

A Shared Journey

Nurturing and Sustaining Ethical Space
for the Alberta Indigenous Wisdom Advisory
Panel and Alberta Environment and Parks,
2016-2019



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Suggested Citation:

Bastien, H., Crowshoe, R., Ghostkeeper, E., Lepine, M., Lickers, H., Littlechild, W., Little Bear, L., & Wrona F. (2024). A Shared Journey: Nurturing and Sustaining Ethical Space for the Alberta Indigenous Wisdom Panel Advisory Panel and Alberta Environment and Parks. Edmonton, Alberta.

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Acknowledgements:

We gratefully acknowledge the Community Based Monitoring and Knowledge Unit of Alberta Environment and Protected Areas for drafting and editorial support (2019-2024), and the Office of the Chief Scientist for publication support. Additional thanks to others not mentioned but whose contributions are greatly appreciated.



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Preamble

“All societies, however they come into existence, sooner or later claim a territory. Within that territory, a culture arises from the mutual relationships with everything in the territory including plants, animals, water, the cosmos, and the land itself. A culture consists of paradigmatic concepts, values, and customs. Paradigms are the tacit infrastructures that members of the society use for their beliefs, behaviour, and relationships. Values are used for setting standards and goals. Customs are accepted ways of doing things. The metaphysics of our modern Western world are based on a stagnant world view (God does not play dice with the universe): everything is about matter, everything is inanimate (except for you and I and a few other sentient beings), we look at things in isolation, we are future-oriented. All of the above is captured in the language we speak (we are colonized by our language: we are not free thinkers), our main reference deep in our minds is ‘time.’ These metaphysics give rise to social values such as bigger, newer, faster, higher, more, and so on.

“The science that has manifested from these metaphysics is all about measurement. If it is not subject to measurement, it is not scientific. Along with the measurement approach comes a methodology that depends on mathematics.

“Indigenous paradigms or metaphysics include notions of: constant flux of existence consisting of energy waves (the spirits), everything being animate, existence being a web of relationships, renewal and maintenance of those conditions and factors that make the present reality and without which humans cannot survive as a species, sustaining the land upon which the present reality depends on, and language as a repository for the knowledge arising out of these metaphysics. The social values arising out of these paradigms are not limited to sharing, kindness, respect, honesty, and strength. Along with the relationship approach comes a methodology which includes wholistic thinking, respect for all my relations, and the notion of renewal.

“The science arising out of these metaphysics is such that it is all about relationships. So much so, one can say, that ‘if it is not about relationships, it is not scientific.’

*“**A SHARED JOURNEY** is an attempt by the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel of Alberta to include the Indigenous science approach in the environmental science work of the Chief Scientist and the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas. The Indigenous science advice is the gifting of traditional ecological knowledge to the Chief Scientist and the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas. **A SHARED JOURNEY** is all about establishment of good relations.”*

Dr. Leroy Little Bear, founding member of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel, 2023

A Gift

“The government’s creation of this panel of Indigenous wisdom holders and western scientists is an example of the winds of change sweeping across the nation. “

Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper, IWAP Meeting, May 30, 2017, Fort McMurray

A gift from the founding members¹ of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel² (IWAP), *A Shared Journey* is intended to help sustain the implementation of the IWAP mandate by offering an overview of the journey the IWAP has shared to date with Alberta’s Chief Scientist (CS) and the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas (previously known, and referred to throughout this document, as Alberta Environment and Parks). This document describes the main elements, processes, and concepts that, when consistently implemented, should help ensure that the shared journey continues in a good way³. The advice and teachings shared to inform *A Shared Journey* are reflections of the cultural perspectives of spiritual and Natural Laws, held by the IWAP founding members. The Indigenous Knowledge gifted to inform this document was validated with the smudge for re-presentation in *A Shared Journey*.

Origins

2015: Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting Agency (AEMERA)

A Traditional Ecological Knowledge Advisory Panel was established by the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA)⁴ in 2015 to provide strategic recommendations for incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) within the Government of Alberta’s environmental monitoring, evaluation and reporting system. The members were appointed under the

¹ Founding (2016-2019) Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel members are Elder Hartley Bastien, Dr. Reg Crowshoe, Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper, Ms. Melody Lepine, Dr. Leroy Little Bear, Dr. Wilton Littlechild, and Dr. Henry Lickers. Founding Chief Scientist: Dr. Fred Wrona. Biographies available online.

² Established under Section 15 of the Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (2016), IWAP is an “independent advisory agency to the Minister of Environment and Parks responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge and the environmental science program.”

³ “In a good way” is an expression used by many Indigenous peoples to denote participation that honours tradition and spirit, embodying the teachings of wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. From an Indigenous worldview, research done “in a good way” is a sacred endeavor carried out in full awareness of interconnectedness between the spiritual and physical realms. In: Flicker *et al.* 2015. Research Done in “A Good Way”: The Importance of Indigenous Elder Involvement in HIV Community-Based Research. *Am J Public Health* 105(6):1149-1154. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25880963/>

⁴ AEMERA 2015-2016 Annual Report: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-environmental-monitoring-evaluation-and-reporting-agency-annual-report>, page 18.

*Protecting Alberta's Environment Act, SA 2013 cP-26.8*⁵. After the first meeting, the Panel was renamed the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel (IWAP) based on advice of the founding members to reflect the deeper and more holistic nature of TEK as part of Indigenous Wisdom.

