



# WORKSHEET FOREST SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a complex concept. It presumes that resources are finite and should be used wisely with a view to the long-term. A commonly shared definition of sustainability comes from the UN World Commission on Environment and Development: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

Forest sustainability may be defined as managing forests to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is often seen as a balance between society’s demands on forests, and the need to conserve forest health and diversity.

For Indigenous Peoples, the concept of sustainability is ingrained in their culture and heritage. For some, this sustainability approach is articulated as the Seventh Generation Principle, which is based on an ancient philosophy that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world as far as seven generations into the future. It is represented in the “Seventh Generation Principle” graphic, on the right. In considering the long-term effects of actions affecting energy, water, and natural resources, this philosophy helps to ensure both sustainability and stewardship.

Many people use a “triple bottom line” approach to measure sustainability by looking at three elements: economy, environment, and society. Each of the elements—economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social well-being—is interdependent with the others, and each may be present to a greater or lesser degree in a particular situation. The ultimate goal of forest sustainability involves a balance of all three, as indicated by the shaded area in the middle.

The essential idea of forest sustainability is that environmental, social, and economic issues and ideals must be included in decisions and actions that affect forests, while also taking into account future and present needs.

**FIGURE 1. SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE OF SUSTAINABILITY**

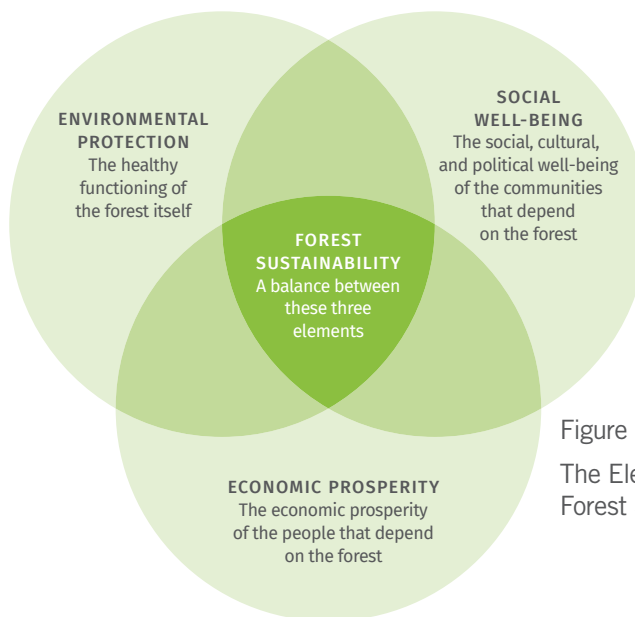
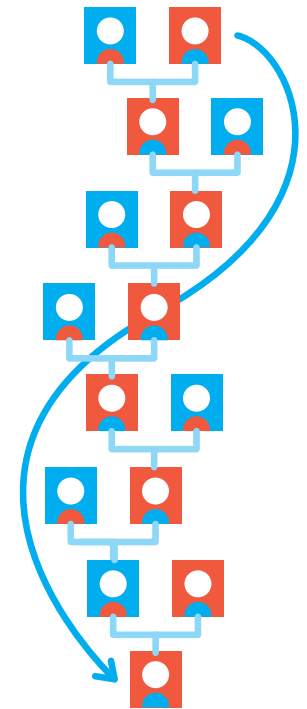


Figure 5  
The Elements of  
Forest Sustainability



**Sources:** Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Report). 1987.

[www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf](http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf)

[www.ictinc.ca/blog/seventh-generation-principle](http://www.ictinc.ca/blog/seventh-generation-principle)