Sub-regional Planning
Supporting Indigenous Land Use

OVERVIEW
The Cold Lake and Bistcho Lake sub-regions are important to many Indigenous peoples. Cold Lake is where Treaties 6, 8, and 10 meet, while Bistcho Lake is entirely within Treaty 8. Both sub-regions are adjacent to several Métis settlements and communities. Ensuring that the landscapes within this sub-region can support a variety of ecosystems that in turn support a variety of plants and animals is key to ensuring ongoing opportunities for Indigenous peoples to practice Treaty rights and traditional land uses.

TREATY RIGHTS AND TRADITIONAL LAND USES
Indigenous peoples have indicated the importance of lands within this sub-regional planning area for the exercise of constitutionally recognized Treaty rights, and for traditional land uses, and cultural practices.

Under Treaty, Alberta’s First Nations people have the constitutionally protected rights to hunt, trap, and fish for food. Alberta has a duty to consider these Treaty rights when making decisions that may impact the continued exercise of these rights. However, there is more to maintaining Indigenous traditional land uses and cultural practices than assuring opportunity to hunt, fish and trap for food. Indigenous traditional land uses are important to maintaining Indigenous cultures for First Nations and Métis people. Some examples of Indigenous traditional land uses include the gathering of medicinal plants, and various traditional and sacred ceremonies, among other things.

As sub-regional plans are developed, it is important that they consider how planned land-use changes could affect Treaty rights and traditional land uses.

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS USE
Industrial development and economic activity in this sub-region have resulted in a fragmented landscape. Developments and legacy seismic disturbances change how the landscape is used, and affects species such as caribou that are of cultural importance to many Indigenous peoples.

The sub-regional plan outlines a number of approaches for managing different industrial activities on the landscape. Over time, these approaches will help to restore and achieve a more intact landscape that supports Treaty rights and traditional land uses. Landscape intactness will be addressed primarily by managing the amount, the location, and the duration of footprint associated with resource development over the long-term. A key part of the sub-regional plan is the adoption of an Access Management Plan (AMP) that will assure thoughtful and coordinated placement of a future road network that considers and seeks to avoid important habitat areas.

Improving landscape intactness will take time; in the near-term it is important to understand traditional use and values that are important for Indigenous peoples now, and explore how the values can be incorporated to support Indigenous traditional land uses and cultural practices. The sub-regional plan includes a commitment to collaborate with Indigenous peoples undertaking traditional land-use mapping in the sub-region, to support traditional land use practices.

Identification of traditional use will help inform the planned activities (e.g. restoration of legacy seismic lines and wildlife management).