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Abstract

Water: A First Nations' Spiritual and Ecological Perspective.

Michael Blackstock

Water quality and availability is an urgent global concern. This paper documents, through the use of ethnographic research methods, First Nations?concerns and perspectives about water. The paper担 scope is primarily limited to the views of three Elders from the southern Interior of British Columbia: Mary Thomas from the Secwepemc, Millie Michell from the Nlaka抪amux, and Mary Louie from the Syilx Nation. Secondary literature sources complement the Elders?sharing of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The Elders?emphasis on the spiritual importance of water is contrasted with Western science扭 emphasis on water扭 unique physical and chemical properties. This fundamental difference raises questions about Western science扭 approach to freshwater ecosystem management and study. Ultimately, this paper documents the wisdom of highly respected Elders about water in relation to the culture and freshwater ecosystems of South-Central British Columbia.

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previous page top of page





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