



Species at Risk and of Cultural Value Seedbank Gathering - Discussion Group Summary

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Summary of BC Seedbank Discussion

Context Setting

On February 28th, 2024, the Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership (CFDCP), the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) and the UBC Botanical Garden hosted a virtual Species at Risk and of Cultural Value Seedbank Gathering.

The purpose of the gathering was to take the first step towards developing a long-term seedbank for species at risk and of cultural value in BC.

The gathering brought together people from plant nurseries (indigenous and non-indigenous), botanical gardens, herbariums, restoration practitioners (indigenous and non-indigenous), local, provincial and federal government, NGO's, scientists and researchers.

The objectives for the gathering were to:

- Establish a network of knowledge holders and future collectors.
- Understand priorities for species to include in the seedbank.
- Understand support / capacity needed to establish and maintain the seedbank.
- Learn from others who have experience with species at risk or cultural value, seed collection and the storage of seed.

To achieve these objectives, participants were asked a series of questions during the gathering, and these were discussed in small, facilitated groups.

Who?

The discussion groups were asked to identify **who else should be included** in conversations going forward about the development of a seedbank. This led to the following recommendations:

- All Indigenous Peoples within BC including leaders, knowledge keepers and youth.
- Native plant nurseries e.g. Twin Sister Native Plant Nursery.
- Ecosystem restoration professionals.
- BC Botany Groups
- Better representation from each region in BC.

The discussion groups highlighted that the following areas needed to be considered:

- Maintenance of indigenous food and **data sovereignty**.
- Indigenous led **knowledge sharing**.



Photo: Marika Ai-Li

Which Plants?

The discussion groups considered the **prioritization of species for collection** in relation to cultural plants and rare plants, leading to the following recommendations;

Prioritization factors for cultural plants:

- Plants that are used and interacted with the most (i.e., medicines, foods, fibre etc.).
- Plants that can be used for restoration and to support wildlife.
- Wetland species.
- Consult with elders and knowledge holders to determine what cultural plants to include.

Prioritization factors for rare plants:

- Rarest species, or species with smallest populations should be collected first, provided there is sufficient seed available.
- Plants likely to be impacted by climate change.
- Consider ecological relationships e.g. symbiotic species, keystone species etc.
- Consider genetic, phylogenetics and geographic diversity.
- Common species should also be collected, following the rarer species.



Photo: Marika Ai-Li

Resourcing

In the discussion groups, attendees detailed **training** that they would like to see and highlighted that there is currently an absence of training for people interested in seed collection and the propagation of native species. These discussions continued and highlighted that there were indigenous and non-indigenous organisations at the gathering that have the skills and interest to fill these training gaps.

The discussion group participants highlighted that the following **resources** were needed to develop the seedbank network:

- Training.
- Funding.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Equipment and facilities.
- Opportunities to bring Indigenous Peoples to the table.
- Indigenous Peoples should lead identification of species of cultural value to include in the seedbank.
- Capacity/volunteers/experienced staff.
- Cultural sensitivity.

What Do We Do Next?

The gathering highlighted the **existing depth and knowledge** of the participants, particularly in relation to collecting seed, its storage and propagation for restoration and maintenance of a living library of rare and culturally valuable species (**Refer to Figure A**). The gathering also highlighted that Indigenous Peoples and their organisations have built knowledge in relation to the long-term storage of seed through the Indigenous Seed Collection Program delivered by the National Tree Seed Centre.

It was suggested that the Seedbank should include **regional/territorial hubs** to reflect where knowledge about rare and culturally valuable plants is held. These hubs would send seed for long-term storage at two+ locations. The discussion groups highlighted the next steps for the seedbank:

- Speak with knowledge holders to identify species that should be include in the seedbank.
- Confirm the locations for long-term storage of seed and resources these locations need.
- Indigenous led development of an Indigenous Data Sovereignty Agreement.
- Deliver training to existing knowledge holders on seed collecting for long term storage.



Photo: Adam Taylor

Figure A - Growing the BC Seedbank for Rare and Culturally Valuable Plants

The BC Seedbank Gathering in Spring 2024 was the first step towards establishing a seedbank for rare and culturally valuable species in BC. Attendees included indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge holders that work in plant identification, seed collection, seed banking, propagation and research. The gathering provided us with an opportunity to understand where people and organisations had skills, knowledge and resources that they were happy to share. It is understood that there are a lot more people that need / should be involved in this conversation and we hope to continue to identify who would be interested in taking an active role in this project.

BC Seedbank Activities

