

A New Approach for Adaptive Co-Management:

Local Measures of Success for the John Prince Research Forest

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Introduction

Co-management of natural resources is an approach that is gaining interest amongst First Nations, governments, industry and others. Evaluation processes for co-management are not well developed, yet it is critical in these emerging processes to determine what works, and what does not. Engaging community members in identifying measures of co-management success may provide an important element in adapting co-management to achieve local values. This research presents a method of creating local measures of co-management success for the John Prince Research Forest.

Objectives

1. **Develop and Test a Process:** Develop and test a method for generating local Aboriginal measures of co-management success
2. **Evaluate the Process:** Determine what worked, what didn't, and make some recommendations for future applications

Methodology

There are many different approaches to developing measures, and some are better at reflecting community values than others. This method was developed using social science research, and by reviewing projects around the world that involve First Nations in developing measures, including areas such as education, community development and well-being, and natural resources management.

Process

Step 1: Personal Transformative Process

Gain experience, skills, trust, and credibility working in the community

Collect and review background information on Aboriginal history, culture, and worldviews generally and locally, as well as co-management processes and outcomes

Learn about similar projects on Aboriginal approaches to evaluation and measures development

Step 2: Data Generation

Invite participants who were previously involved in identification of expected co-management processes and outcomes

Select methods for idea generation from available literature

Consider ethical issues and mitigate through adjusting research design elements

Design interview questions based on expected co-management outcomes

Conduct interviews on how participants measure success in achieving identified values

Summarize and analyze interview data from measures interviews and outcomes interviews

Draft a list of measures characteristics based on literature, interviews, and local insights

Conduct focus group / workshop to verify and supplement interview data, and to adapt the Tl'azt'en Measures Characteristics list

Analyze focus group data

Step 3: Measures Formation

Compile data from the focus group, measures interviews, and outcomes interviews

Use measures characteristics list as guidelines for structuring conversational ideas into discrete, succinct measures; reduce redundancies

Re-evaluate the measures list through review by staff and technical experts, and assessment based on Tl'azt'en Measures Characteristics list

Finalize and present to the community and co-management staff



JPRF co-management includes research, education and forest management. Pictured here, the JPRF hosts a cultural camp for Tl'azt'en children.

Discussion

Overall, this method was successful in generating information from community members, and, through using the Tl'azt'en Measures Characteristics, in creating measures that reflected community interests. Each step was necessary, and each contributed to the final set of measures, although some improvements are needed for future uses of the method.

In future applications, community co-management interests should be prioritized, and the issue of highest interest should be addressed first. As well, community capacity, interest and commitment should be gauged to inform modifications to the method. For example, the intensity of the training and the length and number of focus groups should be selected based on community needs. Increasing the structure of the focus group would help participants and enhance the results. A more rigorous verification process would increase the quality of the results.

Once measures become a regular part of JPRF co-management through community reporting, continual refinement of measures will be needed based on Tl'azt'en feedback.

Results

Participant Feedback

- The project overview at the start of the focus group/workshop was informative.
- It is appropriate to use the measures concept.
- Both the interviews and the focus groups were valuable; it was good to get initial ideas out individually and then have a group discussion.
- It can be hard to distinguish between themes.
- It was challenging to refer to written summaries of interviews. Better integration of interview data is needed into focus group.
- The group size of 8 was fine most of the time, but splitting the group in two may have improved discussion and theme coverage
- Three hour focus group was acceptable, but no longer than that
- Meeting in the Tache Elders Center was good
- The pace was challenging but functional: "We got through it!"

Analyst's Perspective

- The measures interviews provided the richest source of measures, although the archived outcomes interviews and the focus group made important contributions that balanced the measures set
- The focus group provided important information about the Tl'azt'en perspectives on measures and the overall process, and allowed for verification of individuals' ideas
- Explanation of the project may not have been sufficient for all participants to fully understand the process
- Support of the community researcher (Bev Leon) was essential to all aspects of the research
- From this information, I was successful in developing a set of measures which reflect the "Tl'azt'en measures characteristics"

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