

Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel

Mandate and Roles Document

May 2017

The Indigenous¹ Wisdom Advisory Panel is dedicated to ensuring that Indigenous science knowledge systems, languages, oral traditions², understandings, natural laws and cultures are represented and respected equitably with the Alberta environmental science program under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.

For the purposes of this Mandate and Roles Document, Indigenous wisdom and knowledge is understood as a living body of knowledge, a cosmovision, worldview and way of knowing transmitted from generation to generation. Indigenous wisdom and knowledge is inextricably integrated with the Earth and Indigenous languages, cultures, spirituality and natural laws.

The Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel (the Panel) intends to operate in accordance with the customs, protocols and knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples, insofar as possible, and to carry out such deliberations, responsibilities and communications through oral systems in parallel with written contemporary knowledge systems.

As such, this Mandate and Roles Document is a collaboratively written agreement³ envisioning a relationship between the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, Alberta Environment and Park's Chief Scientist and the Minister of Environment and Parks (the Minister) wherein principles of good faith, sharing, mutual respect and honour, kindness, generosity, trust and humility form a foundation.

The creation of this relationship has been commemorated through a Blanket Ceremony with Minister Phillips, Alberta Environment and Parks, held on October 18, 2016 at Alberta Government House in Edmonton, Alberta. The Ceremony included a demonstration of the intent to do good work together through presentation of blankets from Minister Phillips to all the Panel Members. Minister Phillips was also presented a blanket by the Panel and a song was gifted to validate the collective agreement regarding the Panel's intent and the commencement of their work.⁴

¹ For the purposes of this Mandate and Roles Document, "Indigenous" shall be inclusive of First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

² The oral traditions, oral histories and oral systems of knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in Canada have been recognized as having equal weight and footing with written systems of knowledge. This recognition is exemplified in Supreme Court of Canada decisions beginning with *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010 (SCC). Oral traditions, oral histories and oral systems of knowledge are integral to the natural laws, cultures, identities, land use and histories of Indigenous Peoples.

³ The spirit of this agreement is consensus, within the concept and meaning of our historic Treaties. As such, nothing in this Mandate and Roles Document shall be construed so as to prejudice, abrogate or derogate from any Aboriginal and Treaty rights protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

⁴ In keeping with the traditions of Indigenous Peoples, and through our oral practices and natural laws, the Blanket Ceremony is an exchange of blankets and song to validate our collective agreement to bring our knowledge systems together, where the understanding is bundled within the symbolic repository of the blanket.

This Document is intended to inform the process of braiding and weaving together knowledge systems.⁵ This work shall be carried out with the understanding that all knowledge systems engaged with are of equal value, with no one system having more weight or legitimacy than another. Braiding and weaving together knowledge systems requires an understanding that one system does not require corroboration of another system in order to achieve internal validity. The process of braiding and weaving together shall be carried out in accordance with the Guiding Principles, Mandate, Duties, Responsibilities and Interactions set out in this document.

The elements of this Document are intended to be implemented as a whole, maintained as a living document and revisited through ceremony or dialogue as conditions develop through the relationship. The original intent of the Panel, to provide advice for the respectful and appropriate inclusion of Indigenous wisdom and knowledge, will remain the core value of the relationship.

1. Guiding Principles

The following serve as Guiding Principles in carrying out the responsibilities of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel.

- **Good Faith:** The *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* of Alberta, Indigenous Ceremonies conducted under the auspices of this Panel, the United Nations and Organization of American States respective Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the Treaties 6, 7 & 8 Elders Declaration on the Environment, and the Treaties 6, 7 & 8 Declaration on Water provide the framework of good faith and clarity for the Mandate of this Panel.
- **Sharing:** The Panel recognizes the diversity of perspectives, knowledge systems, understandings and experiences brought to the table by each Panel Member, which further enrich the dialogue and sharing of Indigenous wisdom and knowledge. The Panel also recognizes that the varied perspectives of the Members of the Panel further strengthen the braiding and weaving together of Indigenous wisdom and knowledge systems.
- **Mutual Respect and Honour:** The Panel recognizes that all knowledge systems and oral traditions are understood as holding a place of equity in the fulfillment of the Panel's Mandate and Roles. Cross-validation of these systems of knowledge shall be commemorated through ceremony, song and dialogue throughout our shared journey.
- **Kindness:** The Panel undertakes the Mandate and Roles set out in this document in the spirit of kindness and caring, not only with regard to each other in the course of our work together, but also with the understanding that the Earth cares for us as we care for the Earth, and that all life is sacred.
- **Generosity and Trust:** The Members of the Panel, the Chief Scientist and the Minister understand that we have been called together to share with each other in the true spirit of these Guiding Principles. In order to fulfill this call, we must dedicate ourselves to

