
Postgraduate Certificate in Ethnobotany and Ethnoecology

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) refers to the knowledge, practices, and beliefs held by indigenous and local communities about their environment. This knowledge is passed down through generations and is essential for sustainable resource management, conservation, and adaptation to environmental changes.

TEK is holistic and encompasses a wide range of topics, including plant and animal species, ecosystems, weather patterns, and natural resources. It is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, spirituality, and social systems, shaping the way indigenous communities interact with their environment.

TEK is often based on direct observations, experimentation, and oral traditions rather than formal scientific research. It provides valuable insights into ecological processes, biodiversity, and ecosystem dynamics that can complement and enhance Western scientific knowledge.

TEK is increasingly recognized for its contributions to environmental conservation, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development. Integrating TEK with Western science can lead to more effective and culturally appropriate solutions to environmental challenges.

Related Terms: Indigenous Knowledge, Local Knowledge, Ethnobotany, Ethnoecology, Biocultural Diversity

Example: Indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest use Traditional Ecological Knowledge to identify medicinal plants, manage agroforestry systems, and protect biodiversity.

Challenges: TEK faces threats from environmental degradation, loss of cultural traditions, and lack of recognition and protection by governments and institutions. Efforts to conserve and promote TEK must respect indigenous rights, foster intercultural dialogue, and address power imbalances.