2016 – 2019: IWAP, Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and Alberta's Ministry of Environment and Parks (AEP)

During the spring of 2016, the functions of AEMERA were brought back into AEP. Building on the work initiated by AEMERA, Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA)⁶ was amended in 2016 to state that the *"the Minister shall establish an [Indigenous wisdom] advisory panel to provide advice to the Chief Scientist, Office of the Chief Scientist and the Minister [of Alberta Environment and Parks] on how to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into the environmental science program"* (Chapter E-12, 15.3, 2016).

Concurrently, the 2016 revised EPEA established a Science Advisory Panel (SAP). The OCS has endeavored to enable the two panels to work together. The Chief Scientist has convened joint meetings between the IWAP and the Science Advisory Panel to advance shared understandings of Alberta's monitoring, evaluation, and reporting activities.

Subsequently, the IWAP members and the Chief Scientist collaboratively developed the IWAP Mandate and Roles Document (MRD) describing roles, affirming Indigenous approaches to decision-making and advice gifting, and strengthening relationships between the Panel and the Chief Scientist⁷. The MRD states that the IWAP's mandate is to *"... 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."*⁸ This foundational document was formally affirmed on May 31, 2017 in Fort McMurray, Alberta through oral (a pipe ceremony) and written (member signatures) validation processes.

Since 2016, the IWAP has gifted the Chief Scientist and Minister strategic advice on the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge⁹ within Alberta's environmental monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system. As of January 2021, there have been numerous in-person meetings of the IWAP and Chief Scientist, where the Panel gifted strategic advice. IWAP's recommendations have informed the development

⁵ Protecting Alberta's Environment Act, SA 2013 cP-26.8: <https://www.canlii.org/en/ab/laws/stat/sa-2013-c-p-26.8/latest/sa-2013-c-p-26.8.html>

⁶ Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Section 15.3: <https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/acts/e12.pdf>

⁷ IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, October 18, 2016, Edmonton. Pg. 5.

⁸ IWAP Mandate and Roles Document (2017): https://www.alberta.ca/AGS-directory/MR_1014_2017-05-31_MRD_IndigenousWisdomAdvisoryPanel_toPost.pdf, Pg. 3.

⁹ The term Indigenous knowledge encompasses the multiplicity of place-based relational nature of worldviews and knowledge systems held by diverse Indigenous peoples. According to Margaret Kovach, Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar and professor, it "acknowledges both the shared commonalities and the diversity of many tribal ways of knowing" (in Kovach 2010. Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts. University of Toronto Press).

of AEP's 2018-2023 Science Strategy *Knowledge for a Changing Environment*¹⁰, in particular as it relates to Multiple Evidence-Based¹¹ approaches to environmental science programs as a way to respectfully braid Indigenous, local, and scientific knowledge systems.

Key Elements and Processes

On Relationships based on honesty

"... everything is about relationships. When you think about and understand the notion about relationships in the Native world, you'll find that this notion of about truth or honesty.... When there was no written papers and documents to sign, you had to go on the basis of someone always telling you the truth. Because that's what you used to act on. In the western world you can say anything, but what I'm going to go by is the document. You can say anything; what's important is what's written here. In the Native world, what's important is the relationship revolving around the notion of honesty. What you say to me, I have to use that. And what I say to you, you use that as the basis for your actions and so on. As part of this, maybe it's good exercise to include these notions of relational aspects we come from in the Native world."

Dr. Leroy Little Bear, IWAP Meeting, October 18, 2016, Edmonton

During the IWAP's shared journey, several key elements and processes have been developed to support:

- the implementation of the IWAP mandate of gifting advice to the Chief Scientist;
- the Chief Scientist receiving, and responding to the advice;
- development of a shared approach for the IWAP, SAP and OCS office to develop shared advice, and
- AEP applying the gifted advice (see section: The Seasonal Round of the Shared Journey).

¹⁰ 2018-2023 Science Strategy: <http://osmdatacatalog.alberta.ca/pubdata/https-open-alberta-ca-publications-9781460142370>

¹¹ An innovative knowledge coproduction framework employed by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) for mobilizing "insights and information originating from multiple knowledge systems" (In: IPBES 2018. The regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for the Americas. Bonn, Germany. 656 pp. https://www.ipbes.net/system/tdf/2018_americas_full_report_book_v5_pages_0.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=29404)

These key elements and processes, under the guidance of the founding IWAP members, describe the ways of sharing and bridging diverse knowledge systems through culturally appropriate approaches, methodologies, protocols, validation practices and good practices of assembly including ethical space¹² approaches, traditional ceremony, seasonal round activities for the IWAP, co-creating meeting agendas and knowledge translation products, holding IWAP and/or joint meeting(s) with the SAP and other relevant program-related representatives from the (then) Ministry of Environment and Parks or external organizations. As new members are appointed to the IWAP, these processes will grow and evolve to reflect new or additional practices and guidance, as guided by the wisdom of those knowledge holders.

Ethical Space

On leaving your baggage at the door

“If we were sitting across the table to negotiate, I come with all my baggage. That baggage includes all my beliefs, all my methodologies, all my biases. While the other person also has all their baggage. It’s a realization that we have all this baggage, luggage that we carry around on an everyday basis. And so often when I’m negotiating I reach into my luggage with all my biases, I use them as gate-keeping... It’s a realization that the baggage exists on both sides. The idea of ethical space is saying – let’s leave those at the door for now. We’re not trying to convert you, but leave them at the door for now. So we have some neutral space where we can really get into deep discussion without those biases and beliefs getting in the way. That’s ethical space...”

