



## **A Cultural Ethic in Tribal Forest Management and Self-Determination: The Human Dimension of Silviculture**

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I received a doctor of philosophy degree in forestry from The University of Montana with emphasis not only in forestry, but also in federal Indian law (environmental law/forestry) and sociology. I am the only Navajo woman with a PhD in forestry. The goal of my dissertation was to provide a contemporary perspective of Native American cultural/traditional values and attitudes toward harvest treatments on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) of the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana. It was the premise of this paper that cultural/traditional Native American people hold a strong connectivity with their environment and exhibit strong opinions on harvest treatments that affect traditional use and their impression of caring for the land. Often forest management decisions are made without firmly determining tribal membership values and attitudes about harvest treatments, thus fostering discontent and mistrust about tribal forest management intentions. Tribal policies and laws often focus on quantitative measurements when determining tribal membership cultural values. These laws and polices focus on cultural uses and resources as primary in judging values.

My dissertation presents a method for understanding and evaluating the cultural acceptability of harvest treatments through quantitative social science research technique. An example of a survey I designed was used to determine the acceptability range of past seed tree harvest, present seed tree harvest, and past uneven aged harvest treatments and also examined the response to two different clearcut techniques. The purpose was to determine which harvest treatment came closer to a cultural ethic (traditional use, belief in 'Mother Earth' and caring for the land) of the CSKT membership.

Tribal membership values and attitudes toward the environment are vital for shaping forest management practices as well as incorporating these values into tribal policies and laws. Through the National Environmental Policy Act, Indian Self-Determination Act, and Tribal Self-Governance Act, tribal members can actively change forest management practices to tailor harvest treatments that are more in-line with cultural values. These laws also allow for tribal forestry professionals to integrate and incorporate tribal values of land sacredness into forest resource management while embracing and defining tribal and cultural self-determination.

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**Victoria on a University of Montana prescribed fire at Lubrecht Forest with Ron Wakimoto, 1999.**