

INDIGENOUS SEED COLLECTION PROGRAM

Natural Resources Canada's Indigenous Seed Collection Program (ISCP), led by the National Tree Seed Centre (NTSC), supports Indigenous communities and organizations in **building long-term capacity for seed conservation and protection, helping to safeguard biodiversity and strengthen resilient landscapes for future generations.**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE RECOGNIZED AS THE ORIGINAL ECOSYSTEM ARCHITECTS OF TURTLE ISLAND, BEING THE EARLIEST SEED COLLECTORS, PROCESSORS, AND DISTRIBUTERS. THE GOAL OF ISCP IS TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS TO RECLAIM THESE SKILLS AND HONOUR OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES IN CARING FOR MOTHER EARTH. ISCP FOCUSES ON SPECIES THAT ARE OF CULTURAL, MEDICINAL, SPIRITUAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE.

THE ISCP FOCUSES ON:



Tree and shrub seed collection



Long-term seed banking



Cross-cultural knowledge exchange

The ISCP aims to protect cultural heritage and identity through the **preservation of plant genetics and seed banking.**

Engaging with this work in communities and across nations also encourages the preservation of language around plant relatives and medicines, supports food sovereignty and restoration work, and builds a diverse network of Indigenous leadership in forestry across Turtle Island.

ISCP IS CARRIED OUT THROUGH 4 MAIN COMPONENTS:

1) FIELD TRAINING

- Delivered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous technicians and staff from the NTSC.
- Shares practical skills and techniques including seed forecasting, collection methods, and post-harvest handling.
- Supports community-specific goals and projects around seed ecology and stewardship for species of significance for the community.
- Supports the strengthening of existing community practices and capacity.



2) LAB TRAINING

- Participants learn about seed cleaning and processing, viability testing, germination protocols, and storage techniques for longevity.
- The training brings together Indigenous seed-collectors from across the country to grow a national network of Indigenous-led seed conservation.



3) KNOWLEDGE SHARING

- The ISCP organizes knowledge sharing through virtual gatherings, ongoing technical support if requested, and publications co-developed with communities to share seed stewardship practices.



4) SEED STORAGE

- The NTSC can process, test and store seeds on behalf of community partners who do not have the current capacity.
- For those partners, the ISCP co-develops Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) to ensure that ownership, intellectual property rights, data sharing and use permissions are fully respected and directed by the partner community or organization.



FOR A DETAILED LOOK AT THIS PROCESS, SEE THE SEEDS AND STORIES BROCHURE HERE!

Seed collection techniques and principles can be transferrable but vary depending on species. As an example, handling White Spruce can look something like this:

Mature cones can be collected using pole pruners, from harvested trees, or other collection methods.

Maturity is determined by factors including seed coat colour and seed fullness.

As the cones are slowly dried, they open, the seeds fall out and must be de-winged by hand rubbing.

To grow seeds, seeds must be prechilled for 21 days then sown directly into preferred growing medium.

To store seeds, they must be dried to the right moisture content before being placed into an airtight jar for freezer storage.

White Spruce



Canadian Conservation and Land Management

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ISCP AND HOW YOUR COMMUNITY CAN GET INVOLVED IN THIS PROGRAM, PLEASE VISIT HERE OR WWW.CCLMPORTAL.CA.