activities and programs frustrates the appropriate use of traditional knowledge within the cultural groups, and the ability of these organizations to work co-operatively with government and others to encourage its application elsewhere. The maintenance of cultural integrity and continuity must be motivated from within aboriginal communities. It cannot be imposed by government. However, the resources for aboriginal peoples, through their cultural organizations, to successfully participate in a partnership approach with government requires financial resources beyond those currently available.

## ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Many aspects of traditional knowledge can only be expressed clearly and accurately in aboriginal languages. Some traditional concepts are difficult to translate, or expressed only in old forms of these languages, which if lost, will decrease the understanding of traditional knowledge. Transmitting traditional knowledge to young people, and assuring its survival for future generations depends on the vitality of aboriginal languages.

Discussion on northern participation in the Decade for Cultural Development during the 30th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO in Yellowknife concluded that, "recognition of indigenous languages and legislation to guarantee their survival. is necessary for maintenance of a traditional knowledge cultural base."

The inability of government and other agencies to communicate in the language of many of their clients contributes to a widening generation gap, the increased dependency of elders on others, and their loss of respect and self-esteem. It also limits the participation of elders in traditional roles as well as more modern ones.

Research and documentation of traditional knowledge, and often its use, require highly skilled translators and interpreters. Such services are often difficult to obtain, and costly when available. The interpreter/translator, resources within the GNWT are already strained. It is clear that institutions committed to the use of traditional knowledge must employ qualified people who themselves have aboriginal language fluency.

Current aboriginal language development and translation efforts tend to concentrate on the political and administrative needs associated with the Legislative Assembly and court system, or on disseminating information from the government. The need to inform others about aboriginal values, understandings and views of the world is not adequately accommodated.

Finally, there is the practical problem of translating concepts in both the oral, personalized traditional knowledge system and the written, de-personalized western system. Jargon and the way information is organized within different systems of knowledge must also be addressed to increase awareness and acceptance.

### PROFESSIONALISM

Attitudes of mistrust, arrogance and ethnocentricity by the holders of any system of knowledge can prevent sharing. There is fear that accepting the value and substance, of part or all, of another system of knowledge will threaten the value, and or use, of the system first learned. Balancing the use of traditional knowledge with current Euro-Canadian systems demands flexibility and openness to different concepts, observations, and priorities.

A major barrier to the acceptance of traditional knowledge is an attitude that the "southern", Euro-Canadian, "established", or western scientific way of doing things is the only way. Acceptance of western science by some aboriginal people is also hampered by their strongly held views about the ability or acceptability of people or governments "managing" animals or the environment, or even handling wildlife.

Differences in background, training and cultures make understanding of difference forms of knowledge difficult. "Scientists do not think the same way, study problems the same way, nor communicate knowledge in the same way as people without scientific training, especially people from other cultures."<sup>22</sup>

Traditional knowledge is often considered suspect, or unsubstantiated folklore because it is not seen as a product of the rigorous western scientific method, despite its basis in decades and centuries of empirical data. The myth that any truly objective or infallible science exists is still a problem. For example, even if much research does not depend explicitly on a value system, the

larger environment or system in which the research is pursued will never be value-free. All research, traditional, scientific, or otherwise, is influenced by the value system it is part of.

Professionals have generally worked hard to acquire their knowledge. Often it is perceived as a unique body of knowledge and in most cases is protected by credentials. Those without credentials are not valued for their knowledge. There is *no* formal recognition by society at large of the knowledge which aboriginal peoples have or of its value.

The emphasis on quantitative reasoning and the specialized nature of professional training contributes to the resistance to using traditional knowledge. The problems inherent in the application of science which often ignores the human condition are exacerbated in the north when cultural differences are also present. It is difficult to incorporate traditional approaches in such programs as Child Welfare, which would require a native psychology approach, until there is professional education which includes native perspectives.

There are few opportunities for holders of traditional knowledge and western professionals to work together on an equal footing to share their information, understandings and wisdom with each other, and with young northerners. The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories "Going Fishing" science camp is an example of a successful opportunity for Dene elders, biologists and students to do just that. This venture could serve as a model for further initiatives to improve the credibility of both western forms of knowledge among aboriginal people, and traditional forms of knowledge among western scientists and professionals.

#### ADDRESSING ISSUES **AND** INFLUENCES OUTSIDE THE **NWT**

The effectiveness of initiatives within the NWT is influenced by forces outside the direct control of northern people or government.