Dr. Leroy Little Bear, IWAP Meeting, November 28, 2017, Edmonton

The co-created MRD describes six interconnected guiding principles for IWAP and the OCS to come together in a way that honours relationships with each other, including the land, and diverse worldviews. The principles of Good Faith, Sharing, Mutual Respect & Honour, Kindness, Generosity & Trust, Humility & the Trickster (described more fully in the IWAP MRD¹³) are ‘built upon the spiritual integrity of the land’¹⁴ and are fundamental to ethical space. For the IWAP, ethical space is grounded in ceremony:

¹² Ethical space is a metaphorical “space of possibility” that exists in between Indigenous and Western spheres of culture and knowledge (that invites us to respectfully embrace the diversity and complementarity of Indigenous and Western worldviews, knowledge systems, ethics and values, and offers an opportunity for deep ethical understanding and relating between cultures. In: Ermine et al. 2004. The Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples: Report of the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre to the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics. Saskatoon, SK. https://epub.sub.uni-hamburg.de/epub/volltexte/2009/2989/pdf/the_ethics_of_research.pdf

¹³ IWAP Mandate and Roles Document (2017): https://www.alberta.ca/AGS-directory/MR_1014_2017-05-31_MRD_IndigenousWisdomAdvisoryPanel_toPost.pdf

¹⁴ IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, October 18, 2016, Edmonton.

- it privileges Indigenous languages in meetings;
- it cultivates good practices of assembly, such as allocating sufficient time for round table dialogues;
- it enables IWAP-only caucus discussions; and
- it seeks culturally appropriate meeting venues.

Ethical space is a model of reconciliation between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, doing, and being¹⁵. It is not a physical destination, but rather a coming together in an open dialogue between multiple ways of knowing. In this metaphorical place of possibility, all wisdom keepers and knowledge holders are respectfully heard.

Ceremony

On intention and validation

“That power was called original creation. Anytime we are doing something, like Harley creating the tripod, it stems from that intention and original creation. As the being stayed in front of Creator he gave it sound which was put into everything – the environment, wind, water and also, other languages are called ‘sounds’. For the Blackfoot people, the validation or learning process has four components: venue, action, language and song.”

Dr. Reg Crowshoe, IWAP Meeting (opening remarks), May 31, 2018, Lethbridge

Guided by their mandate, as described in the MRD, the IWAP founding members and Chief Scientist affirm ways through venue, action, language, and song of respectfully seeking, gifting, and receiving Indigenous wisdom to honour diverse Indigenous decision making processes¹⁶. To avoid cultural confusion¹⁷, it is essential that those processes are validated in traditional ceremonies led by the authorized knowledge holders from relevant Indigenous knowledge systems. The ceremonial aspects for the IWAP shared journey, described below, reflect the guidance gifted by the IWAP founding members.

¹⁵ Ermine 2007. The Ethical Space of Engagement. Indig Law Journal (6)1:193-203. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/17129/1/LJ-6.1-Ermine.pdf>

¹⁶ IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, October 18, 2016, Edmonton and IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, May 31 2018, Lethbridge.

¹⁷ “Cultural confusion” refers to the confusion that results in attempting to integrate or incorporate aspects of Indigenous and western ways of being and knowing without consideration of ethical space and in the absence of culturally appropriate protocols and/or processes guided by knowledge holders. (Dr. Reg Crowshoe: IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, October 18, 2016, Edmonton.) See also: https://static.aer.ca/prd/documents/about-us/VoiceOfUnderstanding_Report.pdf pg. 13.

Offering Protocol

As part of seeking guidance and prior to formal request for IWAP advice¹⁸, the Chief Scientist or Minister hold the responsibility of offering protocol to the knowledge holders engaged. Tobacco is traditionally offered but other protocol may be appropriate to establish mutual understanding of the offering's intention or purpose. Offering protocol is an act of humble recognition of the value of the Indigenous wisdom, without any expectation of receiving it as a gift. A period of time may be necessary for the Elder to consider the request prior to formally accepting the protocol. Acceptance of the tobacco or protocol by the knowledge holder implies an agreement and formalizes the request or intent.

Four Sacred Medicines and Smudging

On Sanctified kindness, Sweetgrass, and the Smudge

"The smudge also reflects the concepts of sanctified kindness – talking about the whole environment that we are part of. In oral systems, if people are speaking at ceremony, they are speaking the truth because of a physical representations of authority or protocols such as the smudge... The protocol would be that any time anyone uses the story or medicine, a smudge has to be made. The action of the smudge protects the intellectual knowledge and allows for the use of his/her name and story as part of the research – it's an oral structure of citing and protecting what we say and hear."

Dr. Reg Crowshoe, IWAP Meeting, May 31, 2018, Lethbridge

For thousands of years, traditional tobacco has held cultural and spiritual importance in Indigenous ceremonies. Tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar are often referred to as the four sacred medicines the Creator gave to guide Indigenous peoples¹⁹.

Burning of the four sacred medicines as part of a smudging ceremony is a means of traditional ceremonial cleansing of mind, body, spirit, and emotion, allowing meeting participants to gather with kind hearts and clear intention. The smudging ceremony brings about a mutual respect for all shared voices and to ensure that the knowledge shared is culturally protected. During this ceremony, an Elder, or an Elder's helper, may offer the smudge to each person in the circle in a clockwise direction to cleanse their hands, eyes, ears, mouth, and heart for them to be fully present in the activities of the day with a truthful and open mind. In a western business meeting, an acceptance of the meeting agenda and a gavel calling

¹⁸ Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Section 15.3. <https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/acts/e12.pdf>

¹⁹ Kimmerer 2013. Braiding Sweetgrass – Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants. Milkweed Editions.

a meeting to order might be considered similar to a smudge²⁰. The smudging ceremony and opening prayer for each IWAP gathering, led by a Traditional Host²¹, grants the OCS the authority to hold the Panel meeting and to call the meeting to order.



