

be a life-long learning process and is discussed in the section of this report on education, public awareness, and training. The use of new technologies and alternative ways of understanding our relationship with the Earth are also important trends.

Distance Education

As a sparsely populated country, Canada has always promoted forms of distance education. Advances in technology have created new opportunities for individuals to learn, breaking down barriers of distance between learners and educators. Examples include specialized education computer networks such as STEM-Net in Newfoundland, the Ontario Education Highway, Alberta's ARNet, and SchoolNet.

For example, SchoolNet has been created to encourage all of Canada's 16,000 primary and secondary schools and 200 colleges and universities to connect to the Internet by 1998. Initiated by Industry Canada and launched in 1993, SchoolNet receives support from many sectors, such as, the private sector and the academic community.

There are now three Canadian universities whose sole method of instruction is distance learning: British Columbia Open University, Athabasca University in Alberta, and Télé-université, which is part of the Université du Québec network and the only francophone distance education university in North America.

Traditional Environmental Knowledge

Canada's Aboriginal people have a deep tradition of respect for and understanding of the environment based on life in harmony with the Earth. Aboriginal people have developed a profound knowledge of their environments over thousands of years. The documentation and application of this traditional environmental knowledge is a growing field of research in Canada.

The Dene Cultural Institute Pilot Project in the Northwest Territories is an example of a participatory community project. It is designed to document the traditional environmental knowledge of the people of Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake. The ultimate goal of the project is to integrate traditional environmental knowledge and western science for the purpose of community-based natural resource management.

A cooperative project between five Aboriginal communities located in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick is illustrating Naturalized Knowledge Systems, including local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal systems. These systems demonstrate how knowledge is transferred within the community between people and generations. They also show how a community has adapted to social and cultural change. A major focus of the project will be the clarification of indigenous environmental indicators that are important to members of the community. The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the University of Ottawa are working in partnership with the five communities to empower each of them with this knowledge.

On 18 July 1995, the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy along with Cambridge University each received an award from the United Nations Environment Programme in recognition of their work and dedication toward protecting the environment. The "Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration: Indigenous Strategy for Human Sustainability" is an environmental agenda, using the Naturalized Knowledge Systems of the Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee have territories in the Great Lakes area.