

Eastern White Cedar

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Conservation of Eastern White Cedar

A SPECIAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Why are we doing this?

The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council started this project with the intention of providing our membership with a Conservation Guidelines Fact Sheet that could be used individually by anyone who wants to help in the conservation of Eastern White Cedar.

During the compilation of research for this project it was realized that we cannot tell you how important it is to aid in the conservation of cedar without first telling you why & how it is so important to us. So, with this realization, I have researched & compiled as much information that could be accessed within the time frames set out for the project. This was done through interviewing people in the province of NB as well as

accessing statistical data from the Department of Natural Resources & the Conservation Council.



Eastern White Cedar

It is my hope that you will take this booklet on cedar & use it to your best abilities. We here at NBAPC realize the importance of having cedar for us, & our future generations in the years to

come & so, hope to have aided in an effort to conserve by providing you with this information & knowledge.

With that being said, the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, & the coordinator Wendy Wetteland, would like to extend a very sincere Thank you to all who participated & shared their knowledge with us during the course of the project.

The following are some of the people who helped & supported us by sharing their time & knowledge with us so we could bring you this very important information:

Gwen Bear, Raymond Nicholas, Dennis Gedeon, Carol Harquail, Chris LaBillois, Perry Harquail, Dave Godin, Colleen Petersen, Sarah Ward & Claudette Cormier.

Just the facts...

Eastern White Cedar a.k.a. Northern White Cedar a.k.a. Swamp Cedar, is an evergreen, the only member of the cypress family to habituate the Maritime provinces.

EW Cedar is a slow-growing tree. At maturity it is 40-50 feet tall but can reach heights of 70-80 feet. Growth is dependant on location; you might see a 50yr old tree reach 40 feet on a good

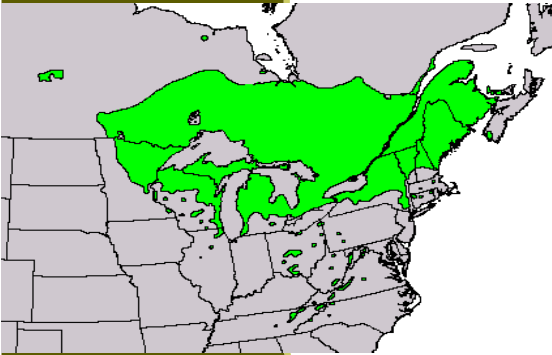
sight, & only 15 feet or less on a poor sight. EW Cedar can reach ages of 800 years or more. Two cedar trees in Ontario were dated at 935 & 1032 years of age. With age, EW Cedar develops wide-spreading root system which is well adapted to secure water & nutrients from cracks in rocks. Cedar has a dense fibrous root system & prefers moist sites. It helps to stabilize the

embankments of streams, rivers & lakes.

It grows in uplands- primarily seepage areas, old fields, limestone cliffs & boulder fields. Lowlands include swamps, stream/river banks & lakeshores. It most commonly grows in mixed stands & is rarely found in pure stands. EW Cedar is a tree that lives relatively disease free.



Where is it Found?



Eastern White Cedar can be found over a larger area of both Canada & United States. EWC is found in the following provinces & states: NB, NS, PEI, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, New England, Pennsylvania, Vermont, West Virginia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia. Historical evidence states that EWC is native to North

Carolina however there are no known populations today. Eastern White Cedar is the only tree member of the Cypress family in the Maritimes.

The problem with this information is that it does not accurately inform us of how much cedar is in our province. Tree stands vary in size.

How Much Cedar is in NB?

The only basis that could be found on what the size of a tree stand is, is that they are measured in volume.

Percent Stand Volume (merch)	Crown Land		Private Woodlots	
	# of Stands	Area (ha)	# of Stands	Area (ha)
10	9791	60405	5292	26296
20	14552	83519	12195	64537
30	6373	34866	6080	31655
40	3426	19121	3666	19184
50	3006	19923	2912	14064
60	3174	17215	2888	13626
70	2410	13630	2259	11207
80	1489	8080	1330	6503
90	864	3671	749	3106
100	120	492	102	369
Total Volume (m3)	15.5 million m3		12.3 million m3	



Ancient twisted Eastern White Ce-

The Way We Harvest

When talking with Elders & people with traditional knowledge, one of the messages that was underlying all of the information they shared was that even though the process may differ, there is a great amount of respect that is the foundation of all that is done. When harvesting, an offering is made, this varies in culture,

some use tobacco, some pollen of corn. The manner in which it is done may vary but the basis of it is that we are giving an offering & asking the spirit to give of itself, telling what it is being given for & what will be done with it. We thank the spirit for giving of itself to us for our many uses. In the words of a wise Elder, if we want

cooperation we have to ask for it! When harvesting the bark of any tree, never cut all the way around. Always leave a path for the nutrients to follow up the tree & so protect it. Never harvest from a tree near electrical wiring. The energy of the electricity changes the energy of the tree.