Figure 1. Smudge offering during the May 31, 2017 Fort McMurray IWAP Meeting. Photo copyright T. Howlett.

Bundle (Parfleche)

On protection of the Bundle

"...All bundles represent visions and historically were covered with hides or shawls. Those shawls or the hides being used to represent the protection of what your bundle is all about; what it represents... The people that are entrusted to look after that bundle are also covered with the shawls that represent the same protection of the vision of the bundle; in this case the environment... is what it represents to you as being responsible to look after that bundle and that is why these shawls represent that environment protection and mandate. ...So in our ceremonies we sing a song that represents the rights and privileges of this shawl for environment for you to wear and represent the bundle of the environment."

Dr. Reg Crowshoe, IWAP Meeting, October 18, 2016, Edmonton

²⁰ IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice .October 18, 2016, Edmonton. Pg. 4.

²¹ A "Traditional Host" is identified by IWAP to guide the ceremony, depending on the geographic area/traditional territory where the Panel is gathering.

Across the North American plains, a parfleche is considered by many Indigenous peoples to be a physical manifestation of the interconnectedness between Mother Earth and all beings, visions, and stories. The parfleche is a traditional rawhide container made of natural materials, which may also serve as a cultural artifact and physical representation of an oral mandate. Within the parfleche, often referred to as a “Bundle,” are items needing protection. These items may be of symbolic, social or spiritual importance offering guidance on how to uphold the responsibilities connected to the Bundle’s purpose.

The IWAP Bundle²² is made using materials from the three Treaty areas and the Métis communities across Alberta. The IWAP Bundle holds a written copy of the MRD with the signatures of current members, and an audio recording of the pipe ceremony symbolizing the work the Panel, Chief Scientist, and Minister have been doing together for the environment. On May 31, 2017, in Fort McMurray, Alberta, the IWAP Parfleche was blessed with the songs and prayers, which express the Panel’s oral mandate, in front of local Elder witnesses, Chief Scientist and the Minister.

The IWAP Bundle may be held in stewardship by the Chief Scientist, or a delegate, as the representative for the Minister. When the Chief Scientist or Minister are appointed, the IWAP Bundle is transferred through protocols and ceremony defined by the IWAP members. When updates to the IWAP mandate are required under the guidance of the IWAP members, and/or new members join IWAP, the IWAP Bundle is opened through Pipe Ceremony.

As the physical representation of the IWAP mandate, the Bundle is present at all Panel meetings. During the meetings, the Bundle is positioned in the middle of the gathering circle near the Bundle holder and held safely above the ground by a tripod of river willow branches²³. Between IWAP meetings, the Bundle is held in stewardship by the Chief Scientist within the OCS to ensure good care and protection.

²² IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, May 30, 2017, Fort McMurray. Pg. 1.

²³ A River Willow tripod was gifted by IWAP member Elder Harley Bastien (May 31, 2018 IWAP Meeting, Lethbridge).



Figure 2. IWAP Member Dr. Reg Crowshoe and Alberta's Chief Scientist (2016-2020) Dr. Fred Wrona acknowledging the transfer of the IWAP Bundle during the May 21, 2017 IWAP Meeting in Fort McMurray. Photo copyright T. Howlett.

Blanket Ceremony

Heavy wool shawls or blankets²⁴ are gifted through a Blanket ceremony to each new IWAP member by the Chief Scientist and Minister and, in turn, the Indigenous members gift a newly appointed Chief Scientist or Minister with blankets as acknowledgement of their relational accountability to the IWAP mandate. The ceremony involves the wrapping of the blanket around the shoulders of new members. During the October 18, 2016 IWAP meeting at Government House in Edmonton, blankets were wrapped around the shoulders of the Chief Scientist and Minister, as a gift symbolizing an offering of protection to them as stewards responsible for taking care of the environment. Through this ceremony, the IWAP mandate and the relationships of the Panel working with the OCS are acknowledged.

²⁴ In Alberta, Pendleton blankets are traditionally gifted. https://www.pendleton.ca/collections/iconic-blankets?gclid=Cj0KCQiAsburBhCIA-RIIsAExmsu7wXfmemEYzSwJtk0vlzZnpGkKQh0chF0ZLu4c_MgAT-mnQjPwETawaAj8ZEALw_wcB#legendary-collection

Pipe Ceremony

On Pipe Ceremony and the Pipe: Universal teachings of Honesty, Kindness, Sharing and Strength

"... When we have a pipe ceremony, we're reminded that the bowl where tobacco is put in is always made of rock, a stone. That stone represents our sacred temples, the mountains, the sacred areas. You have the pipe stem always made out of wood, and you put the two together. What you're reminded of is that the stone represents the teaching of strength. That's the same among all of us. The pipe stem represents the teaching of honesty, that's why it's always straight. You've got there strength and honesty... The smoke rises, the teaching there is that your prayer reaches Great Spirit. But if you put your hand over the smoke you won't feel it. And that's the teaching of kindness. That's how kind we're supposed to be to each other, and to Mother Earth.

