

Summary of:

Economic Aspects of Wilderness Valuation and Recreation  
uses by Aboriginal Households: A Case Study of Prince Albert.

Researchers:

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Aboriginal influence in Saskatchewan is growing. Among the various major users of forests in northern Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people stand out demographically and culturally; however, the economic, social and environmental values of forests are usually examined for typical households, regardless of peoples' cultural heritage. Knowledge of the social values held by various cultural segments of society is an important input in developing and selecting appropriate forest management options. Such knowledge should be acquired from those groups that are most likely to be users of the forest.

The purpose of this study was to explore the cultural bias of Aboriginal people toward forest values in order to enhance the cultural accountability of forest management. The specific objectives were to:

- 1) examine the nature and location of recreational use by Aboriginals living off reserve.
- 2) investigate the pattern of recreation by the above people.
- 3) estimate the non-use value associated with preserving wilderness areas in Saskatchewan.
- 4) compare the results for Aboriginal households with those from general Saskatchewan residents (Loewen and Kulshreshtha 1995).

A non-random sample of 30 Aboriginal families living off reserve was taken. In addition, a Contingency Valuation Method was employed to estimate the willingness to pay (WTP) for wilderness preservation. The results of this study were compared to a concurrent study of general Saskatchewan residents (Loewen and Kulshreshtha 1995).

Both general Saskatchewan residents and urban Aboriginal residents identified the most significant recreational activities as walking, wildlife viewing, camping, picnicking, swimming and fishing. Hunting was more significant to Aboriginal households. Skiing on water or snow, hiking, sunbathing, mountain biking, golfing, tennis and sailing were significantly less important to Aboriginal households.

The preferred Aboriginal recreation sites were Prince Albert National Park, Emma and Christopher Lakes, Candle Lake and Big River. General Saskatchewan residents spent more time in various recreation sites and participated more in outdoor activities than Aboriginals.

Only 7% of the Aboriginal sample, and 58% of the general Saskatchewan sample were satisfied with current wilderness protection in Saskatchewan. The Aboriginal sample was more concerned with environmental health for current and future generations. Reasons such as protecting water and air quality, wildlife habitat, rare and endangered species, wilderness for future generations, scenic beauty, existence of wilderness and spiritual inspiration were all rated higher for Aboriginal households. General Saskatchewan residents placed greater emphasis on commercial aspects of wilderness,

such as tourism, while spiritual inspiration was the least significant reason to preserve wilderness. Although Aboriginal families tended to use wilderness and recreation areas less than general Saskatchewan residents, the Aboriginal families valued wilderness more highly.

General Saskatchewan households earned significantly more income on average (\$45,781/year) than urban Aboriginal households (17,000/year); however, the estimated WTP to ensure current wilderness protection was approximately \$81 per Aboriginal household. This figure is nearly \$20 higher than the mean WTP per general Saskatchewan household. A Tobit analysis showed that spirituality and home ownership positively influence the Aboriginal household's WTP.

The results of this study suggest that differences in forest use recreational activities may not simply be related to ethnic origin. Activities such as boating, golfing and mountain biking require some capital commitments for equipment and user fees. For this reason, households with lower economic means would tend to participate in these activities less often than households that are more well-to-do. Differences in wealth may have an influence on Aboriginal forest use. To further examine the correlation between ethnic origin, wealth and the use of forests for recreation by Aboriginals, a more extensive study involving a larger sample of Aboriginal households of diverse incomes would be required.