Federal guidelines, policy and legislation can constrain the integration of traditional knowledge into territorial and non-government programs. For example, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) is used as a cost-sharing mechanism between Ottawa and the GNWT. It prescribes clear parameters of program design. Where flexibility and encouragement to design programs to suit local needs exist, such as under the Young Offenders Act, there is a demonstrated increase in the use of traditional knowledge.

The recent public outcry and defiance of federally-imposed beluga whale quotas in the Baffin region is just one example of the results of not involving Inuit hunters in determining animal populations or conservation measures. The proposal for an independent study of beluga whale populations to incorporate traditional knowledge by Government Leader Dennis Patterson is a positive step. However, advocating the use and acceptance of traditional knowledge by federal departments, academics and professionals operating within the NWT has to become a routine matter, rather than a reaction to public outcry and defiance of regulations.

While certainly federal policies can be restrictive to the use of traditional knowledge, there is a great deal of flexibility for creative, democratic solutions to northern problems which must be taken advantage of. The federal government has in fact encouraged innovative constitutional arrangements within the NWT to accommodate aboriginal self-government. In this area and others the GNWT must be aggressive in its support and advocacy of traditional knowledge.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Ministerial Committee recognizes the reality of fiscal constraints within the GNWT, non-government organizations and private industry. A major obstacle to increasing the use of traditional knowledge within northern institutions is the real or perceived financial costs of changes to the way we do things.

In fact, changes in government occur all the time as various departments try new solutions to improve services and solve northern problems ranging from high school dropout rates to the lack of an economic base in small communities. The Ministerial Committee believes changes which more consciously incorporate the priorities, values, thinking and knowledge of northern aboriginal peoples will prove more effective and efficient than strategies which fail to use traditional knowledge.

The costs of failing to appropriately integrate traditional knowledge are high. However, such political, financial and human costs are not easily identified within financial statements and systems based on values which rarely integrate traditional knowledge.

It is difficult to put a dollar figure on the contributions of traditional lifestyles to the northern economy, in terms of food, clothing, environmental knowledge, skill development and social health. The costs of failing to adequately meet the aspirations of aboriginal people are also difficult to calculate. It is time that the benefits as well as costs of creating institutions, policies, programs and services which can better serve all northern peoples



be identified. Public support and sound financial planning for traditional knowledge use rely on such information. It is also necessary if northerners are to be able to determine whether traditional knowledge is being supported by money, time and people equal to that dedicated to the use of other forms of knowledge.

One attempt to address the cultural bias of financial systems is a wildlife harvester support program recommended by the Special Committee on the Northern Economy in 1990 and now under discussion within the GNWT. Under the program, economic support would be provided to allow hunters and trappers to stay out on the land when they might not otherwise be able to raise the capital costs required to do so. Such a program would recognize the lack of wage-earning alternatives in many small communities, and the value to the NWT economy of country foods and the processing of food and animal by-products. It would also be a less dehumanizing alternative to welfare. The program would acknowledge that traditional land-based activities have economic as well as social and cultural value.

The Ministerial Committee advocates the use of existing institutions such as aboriginal cultural organizations and the Science Institute to work together with government, rather than create new bureaucracies to concentrate on traditional knowledge. It has also attempted to find ways in which organizations can share limited resources. In the short term, spending priorities and planning must accommodate the increased training and staffing demands which traditional knowledge use may require, in areas such as research and curriculum development. Difficult choices in deciding financial priorities are a fact of life. Incorporating aboriginal goals, values and perceptions in making those choices will assist in creating ownership of government and non-government programs.

The Ministerial Committee believes additional costs incurred by its recommendations will be offset in the long term by more responsive, efficient and effective institutions. The financial costs of not undertaking a broad-based co-ordinated approach to using traditional knowledge in northern institutions could well grow over time. Aboriginal peoples' desires for self-determination and a distinct identity will not go away. Separate institutions negotiated with the federal government could cost more in the end.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Ministerial Committee believes aboriginal cultural organizations, Elders Councils and the GNWT all share in the responsibility to monitor and evaluate the use of traditional knowledge within the Northwest Territories.

The Committee has not established indicators for evaluating the progress of government departments in recognizing and using traditional knowledge, as set out in its terms of reference. It is too early in the process which first requires awareness and commitment to change.

There is no comprehensive baseline data on current use of traditional knowledge. As noted earlier this task has not been completed. As well, goals for increasing use have not been established. Progress cannot be measured until we know what we are trying to achieve. Finally, evaluations must be based on guidelines developed to determine appropriate traditional knowledge use in a variety of activities and situations.

Assessing current use, establishing goals, and determining guidelines in a wide variety of circumstances, from education legislation to human resource policies, will require a co-operative effort on the part of aboriginal peoples, their cultural and elders organizations and government representatives.