... So when you bring the eagle feather in, that represents our brothers, our sisters, the other beings - the four-leggeds, the animals. And that they die so we can live. And that teaches us about sharing... When the pipe was used in the Treaty ceremony it's telling us that we must be honest, we must be kind, we must be strong and we must share. That teaching is not an Indigenous teaching only. It's a universal teaching, but it's embedded in that ceremony... It's a teaching that guides us in our behaviour."

Dr. Wilton Littlechild, IWAP Meeting, October 18, 2016, Edmonton

The Pipe Ceremony is a sacred ceremony honouring the Creator, the Four Directions²⁵ and Mother Earth²⁶ through the physical form (tobacco) that is transformed into the spiritual form (smoke). For IWAP, the Pipe Ceremony is considered as an oral validation of the IWAP's mandate and recognition of the traditional territories of the IWAP members. Prior to Pipe Ceremony, the Pipe Holder, supported by a helper, may share his or her specific instructions or requirements for the ceremony. Depending on the Pipe Holder's guidance, it may be appropriate to offer him or her gifts of broad cloths (two meters in length), in red, blue, black, green, white, or yellow colours, representing elements of

²⁵ "Four Directions" come from the life journey teachings of the Medicine Wheel and refer to the north, south, east and west directions. These four directions for human beings are the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the self. As described online: <https://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.html>

²⁶ "Mother Earth" is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well. In: World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. 2010. Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. Cochabamba, Bolivia. <https://www.garn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FINAL-UNIVERSAL-DECLARATION-OF-THE-RIGHTS-OF-MOTHER-EARTH-APRIL-22-2010.pdf>

Mother Earth and the four directions. Metis participants may prefer to gift items that honour their cultural traditions. Every traditional territory and Pipe Holder holds unique protocols regarding involvement of male and female participants in a Pipe Ceremony. Having a discussion prior to ceremony with the Pipe Holder and supporting Elders involved in ceremony is good practice to ensure participants are all of one mind and can respectfully sit in the circle together during a Pipe Ceremony. The IWAP members will advise on the appropriate ceremony and protocol.



Figure 3. IWAP Bundle with print and tobacco offerings from the May 31 2017 Fort McMurray IWAP Meeting. Photo copyright T. Howlett.

Honour Song

On oral validation through Song

“When Dr. Crowshoe was Chief, resolutions would be validated in the Chief’s song (Treaty Song). This would validate that these were decisions made within that discussion. At the end of today, we [the IWAP] will put together what we talked about and give it an Honour Song, reflecting an oral document of validation. The song will parallel the written report and summary of advice as an oral verification”.

IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, May 31, 2018, Lethbridge. Pg. 4.

Traditional Indigenous songs are often connected to story, ceremony, special gatherings and community. These songs are sung by those holding the appropriate cultural authority. The Honour Song is an oral affirmation of the Panel’s written advice to the Chief Scientist or the Minister and is sung at the conclusion of Panel meeting by an IWAP member holding the traditional authority to share the song with the Panel. An Honour Song was gifted by Dr. Crowshoe for the IWAP members to affirm that they “were all of one mind” in the giving of strategic advice²⁷.

Honourary Members

On lasting relationships

“How do you break a relationship? You can’t. Even if I die you will have known me... When we signed Treaties, we thought that’s what we were doing. We were making a relationship between us and that relationship would last forever”.

Dr. Henry Lickers, IWAP Meeting, December 4, 2018, Edmonton

The past IWAP members may continue to hold traditional roles as honorary members whom the current members may call for guidance. The founding IWAP members (2015-2019) recommend that the relationship between the current and past IWAP members extends beyond the formal appointment term as holders of the knowledge or institutional memory of the Panel’s shared journey. As honorary, the past IWAP members may continue to benefit the Panel’s effort to provide meaningful strategic advice. In addition, the departing Chief Scientist becomes an honorary member and is invited to be present during the Bundle transfer ceremony to a newly appointed Chief Scientist or Minister taking on the role of a steward for the IWAP Bundle.^{28,29}

Seasonal Round

The founding IWAP members and Chief Scientist have worked together to decolonize advisory panel approaches and prioritize Indigenous ways of acknowledging the responsibilities and functions of gifting strategic advice. The key elements and processes, described in the previous section, support the implementation of the IWAP mandate during the seasonal round of activities.

The seasonal round (Figure 4) or annual cycle of panel processes includes: identifying AEP issues requiring IWAP advice; co-creating IWAP meeting agenda; holding IWAP and Joint meetings; gifting and validating the advice; receiving, responding, and applying the gifted IWAP advice; and sharing the IWAP story.

