

BOOK REVIEW

Traditional Plant Foods of Canadian Indigenous Peoples: Nutrition, Botany, and Use. Harriet V. Kuhnlein and Nancy J. Turner. Volume 8 in the Food and

Nutrition in History and Anthropology Series, edited by Solomon Katz. New York and Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1991. Pp. xi, 620. 48 figures, 3 maps. \$88.00 (hardbound), \$38.00 for individuals who are members of Science and Arts Society. ISBN 2-88124-465-3.

Ethnobotanical studies amongst Aboriginal Peoples in most parts of North America are "few and far between." It is indeed encouraging that such a highly detailed and thorough report on food plants and nutrition of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada has appeared. The two authors—a well known nutritionist from McGill University and a widely respected ethnobotanist—are to be congratulated for their presentation of such a masterly contribution.

The forward by Laurie Montour, a Native Canadian and a staff member of the Assembly of First Nations, sets the tone of the book: "We need to work hard together to preserve our knowledge and to protect the environments of the plant foods of the world's indigenous people. This book is a good step along the way." In the Acknowledgments, the authors indicate the great number of individuals—aboriginal consultants, students, governmental agencies, and scientific colleagues—whose contributions have helped make this book the encyclopedic masterpiece that it is. The Introduction, Chapter 1, tells us that "The scientific literature was searched for nutrient information of approximately 1,050 species that were identified as edible and available in Canada," and that ". . . nutritional, botanical and ethnological data for more than 1,000 species of edible plants" are included.

There follows Chapter 2, "What's So Special About Indigenous Foods?" Amongst other "specialties" is the usefulness of information in "genetic research, in enhancing existing crops or . . . developing new ones." Chapter 3 deals in depth with "An Overview of the Nutrient Value and Use of Plant Foods by Indigenous Peoples." In the fourth chapter—a major section of the book—are considered the botany and methods of use of indigenous plant foods of Canada. A comprehensive list of plant food species makes up Chapter 5, a convenient tabular summary of earlier chapters. Another tabular chapter deals with "Nutrient Values of Traditional Plant Foods"—a most useful addition that occupies 162 pages.

The Bibliography comprises 519 items and is followed by three Appendices: Linguistic Affiliations and Locations of Indigenous Peoples of Canada (with three maps); Species by Common Name; and Species by Botanical Name. The Index contains both common and scientific plant names, and nutritional and other chemical constituents of the food plants.

This volume will certainly long remain an example of the very finest in ethnobotanical literature. Furthermore, its utility will be evident as a manual for quick consultation by specialists, as a valuable text or classroom reference work, and as an instrument furthering the development of the interdisciplinary field of ethnobotany.

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