

# Improving the eel fishery through the incorporation of indigenous knowledge systems into policy level decision making

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## **Abstract**

As the world continues to transform due to factors such as to climate change, and the expansion of our towns and cities there will continue to be negative consequences for the ecosystems that support our natural resources, economic prosperity and all aspects of our lives. Effective management of ecosystems, natural resources, and harvesting practices is essential for ecosystem health, and sustained harvesting of natural resources. Although the value, importance, and benefits of the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), particularly of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) into western knowledge science, have been well recognized over the past few decades, suitable mechanisms for collecting and incorporating IKS into policy level decision making are not yet well understood. This research examines the role of IKS in policy level decision-making for Canadian fisheries. Using a case study to explore how an IKS that is incorporated at the community level eel fishery in Eskasoni First Nation, NS and how IKSs are incorporated into the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and Species at Risk Act (SARA) process. Through this exploration, the various parts of the IKS value, beliefs, transmission, knowledge, adaption, and practice are examined to show how management decisions can be enhanced through the incorporation of IKSs.