Forest Policy and Economics 22 (2012) 40–46

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Forest Policy and Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forpol

Cultural uses of non-timber forest products among the Sts'ailes, British Columbia, Canada

In-Ae Kim [a,*], Ronald L. Trosper [a,1], Gordon Mohs [b,2]

[a] Department of Forest Resources Management, University of British Columbia, 2424 Main Mall, Vancouver, Canada V6T 1Z4
[b] Sts'ailes, 4690 Salish Way, Agassiz, BC, Canada V0M 1A1

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 16 December 2009
Received in revised form 1 October 2011
Accepted 24 January 2012
Available online 25 February 2012

Keywords:
Traditional use
Non-timber forest products
Forest culture
Indigenous people
First nations
Sts'ailes

ABSTRACT

We have identified cultural uses of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in the Sts'ailes, a group within the central Coast Salish First Nation in British Columbia, Canada. The non-timber forest products are culturally important and often accessible to local people. We undertook a community-based participatory case study of the cultural uses of non-timber forest products within the Sts'ailes traditional territory. We used semi-structured interviews, ethnography, and secondary documents (e.g. maps and supporting documents) to provide in-depth understanding of the NTFP uses. Sts'ailes people use NTFPs by (1) gathering plants for food and medicine, (2) making materials from the plants, (3) making spiritual regalia and paints for winter ceremonials, and (4) brushing with cedar branches as spiritual practices. Forest environments and NTFPs provide secured environment for spiritual bathing and other spiritual practices and cedar branches are essential to use for purification. Because of these uses, Canadian governments need to consult and accommodate the Sts'ailes people when undertaking forestry operations. In addition, Sts'ailes use of the land demonstrates their continued possession of it.

1. Introduction

Indigenous knowledge has been defined as local knowledge held by Indigenous peoples or local knowledge unique to a given culture or society (Berkes, 2008). Indigenous knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge have been promoted in agriculture, pharmacology and ethnobotany and environmental sustainability over the past 30 years (Berkes, 1993; Kim and Trosper, 2008; Moller et al., 2004). Indigenous knowledge was often interchangeable with the term traditional ecological knowledge,[3] especially in forest management including non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (O'Flaherty et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2008).

The purpose of this research is to better understand the cultural uses of non-timber forest products by a First Nation in western Canada. The research identifies the cultural uses of forest lands and plants by the Sts'ailes people. The non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are a collection of biological resources such as fruits, nuts, and medicinal plants derived from both natural and managed forests and other wooded areas (Peters, 1996). The NTFPs are culturally important and mainly accessible to local people; the uses of NTFPs provide examples of putting traditional ecological knowledge into action. The research question examined here asks how NTFPs are used within the social and cultural contexts of the Sts'ailes people, and the significance of these uses.

2. Background of the Coast Salish

Aboriginal peoples are the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples — Indians, Métis and Inuit. A term, First Nation, came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian", which some people found offensive.[4] There are about 1.8 million Aboriginal people, 600 different First Nations in Canada, and 198 First Nations in British Columbia (Statistics Canada, 2008).

The Sts'ailes is one of the Coast Salish First Nations. Coast Salish refers to a cultural or ethnographic designation of a subgroup of the First Nations in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon who speak one of the Coast Salish languages. Coast Salish[5] has been used as a cultural designation since the late nineteenth century for the speakers of the fourteen contiguous Salishan languages on the coast.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 604 225 2843; fax: +1 604 822 9106.
E-mail address: forestinae@gmail.com (I. Kim).
[1] Current affiliation: American Indian Studies, University of Arizona, Harvill 218, 1103 E. 2nd Street, Tucson, AZ 85721, USA.
[2] Current affiliation: EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd., 1066 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6E 3X2.

[3] A cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment (Berkes, 2008, p. 7).

[4] Indian and Northern affairs Canada http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/tln-eng.asp (September 30, 2011).

[5] The cultural groups of the Coast Salish include the Northern Coast Salish, Central Coast Salish, the Southern Coast Salish, and the Southwestern Coast Salish.

1389-9341/$ – see front matter © 2012 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.
doi:10.1016/j.forpol.2012.01.004

The Sts'ailes is one of the Halkomelem speaking people among the Central Coast Salish.[6] On the mainland, the name of the language is written *Halq'eméylem*. '*Sts'ailes*' means 'a beating heart' in their language and also known as Chehalis.[7] Three main dialect groups are distinguishable: an Island group,[8] a Downriver group,[9] and an Upriver group.[10] The Sts'ailes belongs to the Upriver group (Suttles, 1990).

Contact with European explorers on the Northwest Coast began in 1741. In 1806 Simon Fraser explored the Fraser River from its headwaters down to its mouth; the river later named after this explorer (Suttles, 1990). Missionaries began arriving in Canada in the 17th century. Traders, soldiers and missionaries brought with them diseases,[11] to which the Indigenous peoples had no immunity. Epidemics swept through up to three-quarters of the Indigenous groups (Boyd, 1996; Carlson, 1997). The missionaries often intended to have Indigenous peoples reject their sacred beliefs and practices (Glavin, 2002). Many ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance of the Plains and the Potlatch of the Northwest Coast survived through underground practices (Carlson, 1997; Suttles, 1987, 1990).

