

Aboriginal Forestry: Including Native American tribal values in timber management on reservation lands.

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Introduction:

For well over a century, professional forestry in the United States has followed the ever-improving practices in silviculture, or scientific management of trees as crops, in order to maintain the standard of sustainability in management. Despite continued application of research to ensure that best management practices are enacted, professional forestry continues to fail to include the traditional values of Native American tribes the management of timber resources on reservation lands in the United States. The current default for management of timber resources on reservation lands utilizes the services of the BIA.

By implementing systems of community forestry based upon professional forestry on reservation lands, inclusion of Native American values in systems of professional forestry is possible in the United States. Community forestry allows for aboriginal communities to engage local natural resources in a manner that respects tribal needs and includes tribal values and traditional ecological knowledge in the management of local timber resources. Traditional ecological knowledge focuses on the use of observational science in understanding the effects of human interaction with the local natural resources upon which the tribe relies.

Methods:

Utilizing two case studies, conclusions about practices in timber management on Native American reservation lands were drawn. The case of the Teme-Augama Anishinabai of Ontario, Canada serve as an example of the failure of co-management between the provincial government and First Nations. The case of the Menominee Nation serves as an excellent framework for tribal management of timber resources located on reservation lands.

Case Studies:

Failure in Co-Management:

Temagami First Nation (Ontario, Canada)

The value system of the Temagami focuses largely on a land ethic defined within the pages of the Wendaban Stewardship Authority. This document attempts to implement a system of co-management on Temagami lands. It defines the land ethic as understanding that humans are not separate from natural systems, but rather they are an integral part of these systems. Despite the passage of this act as an attempt to engage a system of co-management, the Temagami have engaged in a series of legal battles with the Ontario provincial government in order to ensure that their rights as a First Nation are respected.



Figure 2) The area indicated by the red arrow on the map is the Temagami First Nation. A close-up of this area is displayed in the inset map.

Success in Tribal Management:

Menominee Nation (Wisconsin)

Beginning in 1854, with the establishment of the Menominee reservation, the Menominee Nation engaged the local timber resources in harvest and milling to create lumber that was sold in order to purchase flour for the tribe. Today, this system continues to be successfully implemented, offering the Menominee the opportunity to benefit economically from their long-standing practices in timber management on reservation lands. This system is based upon several principles (listed in the right-hand column) and serves as an excellent example of the management of tribal timber resources.

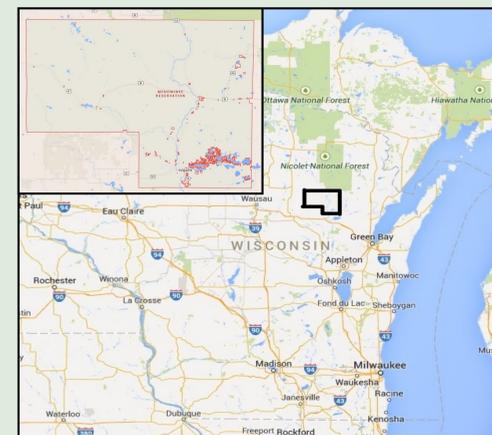


Figure 3) The area outlined in black indicates the location of the Menominee Nation reservation in Northeastern Wisconsin and is displayed in the inset map.

Conclusion:

While both of these systems of management exhibit opportunities for growth, the system in practice in the Temagami Forest District does not include the hinders the Teme-Augama in the management of local timber resources. Because of its developed system of management, the Menominee system of management is the system of choice.

Using the system developed by the Menominee in Wisconsin as a guide, Native American tribes throughout the United States can implement systems of timber resource management that engage the traditional ecological knowledge of the tribe and include the values of the people in the management of timber resources located on the reservation. Through the inclusion of education in silviculture and professional forestry, tribes throughout the United States will be able to manage timber resources on reservation lands. The inclusion of Native American values in professional forestry can help to create a system of sustainable forest resource management that can be applied on reservation lands throughout the United States.

Tenets of the Menominee Management System:

- Harvesting only amounts that the forest exhibited comfortability with, rather than providing for the mill.
- Only harvesting trees over a designated age (200 years).
- Maintaining a large variance in tree species within tribal timber stock.
- Ensuring that management of the resource focuses on continuation into the future.
- Maintaining the timber crop with a sense of respect for the products that it provides.
- Educating future generations in best management practices (College of Menominee Nation).

Works Consulted:

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Acknowledgements:

The production of this poster and the accompanying paper would not have been possible without the aid of: the faculty of the CSB/SJU Environmental Studies Department, Robin Koistinen (Land and Resources Manager, Temagami First Nation), my peers and various family members and friends who have engaged my research to help me perform and present the results.



Figure 1) This picture displays the results of heavy, commercial timber harvest on a plot in Quebec, Canada.
<http://www.painetworks.com/photos/ew/ew1200.JPG>



Figure 4) This picture portrays the modern look of the lumber mill owned and operated by the Menominee.
<http://www.painetworks.com/photos/ew/ew1200.JPG>