Interviews

When interviewing people to compile information for this project, there was a strong underlying message that was clearly received through all. Eastern White Cedar, when used as a medicine has an amazing capacity to heal, but not through ignorance. DO NOT administer cedar as a medicine to yourself or any other without first seeking guidance from a person knowledgeable in this field. The information in this booklet has been provided to you by us solely to demonstrate to you its importance to our way of life. This knowledge comes with a great amount of teachings & if

you do not know the properties of using cedar as a medicine then do not use it as such. Cedar does have harmful properties & can be harmful, even fatal, if used wrongly or excessively.

Some of the words that came from the interviews were so important I felt they should be shared with you. The following are a few quotes from some of my interviews:

“You learn from it when you are growing, in your clan, more so than other trees, which in my perspective, puts it in a place of great honor.”

“Everything deserves respect.”

“I would like people to know & realize that we need it, this is our medicine, one of our four sacred gifts. We need it for our life. We need it for our future generations so we can teach them to use it also. Not all things that help us come from the pharmacy; that is not where our healing is. Our healing is in the woods. It is important that people continue the knowledge. I like that you are doing this for the trees.” “Why are people having such problems with drugs & alcohol when our medicines are right there? Cedar is the strongest medicine we have.”



“This is what I know because I am native, this is who I am. We learn from each other, we share. There is more we will learn, it will come with time.”

Gwen Bear

Medicinal & Ceremonial Uses

The way of using cedar as a medicine, as well as for ceremony, are closely intertwined. They are both done in connection with each other & for this reason are included under one heading in this booklet. They are both quite important.

The four sacred gifts we were given are Sweetgrass, tobacco, sage & cedar. Cedar is used for the mental aspect, the northern aspect of the medicine wheel. We were given these four gifts to help us with everything. We honor them.

It was stated under the topic of Interviews in this booklet that it is very important that you consult with a person who knows what they are doing if you wish to administer cedar as a medicine. It can be very harmful if not used with knowledge & experience. For this reason it is mentioned again. You may find the description of medicinal uses somewhat vague. This information is provided in such a manner as to express cedar's importance to you.

You can use cedar for: rheumatism; to reduce sweating; to treat croup; canker sores; to treat morning sickness in pregnant women; used as a relaxant to help you sleep; as an anti-inflammatory; to treat infections; has antiviral properties; for colds, bronchitis, toothache, headache; a concoction used to treat a paralyzed body part; a mixture made with the boughs of cedar for healing women who have birthed child to take for forty days after; to treat gout, a form of arthritis, a soak made of cedar done over a period of time; boughs soaked in olive oil for several weeks & then removed, oil is used in bath water for dry skin; used to make a



poultice for chest problems, treating pain, sprains, sore areas, headaches; steamed & inhaled for cough & congestion; to cleanse the body of toxins put cedar in bath water, the hotter the better; when feeling depressed, break a piece of cedar & breathe it in.

There are ceremonial practices around each of the uses for cedar. Cedar is used as a cleansing, to wash away a problem, it is a private ceremony. In preparation for a fast, one of the things we do is we pray four times daily, we do this always with cedar. We inhale the smoke, this is to protect us while we pray. When we are praying we can attract negative energies because we are purifying. Cedar helps us with our dream time; spirit travel. Ceremony can be divided in two ways: Before the full moon energies are increasing, you would use this time to help in healing. After the full moon energies are decreasing, you would use this time to help rid infection, taking away.

Traditional Uses

Cedar has been used for many things, both in the past and in the present. There is much that has been mentioned during interview, & certainly more that has yet to be learned.

Most of that which was mentioned during the interviews has been listed here for you to discover if you do not already know which is great & hopefully you will share with someone!