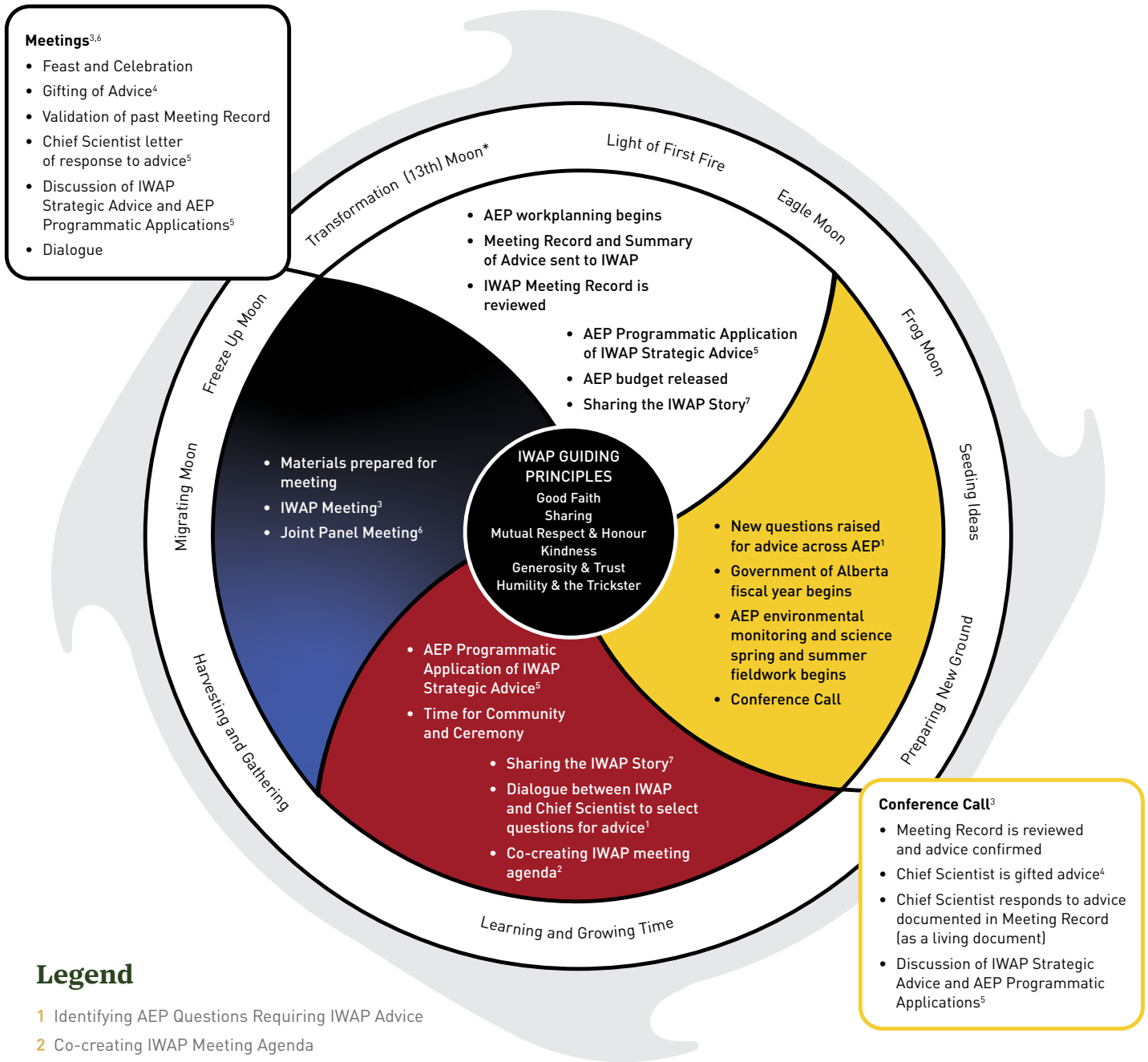
²⁷ Gifted by Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe, as described in the IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, May 31, 2018, Lethbridge. Pg. 4.

²⁸ Advice gifted by IWAP Elders, IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice, December 4, 2018, Pg. 14 and IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice April 29, 2020, Pg. 10.

²⁹ Crowshoe and Mannes Schmidt. 2002. Akak’s timan: A Blackfoot Framework for Decision-Making and Mediation Processes. U of C Press. Pg.38.

Seasonal Round of the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel

Figure 4. Seasonal Round of activities seeking to bridge worldviews.



Legend

- 1 Identifying AEP Questions Requiring IWAP Advice
- 2 Co-creating IWAP Meeting Agenda
- 3 IWAP Meeting
- 4 Gifting and Receiving of Advice
- 5 Responding to IWAP Advice and Practical Applications
- 6 Joint Meetings
- 7 Sharing the IWAP Shared Journey Story

*Moons and months adapted from Circle Teaching. Stories from the bush, teachings from Henry Laboucan. pisimohsinahikan, 2018. www.circleteachings.ca

Identifying Strategic Issues Requiring IWAP Advice

Ministry leadership can submit expressions of interest through the OCS to receive strategic advice from IWAP on the role Indigenous knowledge could play across the Ministry and relevant OCS planning and advisory documents (e.g., OCS Science Plan). The expressions of interest should be submitted well in advance of a Panel meeting to ensure that the members have sufficient time to consider identified issues.

Several approaches to identifying strategic issues requiring IWAP's advice range from the issue being identified by Ministry leadership; to the Minister, via the OCS, seeking strategic advice on a specific issue of concern; to the IWAP suggesting to gift strategic advice to the Chief Scientist and the Minister on a specific issue of concern to them.

Co-creating IWAP Meeting Agenda

At least three months prior to a face-to-face gathering, a conference call is recommended with the IWAP members for the Chief Scientist to share potential issues requiring strategic advice for IWAP consideration. The agenda for a one-day IWAP meeting is then co-developed by the IWAP members and the Chief Scientist to facilitate the discussion of the identified issues of common concern. To allow for robust dialogue, up to two issues with related content presentations are recommended to be brought forward for IWAP advice. The outcome of the meeting (usually virtual) is a common understanding of intention, issues to be explored, and any other activities for the upcoming face-to-face meeting. Additionally, opportunities to be on the land together, the meeting venue³⁰, and Traditional Host³¹ for the meeting are confirmed.