⁵ Braiding and weaving knowledge systems together results in more than the sum of their parts. The process of braiding results in a stronger "us," together rather than apart. The process of weaving results in the creation of something that is more useful and beautiful as a whole than separated. Braiding and weaving together our knowledge systems can result in instruments of peace to strengthen our spirits.

being generous with one another. We must dedicate ourselves to the challenge, in the face of past exclusion, appropriation and oppression, to build trust with one another. Trust is an ongoing process notionally achieved through the value of honesty and the principle of the honour of the Crown.

- **Humility and the Trickster:** The Panel will anticipate chaos and changes in the world and approach these dynamic changes in a spirit of humility and good humour amongst ourselves and with our colleagues. The Trickster lives.⁶

2. Mandate

Established under s. 15 of the *Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel (the “Panel”) is an independent advisory agency to the Minister of Environment and Parks (the “Minister”) and responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding the incorporation⁷ of traditional ecological knowledge and the environmental science program.

The work of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel shall be carried out in accordance with Indigenous natural laws, knowledge and understanding, insofar as possible. All members of the Panel should conduct themselves above the minimum standards recognized by Indigenous laws, customs and practices as well as those of their respective communities.

The Panel shall advise the Chief Scientist and Minister regarding how to respectfully apply Indigenous wisdom and knowledge to Alberta’s monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities. The purpose of the advice is to improve processes and programs delivered by the Chief Scientist and enhance the development and maintenance of good relations with Indigenous communities in Alberta.

The Panel will nurture a relationship both within itself and in its dealings with the Chief Scientist and staff. This relationship will be founded on the Guiding Principles set out above.

The Panel will provide strategic advice and recommendations, as required by the Chief Scientist, as it pertains to how Indigenous wisdom can be respectfully included in monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the condition of Alberta’s environment. In addition, the Panel will collectively decide areas around which they would like to provide advice towards, including best practices and protocols for respectfully considering Indigenous wisdom and knowledge in a science based system, and areas of common ground/parallels wherein Indigenous and western scientists may work together.

⁶ A Trickster has been described by various Indigenous Peoples in different ways. Neal McLeod has described the Trickster as a part of sacred stories, as an elder brother and a transformer who “creates a state of heteroglossia through the questioning of social space.” See Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing 2007) at 97. Heteroglossia is a noun meaning the presence of two or more voices or expressed viewpoints.

⁷ For the purposes of this Mandate and Roles Document, “incorporation” shall be deemed to refer to the process of “braiding and weaving together” of knowledge systems.

The Panel will not be expected to provide advice on the merits of government policy and plans outside of those influencing the Chief Scientist's mandate; political, economic or regulatory design or decision making; or consultations with stakeholders or the public.

This Document's focus is Indigenous wisdom and knowledge, not consultation or accommodation. It does not purport to fulfill or replace the obligations of the Crown or other parties to Indigenous communities. Nor does it purport to affect protocols created by Indigenous Peoples for engaging government, industry or others, or for gathering, documenting, management or sharing Indigenous wisdom and knowledge.

To achieve the above scope, and at the discretion of the Chief Scientist with agreement of the Indigenous Wisdom Panel and Science Advisory Panel, the respective Panels may be asked to collaborate with each other.

