**Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

GPS+Camera Projects recognize that local communities have always coped with issues of sustainability and many have developed detailed knowledge bases of their local ecology and techniques for resilience often referred to as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Traditional Ecological Knowledge forms the basis for local-level decision making in many communities and research has demonstrated that resilience strategies that use TEK as their starting point are considerably more likely to be effective. One aim of the GPS+Camera Projects is to **recognize**, **record, strengthen** and **share** Traditional Ecological Knowledge across participating communities. The GPS+Camera Projects and Website are intended to help create systematic ways to facilitate dialogue between local communities, as well as connecting international researchers and local communities. Every participant in a GPS+Camera Project has much to teach and much to learn.

**Key Concepts**

* **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** describes a system of knowledge concerning local ecology and resilience strategies developed by a local community. TEK is dynamic, not static, and is characterized by innovation in the face of changing local circumstances.
* **Resilience**: is the capacity of communities to adapt to environmental change without undue hardship. Resilience is often realized locally but is highly dependent on larger external systems.

**Why is TEK Important?**

Traditional Ecological Knowledge forms the basis for local-level decision making in many communities. By starting with TEK as the basis for resilience strategies we can ensure that our projects:

* Are **effective**, **participatory**, and **sustainable**.
* Make full use of TEK that is **accurate**, **detailed** and **attuned to local circumstances**.
* **Recognize, record, strengthen** and **share** an important source of ecological information.
* **Preserve heritage and culture** while taking advantage of **new technology and research**.
* Recognize the important contributions of **women's**, **men's,** and **elder's knowledge** and expertise in sustainability and resilience.
* Emphasize **preexisting strengths** rather than deficits.

**TEK in Barbuda**

Barbuda is a fascinating island with a rich ecology and cultural history. Barbudans have contended with issues of sustainability since the island was first inhabited. Examples of TEK in Barbuda that could become GPS+Camera projects include:

* Barbudans have long manufactured their own cement, using locally available materials. Students could compare and contrast the effectiveness of different recipes for cement and use the most effective cement to restore historic landmarks on the island.
* Barbudans, especially women, have a detailed knowledge of local medicinal plants. Students could study and record this knowledge and publish their findings to an international audience through the GPS+Camera Website.

**Further Reading**

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For comprehensive lists of scholarly articles, journals and databases on TEK:

1. Resilience Alliance: http://www.resalliance.org/bibliography/
2. Alaska Native Knowledge Network: http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/IKS/tek.html