Monitoring and evaluation of traditional knowledge use should be incorporated as much as possible into systems which already exist. For example, rather than special departmental reports on traditional knowledge use, progress updates and implementation plans should be incorporated into regular reporting requirements.

## CARRYING THE WORK FORWARD

There are many things which can be done immediately by individuals and institutions to increase the use of traditional knowledge. Aboriginal community leaders can encourage the establishment of local Elders Councils. Individual elders can increase their efforts to pass on their knowledge to young relatives. Teachers can meet with local elders to discuss ways their classrooms and school activities can become forums for the transferring of traditional skills, values and perceptions.

GNWT traditional knowledge initiatives, such as the writing of government-wide traditional knowledge policy must be well co-ordinated to maximize the limited available resources. The Ministerial Committee believes the Department of Culture and Communications and the Aboriginal Rights and Constitutional Development Secretariat are the appropriate agencies to co-ordinate GNWT efforts and ensure the cultural, aboriginal rights and constitutional implications of using traditional knowledge be addressed. The Secretariat and Culture and Communications have valuable experience working with other government departments and aboriginal organizations.

A major task in carrying the work of the Ministerial Committee forward will be government-wide and departmental research and development of implementation plans into how traditional knowledge can be used to its fullest possible extent. Sharing information and other resources during this process can best be achieved through a government/non-government Traditional Knowledge Co-ordinating Committee.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Both general and specific recommendations are provided below. They address the obstacles to increasing the use of traditional knowledge identified by the Ministerial Committee. The Committee believes that actions resulting from these recommendations will create a climate of mutual respect and confidence in the future among all peoples within the Northwest Territories.

The Ministerial Committee recommends that:

1. The GNWT issue a Declaration of Recognition and Support for Traditional Knowledge which commits the GNWT to:
  - \* Recognize that there is a cultural base to all institutions, laws and policy;
  - \* Agree on a definition of traditional knowledge for internal use and as a guideline for GNWT programs, legislation and policy, as well as GNWT support of its use outside of government;
  - \* Apply traditional knowledge, as defined, within its legislation, policy, programs, services and constitutional development initiatives, in co-operation with aboriginal organizations;

- \* Designate the Department of Culture and Communications and the Aboriginal Rights and Constitutional Development Secretariat as the lead agencies within the GNWT to co-ordinate traditional knowledge initiatives, policy, and legislation.
2. The GNWT work co-operatively with the aboriginal cultural organizations to support and encourage the establishment of a Territorial Elders Council, whose members will be acknowledged within their communities as holders of traditional knowledge. The Council will be recognized as a traditional knowledge advisory body to Members of the Legislative Assembly on constitutional development, legislation and policy, and will be provided the resources necessary to carry out this role.
 

And, that support be provided for community and regional Elders Councils. By their example and encouragement, the GNWT and aboriginal cultural organizations will urge their employees, other levels of government, non-government organizations, and private industry to seek the advice of Elders Councils on the appropriate application of traditional knowledge within their institutions.
  3. A comprehensive education and promotion campaign, aimed at the general public, be developed and implemented by the GNWT, aboriginal cultural organizations and the Territorial Elders Council. Its focus will include:
    - \* increasing understanding and pride in traditional knowledge;
    - \* education about how traditional knowledge is passed on;
    - \* education and promotion designed to inform and create discussion about the possible practical applications of traditional knowledge to solve current northern problems;
    - \* promoting careers relating to the research, documentation and use of traditional knowledge;
    - \* proclamation of a week each year to recognize and honour the contributions of traditional knowledge to northern society.
  4. The GNWT sponsor an independent study of current and potential use of traditional knowledge within the NWT, with terms of reference developed jointly by the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Co-ordinating Committee, aboriginal cultural organizations and the Territorial Elders Council.
  5. The GNWT, the Territorial Elders Council and aboriginal cultural organizations identify the current and potential financial, political and social benefits of traditional knowledge use.

6. All government boards, agencies and committees be required to seek nominations from the appropriate Elders Council for the purposes of guaranteeing traditional knowledge representation.
  
7. The Science Institute of the Northwest Territories mandate be amended to include:
  - \* collecting and distributing research and documentation on traditional knowledge and its use;
  - \* acting as a central agency for the deposit of traditional knowledge information;
  - \* developing appropriate cataloging and annotated computerized bibliographies to provide access to, and encourage the distribution of traditional knowledge information;
  - \* establishing a community-based network within the NWT public library system for acquiring and distributing traditional knowledge information;
  - \* seeking money available to non-government organizations to support these activities.
  
