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### Abstract

#### **" Doing it right": Issues and practices of sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products relating to First Peoples in British Columbia**

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This paper addresses concerns about commercial harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that relate to First Peoples in British Columbia. Many of the species identified as being significant, or having potential significance as NTFPs, are culturally important to First Peoples as sources of food, material, and medicines, or for their spiritual values. While there may be potential for First Peoples to develop local economies from the harvesting, processing, and marketing of NTFPs, there also is widespread concern that traditional values may be lost, and traditional plant resources treated as commodities and exploited by commercial interests. Previous experiences with overharvesting cascara and Pacific yew bark lend substance to this concern.

Aboriginal peoples have a long history of sustainable management of their lands and resources. Any proposed harvest and use of traditional resources should be under the control of, or in collaboration with, those First Peoples within whose traditional territory the resources are to be harvested. Applications of traditional management methods for NTFPs should be explored, but this should be done in collaboration with First Peoples and with full respect for their intellectual property rights.

Principles of sustainable harvesting of NTFPs are presented that may prove useful in ongoing deliberations about how, or even whether, communities should pursue non-timber forest products as a means of economic development.

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