The societies of Coast Salish people experienced economic, social and cultural changes after non-indigenous colonizers found the 'New World'. The colonizer brought changes in Indigenous peoples' societies with regard to economic, social and cultural perspectives. Indigenous peoples were forced to assimilate into the market economy, political system and European concept of civilization. The commercial fishing industry made Indigenous peoples' lives with respect to fishing difficult, and the regulations of the government did not recognize Indigenous peoples' rights to their land and resources (Butler, 2006; Carlson, 1997). The European colonists used residential schools, and regulations that banned the Potlatch, Indigenous peoples' government and laws to impose European values on Aboriginal peoples. Coast Salish people are affirming their rights again and some see the treaty process as their way to manage their land and resources (Silvey and Mantha, 2005). Court cases such as Calder (1973), Guerin (1984), Sparrow (1990), Delgamuukw[12] (1997), and Taku River Tlingit (2004) confirmed aboriginal rights and titles and opened new opportunities for confirming aboriginal rights.

3. Today's context

The cultural uses of NTFPs were mainly passed on through hands-on experiences and storytelling. Since NTFPs facilitate essential elements in their cultural ceremonies and social gatherings, traditional ways of using NTFPs are considered important information to revitalize their ways of living and their identities (Long et al., 2003; Turner et al., 2008).

Today, there is a renewed commitment to the land and to the restoration of plant-management techniques, due to the politics of land claims and treaty negotiations, and the social and cultural recovery that has captivated the consciousness of many Indigenous peoples across Canada in particular (McDonald, 2005). Coast Salish people organize themselves at local and national levels and speak their voices. The younger generations have been disadvantaged in terms of learning their culture from the family and community, mainly due to the destructive force of residential schools. Today, Coast Salish people are exploring ways to maintain their traditional cultural ways, affirm their sovereignty, and fit into local and global economies (Menzies, 2006). In the perspective of the politics of land claims and treaty negotiations, proving present or past possession of land is important to Aboriginal peoples (McNeil, 1999, p. 801). Recording Aboriginal peoples' use of forest products, including of NTFPs, from traditional territories is a legitimate way to prove present or past possession and the presumption of title. Therefore knowing that Sts'ailes people use NTFPs, and where they gather and practice cultural activities, affects forest practices in their traditional territories and brings identities back into the big picture (O'Flaherty et al., 2008).

Forest management activities such as logging and road construction disturb NTFPs by affecting their habitats and growth conditions. In this regard, Forest licensees must consult and accommodate First Nations within operation areas. The Canadian Supreme Court emphasized the requirement that the Crown consult and accommodate in its Haida decision (Christie, 2006, p.178). In the process of consultation, First Nations receive a referral regarding the operation plan and are asked to respond within 60 days if the First Nations have any concerns over the area. When the First Nations have concerns over the land, archeological impact surveys are done in order to accommodate what should be protected.

Several First Nations use NTFPs for business opportunities especially, mushrooms, mosses and fiddleheads (Menzies, 2006). Ethnobotanical information and cultural practices have been applied to educational programs and eco-tourism in British Columbia.

4. Methodology

The research was designed as a community-based participatory and qualitative case study of the cultural uses of non-timber forest products within the Sts'ailes traditional territory in British Columbia, Canada. The community-based participatory approach was chosen instead of surveys, to better allow for issues that are important to Indigenous people to emerge from the data generation process (Le Compte and Shensul, 1999). Semi-structured interviews, ethnography, and secondary documents (e.g. maps and supporting documents) were used to generate in-depth understanding of the case (Yin, 1994). Participant observation and field notes were main components of data collecting during field study; between September 2007 and March 2009, ten confidential interviews were recorded. Prior to recording interviews an explanation of the research plan and confidentiality measures was given, and an informed consent form was signed by each interview participant. A purposive sampling method was used, whereby interviewees were non-randomly selected from among those who are knowledgeable about their lands. The snowball method (Babbie, 2010) was used to broaden the initial list of possible participants provided by key contacts from the Sts'ailes.

Finding a community that is interested in the research and willing to be cooperative is challenging when working with First Nations, especially when a research project is developed in a conventional science setting (Ballard et al., 2008). The research reported here began well; the authors met Chehalis Indian Band, former name of Sts'ailes, through friends. The Chief, William Charlie, personally invited the first author to do the research at Sts'ailes. To initiate this research, the authors had a meeting with Chief William Charlie and council members and aboriginal right and title and forestry department staff. The research was blessed by Sts'ailes drumming and song and meal sharing. As a participatory research (Matta and Alavalapati, 2006), we participated in official and family meetings and cultural ceremonies and built up trust and bonds. We complied with a University ethics review requirement for doing research involving people. We also respected the research protocols of the Sts'ailes, and obtained a Sts'ailes research permit.

The community of Sts'ailes[13] is located in the rural area of central Fraser Valley, about two hour's drive east from the City of Vancouver.

[6] Central Coast Salish refers to the speakers of five languages: Squamish, Halkomelem, Nooksack, Northern Straits, and Clallam (Suttles, 1990).

[7] The Chehalis Indian Band changed their official name to *Sts'ailes*. As for the name change, Chief and Council passed a Band Council Resolution in November 2009 to change the name to Sts'ailes. National Affairs and Northern Development Canada acknowledged receipt of the name change in May 2011. Sts'ailes had an official celebration in July 2011.

[8] The Nanoose, the Nanaimo, the Chemainus, the Cowichan, and the Malahat on Vancouver Island.

[9] The Musqueam, the Tsawwassen, the Saleelwat, the Kwantlen, the Coquitlam, the Nicomekl, and the Katzie on the lower Fraser Valley.

[10] The Matsqui, the Sumas, the Nicomen, the Scowlitz, the Sts'ailes, the Chilliwak, the Pilat, and the Tait on the upper Fraser Valley.

[11] Cholera, leprosy, malaria, measles, scarlet fever, smallpox, tuberculosis, typhoid fever and whooping cough.

[12] http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/bp459-e.htm (June 3, 2010).

[13] http://www.stsailes.com/ (September 30, 2011).