8. The GNWT, the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, aboriginal cultural organizations and the Territorial Elders Council develop and implement a policy for the research and documentation of traditional knowledge and its use. The issues addressed by the policy should include, but not be limited to:
  - \* the practical, widespread use of research and documentation, including curriculum development;
  - \* avoiding duplication of efforts and efficient allocation of resources;
  - \* ownership and copyright of traditional knowledge;
  - \* methods of research with elders;
  - \* standards of payment for traditional knowledge research informants, teachers and consultants;
  - \* training of community researchers;
  - \* inclusion of documentation of traditional knowledge and sharing of information as part of GNWT departmental mandates.
  
9. The GNWT and aboriginal cultural organizations require their employees to make all traditional knowledge information and research available to the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories to increase access to such information and avoid duplication of efforts.
  
10. The mandate of the Department of Education Centres for Teaching and Learning be expanded to include research and documentation of traditional knowledge for the purposes of developing culturally-based curriculum and learning materials,

and that the necessary resources be allocated for this purpose.

11. The contributions of aboriginal cultural organizations, communities and individuals in researching and documenting traditional knowledge and in assisting the GNWT and other agencies in appropriately using traditional knowledge, be recognized through increased GNWT financial resources to support these initiatives.
12. The GNWT work co-operatively with aboriginal cultural organizations to develop and deliver mandatory traditional knowledge awareness training for all GNWT employees, from junior to senior levels. Such training should be progressive, increasing in intensity and specialization as appropriate, and where possible be land-based using traditional teaching and learning approaches.
13. The Aboriginal Languages Implementation Plan reflect the essential role of aboriginal languages in revitalizing and increasing the use of traditional knowledge.
14. The GNWT identify positions where the ability of employees to speak a regional aboriginal language is required to increase the effective use of traditional knowledge, and that it revise affected job descriptions.

And, that time and opportunities for aboriginal language instruction during the working day be provided for employees whose positions have been designated as requiring aboriginal language fluency, and target dates set for fluency attainment.

15. The GNWT, the Territorial Elders Council, aboriginal cultural organizations and the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories co-operatively develop and implement a strategy for creating opportunities for professional exchanges among traditional knowledge holders and western scientists and professionals.
16. GNWT employees who pursue traditional activities be accommodated through such means as job-sharing, seasonal work schedules, decentralization of positions, and provisions for aboriginal language and traditional knowledge educational leave.
17. The GNWT develop, in co-operation with the Territorial Elders Council, an annual award recognizing the contribution to northern society of a holder of traditional knowledge.
18. The GNWT, the Territorial Elders Council, the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, and aboriginal

cultural organizations jointly advocate and lobby the appropriate federal departments to remove barriers to the successful use of traditional knowledge within the NWT. Specific concerns which must be addressed include:

- \* an exemption for NWT elders from Income Tax and/or Canada Pension Plan Act provisions which financially penalize elders paid as research respondents, teachers, or consultants on traditional knowledge;
  - \* access by northerners to artifacts and research relating to traditional knowledge;
  - \* the appropriate balancing of the contributions of traditional knowledge and other forms of knowledge in the distribution of awards to northern residents or others who have contributed to northern society.
19. Departmental commitment to traditional knowledge be expressed by the immediate designation of a traditional knowledge co-ordinator within each department to co-ordinate legislative amendments, policy development, implementation plans and day-to-day activities related to traditional knowledge initiatives, and that appropriate resources be identified for this purpose.
20. Four people be seconded and dedicated to increasing the use of traditional knowledge within the NWT, along with adequate operations and maintenance money to support these positions. And, that these positions be made permanent pending the outcome of a review at the end of three years.

With two people dedicated to the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories to co-ordinate the data collection, organization and distribution of information related to traditional knowledge, and to fundraise for the traditional knowledge information system.

And, two people within the GNWT, as full-time traditional knowledge co-ordinators, within Culture and Communications, and the Aboriginal Rights and Constitutional Development Secretariat. These people will co-ordinate the research and writing of government-wide traditional knowledge policy and legislation, and liaise with government departments, Elders Councils and aboriginal cultural organizations.

21. A Traditional Knowledge Co-ordinating Committee be established with representation from Departmental co-ordinators, the aboriginal cultural organizations, the Territorial Elders Council and the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories, with a mandate to co-ordinate implementation and monitoring initiatives to increase the use of traditional knowledge within the NWT.

And, that the Ministerial Committee on Traditional Knowledge continue its work on an interim basis until the GNWT responds to this report.