3. Duties and Responsibilities

Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel:

- Is responsible for ensuring that the Panel operates at all times in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, the Panel's Code of Conduct, the Guiding Principles set out in this Document, the highest ethical standards and the applicable Indigenous natural laws, protocols, traditions, and customary guidance, as expressed through song, ceremony or other form of Indigenous validation.
- Will convene and attend regular face to face meetings twice a year to provide advice on matters relating to environmental monitoring in Alberta or new or emerging issues. As part of the advisory panel process, the Minister and/or Chief Scientist and/or panel members may request the use of interim conference calls between meetings.
- Will produce reports documenting meeting outcomes, updates or advice:
 - Such reports may be oral and written reports, and may include content in any media⁸ format which the Panel Members may deem appropriate;
 - Such reports may or may not also be validated through ceremony, song or protocol as deemed necessary by the members of the Panel and coordinated through the Facilitator and Co-Facilitator of the Panel.
 - Meeting reports, including notations or addendums evidencing Indigenous validation(s), will be provided to the Chief Scientist and should address questions posed to the Panel and any other points the Panel wishes to highlight.
 - The meeting reports should illustrate issues of consensus and issues for which the Panel could not reach consensus, with an appropriate assessment of diversity and perspectives.

⁸ Media formats may include: audio recordings, video recordings, transcripts etc.

- Provides advice and guidance to the Chief Scientist and Minister on the meaningful and respectful consideration of Indigenous wisdom and has no formal decision making authority. In formulating its advice, it is expected that the Panel will operate by preference as a consensus based entity. Where consensus cannot be reached this is noted in Panel communication to the Chief Scientist. In such cases, the Chief Scientist and the Panel will discuss the significance of non-consensus and identify a path forward.
- Will determine a process prior to the renewal of the Mandate and Roles Document (every three years) to conduct an evaluation and review of the performance of the Panel. The Panel will review the results of such evaluation with the Chief Scientist and discuss potential ways to improve Panel effectiveness and will adopt agreed upon improvements.

The Minister:

- The Minister of Environment and Parks is accountable to the Legislature for the operation of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel.
- Appoints the Panel Members based on her/his assessment that the appointees have the appropriate knowledge, skills, experience and values to assist the Panel in achieving its objectives and performing its functions.
- Monitors the operations and performance of the Panel to ensure that it is fulfilling its mandate in compliance with Government policies.
- Informs the Panel of Government policies and direction affecting the work of the Panel.
- Conducts regular (at least every seven years) reviews of the Panel's mandate and purpose to determine if the work of the Panel is still relevant to the needs of Albertans, if it is aligned with Government priorities and if the operations and functions are being carried out in a manner that can achieve Government objectives.
- Acknowledges a standing invitation extended from the Panel to attend meetings of the Panel.

The Chief Scientist:

- The Chief Scientist is responsible for consulting with the Panel established in section 15.3 (1) of the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and to determine how to address any advice provided by the Panel.
- Supports the work of the Panel, including:
 - Providing the relevant questions to the Panel to seek their advice and insight;
 - Communicating with the Panel regularly as a feedback mechanism to advice received as a function of braiding and weaving together knowledge systems
- Considers the advice received from the Panel; and in keeping with the principle of openness and transparent access to information, the Chief Scientist will make the advice of the Panel and the response to the advice available to the general public through the environmentalmonitoring.alberta.ca website.
- Reviews the Panel's mandate and purpose with the Panel prior to the renewal or revision of the Mandate and Roles Document (every three years).

The Department:

- Is responsible for supporting the Panel in the following areas:
 - Provision of the secretariat functions in the preparation and operation of Advisory Panel meetings and the recruitment process of new members;
 - Provision of orientation and training for new Panel members;
- Provides financial and other resources to support the Panel in fulfilling its mandate subject to the approval of the Chief Scientist.

4. Recruitment and Appointment of Panel Members and Supporting Roles to the Panel

The Panel will consist of up to eight members who are recognized and respected Indigenous traditional knowledge holders. The recruitment of Panel members is managed by the Department in accordance with the current Government of Alberta recruitment and appointment policies for public agencies. Vacant positions will be publicly posted on the Government of Alberta's public agencies website.

Appointments are made by Ministerial Order for a fixed term of three years, with the potential of re-appointment based on satisfactory performance. Panel members are limited to a maximum of ten consecutive years of service in accordance with the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act*.

Membership is not based on representation of a particular community or organization and Members should not propose to represent on the Panel any particular Indigenous society or traditional order or clan, nor any Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization, employer, profession or constituency; nor receive instruction from any person external to the Panel in order to inform their advice.

