

#10 Indigenous Land Claims and Environmental Livelihoods by David Natcher, University of Saskatchewan

There is a complex relationship between indigenous subsistence livelihoods (ie. living off the land) and economic, political, and institutional forces. Existing studies on subsistence livelihoods are difficult to compare to one another because they often come from very different areas and take different approaches. This makes it difficult to compare research across communities and regions.



Knowing about subsistence gives researchers information about many other topics: society, culture, individual behaviours, economic conditions, and wildlife conservation. Learning more about subsistence can help researchers to better understand the cultural, economic, and political situation in the North.

In order to determine what information was missing, the authors tried to find trends in existing research. There are two main groups of research: practical studies (including some anthropological, sociological, nutrition, wildlife management, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and multidisciplinary studies) and theoretical studies (including anthropological studies about culture). They also looked at existing information about land claims. Many land claims included requirements for harvest studies and wildlife management.

There can be many factors that influence a person's ability to live off the land: the number of people living in an area, cultural preferences, political factors, economic conditions, and the involvement of other groups such as animal rights organizations. These relationships are complex and this can make it difficult to interpret data from individual studies because they do not consider the whole picture. Needs and desires of communities change from year to year, and the existing studies are not enough to make good predictions. Wildlife harvesting is not just an economic activity, but a cultural one. It may indicate wealth, freedom, and wholeness. The social and cultural aspects of wildlife harvesting are under-reported.

Wildlife harvesting is one way to help northern Indigenous communities to achieve both wellbeing and food security. Securing land rights and access to natural resources is critical for this to work. However, there is a shortage of good studies that would help create government policy that responds to climate change and industrial development.



Learning more about subsistence can help researchers to better understand the cultural, economic, and political situation in the North and how these might be affected by resource development.

