Indigenous Perspectives on the Use of Biotechnology in Forests

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The Potential for Biotechnology to Address Forest Health
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Presentation Outline

1. Introduction – American Indian Lands
2. Introduction – Tribal Relations
3. Some Perspectives on Biotechnology and Forest Health
4. Questions & Discussion
American Indian Forestry

- 570+ Federally Recognized Tribes
- 302 have significant Forestlands
- 18 million acres (7.3 million ha)
- Tribes managed their lands to meet many goals for generations
- Managed through many changes
- All tribes are different: separate nations, cultures and history
- All forests were once tribal forests
US Forest Service Tribal Relations

• American Indian tribes have inherent rights to United States Forest Service (USFS) system lands, resources, and programs
• All federal agencies are legally required to consult with tribes.
Materials for cultural activities; hunting and fishing; spiritual and religious ceremonies; access to sacred sites.
Perspectives on Biotech and Forest Health

#1: Tribes are diverse
Perspectives on Biotech and Forest Health

#2: Tribes are resilient and forward thinking

Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region (Kling et al. 2003)
Potawatomi "Trail of Death" march: Sept. – Nov. 1838

Designates 1838 Potawatomi "Trail of Death" route starting in Indiana, crossing Illinois and Missouri, and ending at present day Osawatomie, Kansas.

In September 1838 over 850 Potawatomi Indian people were rounded up and marched at gunpoint from their Indiana homeland. Many walked the 660-mile distance, which took two months. More than 40 died, mostly children, of typhoid fever and the stress of the forced removal.

Dots on Trail are some of the 48 places where the Potawatomi people camped one night or more on the forced removal, and certain other locations mentioned in the official journal kept by a government agent.
Perspectives on Biotech and Forest Health

#3: We are all related. Plants and animals are relatives.
Think about what it means to be relatives
“We object to the exploitation of our wild rice for pecuniary gain... We are of the opinion that the wild rice rights assured by treaty accrue not only to individual grains of rice, but to the very essence of the resource.”

Norman Deschampe, Minnesota Chippewa Tribal President
1998 Letter to University Minnesota President

See: https://www.cfans.umn.edu/wildrice
Forest Health vs. Commercialization of sacred relative?
Conclusions

• There is no one tribal voice
• Need to listen to tribal perspectives
• Building relationships is key
• Tribes have been excluded in past biotech conversations
• Tribal relations takes time, leadership, and understanding
• Tribal perspectives on forest health need to be incorporated in biotech discussions and other discussions… maybe other solutions