A host Facilitator and helper Co-Facilitator shall be chosen by the Panel to support the dialogue and deliberations in the course of the work of the Panel at Panel meetings as they may be held at various locations throughout the province. The host Facilitator and helper Co-Facilitator may be members of the Panel and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- Ensure the appropriate consideration of required actions related to ceremony, protocol, and traditional deliberations;
- Host or ensure the appropriate venue for hosting of ceremony, protocol and traditional deliberations; and
- Facilitate dialogue amongst members of the Panel.

Remuneration

The remuneration and compensation for reasonable expenses of members appointed to the Panel will be in accordance with the Ministerial Order which establishes the member appointment.

Remuneration rates and payments will be disclosed in accordance with the guidelines established in the Public Agencies Governance Framework.

5. Interaction between Advisory Panel and Department

The Office of the Chief Scientist, as the primary liaison for the Ministry, will communicate regularly with the Panel. Panel members may contact the Office of the Chief Scientist to address any areas of concern or need for information.

An outcome of this interaction will be that the Panel may also encourage awareness and raise respect for traditional knowledge systems, for the dignity, cultural integrity and intellectual and spiritual values of Indigenous knowledge and wisdom holders who conserve, develop and maintain those systems. The Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel may also ensure that their contribution through the Office of the Chief Scientist and the Executive Director is recognized as relevant for the sustainability of livelihoods and identities of knowledge holders whose contribution is vital to conservation, sustainability, and the progress of science and technology.

Any advice of the Panel, whether written or oral, must have the approval of the Panel prior to submission by the Department to the Chief Scientist and Minister. If in the process of the Panel providing advice to the Minister, any unilateral or unapproved substantive or material change to that advice is made by the Department, then the Panel will have recourse to raise the matter with the Chief Scientist for resolution. Where there is honest disagreement as between the Panel and the Department, such lack of consensus shall be duly noted in any reporting or communications with the Chief Scientist and the Minister.

6. Administration

Review of the Mandate and Roles Document

The Mandate and Roles document, validated through dialogue, ceremony, song and signature of the Panel members and Minister, shall be a living document in effect for not more than three years after signing, ceremony and song. It must be renewed or revised through processes of review, dialogue, ceremony and song by the Panel and Chief Scientist by the expiry date.

The Mandate and Roles Document may be amended at any time, such amendment to be carried out in accordance with applicable Indigenous protocols, ceremonies or customs and signed by Panel members, the Chief Scientist and by the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Implementation and Process for Administering the Code of Conduct

The Panel shall implement a Code of Conduct governing the conduct of its members in accordance with *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act*, Section 11.

The Code Administrator receives and ensures the confidentiality of all disclosures and ensures that any real or apparent conflict of interest is avoided or effectively managed. As well, the Code Administrator is responsible for providing advice and managing concerns and complaints concerning potential breaches of the Code, including conflicts of interest within the Panel. The Code Administrator is responsible for ensuring procedural fairness.

The Code Administrator for members is the Chief Scientist.

Transparency

Copies of the Mandate and Roles Document will be filed with the Minister of Environment and Parks, and the Public Agency Secretariat. In support of the principle of transparency, this document will also be easily available to the public on the Public Agency Secretariat's website: alberta.ca/public-agency-list.cfm.

Periodic Agency Review

The mandate and operations of every public agency must, at least every seven years, be reviewed by the responsible Minister. The next review for the Panel is scheduled for June 2023.

This Mandate and Roles Document was validated through dialogue, ceremony and song on May 31st, 2017 at Fort McMurray, Alberta, and received prior ratification through Ministerial Order 54/2016.

[Original signed by Shannon Phillips]

Honourable Shannon Phillips
Minister of Environment and Parks

[Original signed by Wilton Littlechild]

Dr. Wilton (Willie) Littlechild
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Fred Wrona]

Dr. Fred Wrona
Chief Scientist and Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Monitoring and Science
Division

[Original signed by Leroy Little Bear]

Dr. Leroy Little Bear
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Reg Crowshoe]

Dr. Reg Crowshoe
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Francis Henry Lickers]

Dr. Francis Henry Lickers
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Harley Bastien]

Mr. Harley Bastien
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Melody Lepine]

Ms. Melody Lepine
IWAP Member

[Original signed by Elmer Ghostkeeper]

Mr. Elmer Ghostkeeper
IWAP Member