Holding IWAP Meeting

Meaningful relationships and knowledge-sharing between IWAP members and Chief Scientist are contingent on adequate and meaningful time spent together in a dialogue circle in a board room and/or on the land.

Meeting Support and Facilitation

The OCS provides secretariat support for receiving and bringing the Chief Scientist and AEP issues for IWAP consideration to co-create a face-to-face meeting agenda. Ensuring that the IWAP members have the appropriate support and resources to fully engage in a meaningful dialogue is a key role of the OCS.

At least two weeks prior to the IWAP gathering, a pre-meeting reading package³² is sent (both digitally and hardcopy) to each IWAP member in preparation for the upcoming meeting.

³⁰ The IWAP meeting location rotates across the traditional territories in Alberta in order to represent all Treaty areas and Métis organizations in Alberta. Venues need to be conducive to open dialogue.

³¹ The Traditional Host, or Chairperson, of the IWAP meeting is determined by traditional territory of the meeting location. They have the responsibilities to facilitate ceremony as appropriate.

³² Pre-meeting package includes: current meeting agenda, relevant logistical information (e.g. travel details); past Meeting Report and Summary of Advice with Chief Scientist letter of response; update on Ministry application of Panel advice; background information to support issue(s) seeking advice; and any administrative materials as outlined on the agenda.

IWAP meeting attendees may include: the Minister-appointed IWAP members, Chief Scientist, the Minister (when available), past (honourary) IWAP members (if requested by the current IWAP), past (honourary) Chief Scientist(s) (if requested by the current IWAP or CS), senior EAP staff to provide background on the issues requiring IWAP's strategic advice, the meeting Facilitator, and a note taker. Further, staff, or other external organizations or knowledge holders/experts connected to the topic(s) being discussed at IWAP meetings may be invited to the meeting as the content holders. Additionally, the meeting participants may include invited guests as requested by the IWAP members. To enable a focused dialogue, the OCS staff providing secretarial support typically sit outside of the main IWAP—Chief Scientist/Minister discussion circle.

To support a safe ethical space for full participation of the Chief Scientist or Minister, the Traditional Host and other IWAP members, the Facilitator(s) is required to have proven intercultural competency and to be an effective liaison in the bridging of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. Facilitation may involve two facilitators from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews to model the way of knowledge bridging, equity and diversity. During the Seasonal Round, the Facilitator(s) works closely with the Chief Scientist or Minister and the Traditional Host to support knowledge sharing, the expression of Indigenous values, and the required protocols. Within this context, the Facilitator(s) may seek to engage Indigenous language translators as required to support the IWAP members.

Establishing Ethical Space

The meeting opens through an offering of protocol (tobacco) by the Chief Scientist to the Traditional Host and all the IWAP members to respectfully seek and acknowledge the sharing of wisdom anticipated to take place during the day. Guided by the Traditional Host, ethical space for the gathering is supported through appropriate ceremony as determined by the meeting purpose. After the opening ceremonies, the meeting begins with a request for consent from the Chief Scientist or Minister to the IWAP members to record the meeting dialogue (via audio and written recording). All meeting recordings require ongoing verbal and written consent from the IWAP members, which is sought collectively from the panel during face-to-face meetings and through review of the written meeting report (see below: 'Sharing the IWAP Story').

Throughout the day, good meeting practices include sharing of food, such as a warm breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The Dialogue

Informed by the co-created agenda, the face-to-face meeting includes regular business items (e.g., Ministry and administration updates; review of relevant programmatic updates) and offers time in camera for Indigenous caucus, if needed (for example if the IWAP members require discussion to re-affirm or review past advice gifted). The initial portion of the meeting may include time for a discussion of topics covered at the past meetings, as well as any updates on the programmatic implementation of the advice.

Chief Scientist may bring forward new issues seeking IWAP strategic advice (see 'Co-creating IWAP Meeting Agenda' section above). The panel discussion is supported by being provided pre-meeting background reading materials and receiving content expert presentations during the meeting. Time during the meeting is required for the IWAP to share stories and wisdom through dialogue circles. The dialogue circle is an opportunity for the Chief Scientist to build capacity in listening, hearing and understanding. Typically, the IWAP members will hold two rounds of sharing and dialogue on a particular issue. The meeting may include afternoon discussions out on the land or evening events to offer further opportunities for the IWAP members to connect to place, and develop and maintain relationships.

The IWAP dialogue and any resulting strategic advice is dynamic, and additive. A dialogue regarding one topic may flow across from one meeting to another meeting. For example, the Panel and the OCS have discussed biodiversity health at several IWAP meetings (e.g. panel meetings in the Fall of 2016 and 2017).

On Biodiversity Health, Initial dialogue, IWAP Meeting October 18 2016

"In the Blackfoot way, in the Plains way, in the Native way in this part of the continent when we laid our deceased to rest, most of the time we laid them to rest in the trees down in the river valleys. And over time their body would, the platforms would break out underneath them and their bodies would fall to the ground, and then become food for the plants and the trees. And in that way, we all have a part of our DNA right in the trees. So you know that's how we are related to the cottonwood trees. If there was a way to extract DNA and look for Blackfoot DNA up here in the Cree country, chances are you'd find our DNA. That just exemplifies and just drives home what we're talking about here. If there's no trees, there's no Harley. We're both the same. I know a tree will last a lot longer than I will so I have a lot more respect for the tree. Cause long after I'm gone my grandkids could come and hug that same tree that I hugged. Just to share that's how important it is to me. I think if we learned that we'd have a healthier world around."