Cedar is used for making baskets; the root of cedar can be stripped & used for weaving; used to make the frame, and bottom of canoes; this takes time, our ancestors did not build anything in a day; in areas where it rains often, the bark is used to make clothing; used to make body armor and helmets; mothers used the bark, stripped & fluffed as diapers for their babies; braiding and making rope; strip bark for

sewing, binding hides, tarps; making drums; making sleds; out west it is used to make boxes, all sides bent out of one piece of wood and the last edge sealed with pitch; great used for carving; boughs laid down for women in sweat lodge; boughs tied together used to spray water on the stones in a sweat lodge; it is used to make feather boxes, protects them; used for houses, such as a Hogan, in Navajo territory, made with cedar because it has less sap than other trees, as nomadic people they can be taken down, moved and rebuilt; the berries are edible, as kids we would pick them and eat them; used as a dye for coloring wool; ground cedar used in cooking for the same effect as baking powder; used to make bow and arrows because of its flexibility. Cedar is also a home

for many animals.

Cedar is an essential part of aboriginal livelihood. It is a necessary part of our past, present and future. We must aid in the preservation of this very important part of mother earth. Cedar is sacred.



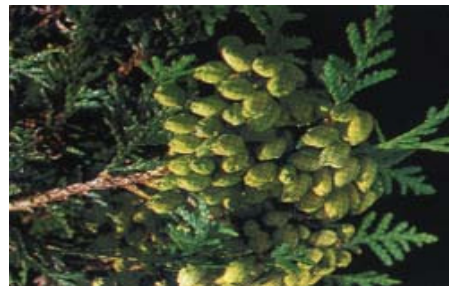
Left: A Hogan, the traditional home of Navajo territory, is made with Cedar

Other Uses for Cedar

There are other uses that were mentioned during the interviews that did not quite fit under the other headings although they may have been relevant to those areas, as everything is connected.

We burn cedar, it starts our fire, put the cedar in the center and surround it with hardwood to keep the fire going. Cedar is widely used ornamentally in peoples yards, as well as inside homes. The bark of cedar was used as a source of fiber to make mats & cordage. Cedar was also used as a kindling to start fire by bow and drill method. It was used to freshen the inside of homes. Good for making shelving; shingles for houses; shanks for roofing. Cedar trees were used for basement foundations & sewage boxes.

Used as support beams for houses, does not rot, will last forever. It is also used to decorate inside of homes such as walls, stairs, etc. Cedar has an amazing capacity for use that has most certainly not finished being described or discovered. We hope that you will take this booklet and use it to broaden your knowledge of a very essential part of our heritage.



IMPORTANT: What can you do?

When researching conservation methods and/or guidelines etc. I found that there are none. Well not on an individual level. Guidelines for commercial harvesting are quite vague to the point that they have been able to develop ways to evade them. If you take a good tree stand and cut everything around it, it then becomes a poor tree stand and at that point there are no guidelines when it comes to cutting a poor tree stand.

Another problem we are facing is that because EW Cedar s a slow growing tree, and seedlings are frequently damaged by heavy browsing, cedar is not successfully regenerated. Neither is it successfully regenerated in forest management. The Species at Risk level for EW Cedar is stated to be secure. We feel this label should be amended to "threatened" as every day it comes closer to extinction. Because it is not successfully

regenerated what is being taken is not being replaced. This is a mixture for a volatile situation. **I ask you, what will we do with out our medicines?**

Aboriginal people have always practiced natural conservation methods and these practices are what you can do to aid in the conservation of this very important part of our heritage:

Take only what you need.

If harvesting bark of cedar or any tree, never cut a full path around

the tree. Always leave a path for the nutrients to follow up the tree and therefore protect it.

In helping to keep the trees growing, the brown foliage in the centre of the tree, this should be cleaned out.

When harvesting cedar for prayer poles, this is done in a method of thinning; leaving the surrounding trees more room to grow.

If you are taking only what you need and are practicing methods stated above, you will be helping to preserve that which is necessary to our way of life. It will be there for your future generations. Share this information with someone you know. It is too important to be kept only to ourselves.



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The New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council is a non-profit representative organization of the off-reserve aboriginal peoples of New Brunswick.

If you would like a copy of this booklet sent to you, or if you would like any information about the council in general, please contact the Communications office at NBAPC, address and phone number to the right.

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