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Biodiversity initiatives have traditionally operated within a 'science-first' model of environmental decision-making. The model assumes a hierarchical relationship in which scientific knowledge is elevated above other knowledge systems. Consequently, other types of knowledge held by the public, such as traditional or lay knowledges, are undervalued and under-represented in biodiversity projects. Drawing upon two case studies of biodiversity initiatives in Canada, this paper looks at the role that constructivist conceptions of education play in the integration of alternative knowledge systems in environmental decision-making. In so doing, it argues that the conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing goals outlined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (signed in 1992 under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme) demand new models of governance which embrace the adaptive management qualities of learning organisations.

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