**Elder Harley Bastien, IWAP Meeting, October 18 2016,
Edmonton**

On Biodiversity Health, Follow up dialogue, IWAP Meeting November 28 2017.

“The interesting thing about the concept of health, the root word is ‘heal’... Mother Nature has the ability to heal. It’s always going through a healing process, you’ll never end that. Every breath we take is a healing process, in the same way Mother Earth breathes is a healing process. It’s always sustaining itself, but it’s getting more difficult. Ecosystem health is the same as human health. I’m nature. I am the environment. I don’t see any separation. That’s why it’s so important to be a part of this. The healing journey of Mother Earth, especially at this point in time because there’s so many impacts to healing. To the healing process.”

Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper, IWAP Meeting, November 28, 2017, Edmonton

Oral Validation of IWAP advice

The dialogue between the Chief Scientist and IWAP members that begins in ceremony guided by the co- created agenda, concludes with a summary and validation of the gifted advice through ceremony. The founding IWAP members have offered an Honour Song to traditionally validate the advice gifted. The Honour Song is sung by an IWAP member having the cultural authority to do so.

Receiving, Responding to, and Applying IWAP Advice

A face-to-face meeting of the Panel, a conference call is held (usually within several weeks) to review and validate in written form (in English) the orally transmitted advice (see above Oral Validation of IWAP advice) and review the *IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice* (the Report). Written advice to the Chief Scientist and Minister may be in the form of a recommendation from IWAP members, or the IWAP may develop a joint statement with the Chief Scientist or Minister as an outcome of a knowledge co-creation dialogue. The IWAP advice is recorded and shared (see below in ‘Sharing the IWAP Story’ section) in written and oral (audio recording) forms. The Report, with the written summary of advice, may be updated by the Panel members and OCS. The IWAP panel will determine if, and what kind, of protocols are required for any portion of the advice-sharing/response process. The Chief Scientist or Minister must be present to participate, were such protocol to take place.

The Chief Scientist’s/Ministerial response to the strategic advice is prepared by the OCS, in collaboration with AEP content experts, to inform Minister and the IWAP. The Chief Scientist responds to strategic advice gifted by the IWAP members through a written (letter) and oral (phone call or in person) statements in response to specific recommendation(s), which may include a description and/or an update on progress toward the implementation of the IWAP’s recommendation.

The IWAP advice (both recommendations and joint statements) and associated responses are to be embedded within the Report (see below 'Sharing the IWAP Story').

IWAP advice, OCS response, and application of the advice into relevant AEP program areas is summarized in tables in preparation for the next meeting. For example, the IWAP advice has been directly applied to the potential creation of an Indigenous Climate Change Observation Network³³. Additionally, the IWAP advice may have influence (e.g., known 'ripple effects') through indirect applications into environmental programs across AEP. For example, the emerging development of guidelines for staff working with Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge holders; recent considerations of cooperative management of wildland parks; and further understanding of the applications of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the context of the Ministry of Environment and Parks. The Chief Scientist's response and the tables are shared with the IWAP members.

Holding Joint Meetings

The IWAP members have identified the desire to spend time working together with the Science Advisory Panel³⁴ to build a foundation of shared understanding and to model respectful knowledge sharing and coproduction. Joint meetings between the Science and the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panels are intended to advance dialogue on issues of common concern to the IWAP members, Chief Scientist and the Minister and should model a strategic approach to knowledge sharing and bridging of Indigenous and scientific ways of knowing. During 2017-2018, the two advisory panels held joint meetings both in the board room and out on the land, where the members shared ideas about working collaboratively. This led to the co-creation of a draft vision statement to support the joint meetings of the panels:

*'The Science Advisory Panel and the Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel see a respect for life and the spiritual integrity of the land, a new shared science, a united voice in a partnership of multiple ways of knowing and the most credible environmental monitoring program for a sustainable, livable, and healthy environment in Alberta.'*³⁵

³³ IWAP Meeting December 4, 2018, Edmonton: IWAP Meeting Reading Materials '2016-2017 Summary of Panel Advice, Chief Scientist Response and Programmatic Applications' pg. 34 - 49.

³⁴ Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Section 15.2. Available online: <https://www.gp.alberta.ca/documents/acts/e12.pdf>

³⁵ At the joint meeting of advisory panels in Lethbridge, May 30 2018, Panel members Dr. David Hik (SAP) and Elder Elmer Ghostkeeper (IWAP) presented two versions of a joint dialogue vision statement for the two panels to seek consensus. **Draft #1:** Panel members envision a collaborative effort based on respect for life, a new shared science built on trust, and a united voice in braiding multiple ways of knowing in support of a world class environmental monitoring program in Alberta. **Draft #2:** We see a respect for life, a new shared science, a united voice in a partnership of multiple ways of knowing and a world class environmental monitoring program for a sustainable and healthy environment.



Figure 5: Joint Panel Meeting. Treaty 7, Lethbridge, Alberta, May 30, 2018. From left to right: Dr. David Hik, Dr. Reg Crowshoe, Dr. Alexander Zehnder, Dr. Elmer Ghostkeeper, Melody Lepine, Dr. Fred Wrona, Dr. Joanne Nightingale, Dr. Russ Schnell, Dr. Jill Baron, Elder Harley Bastien, Dr. John Giesy. (Missing: IWAP members Dr. Leroy Little Bear, Dr. Henry Lickers and Dr. Wilton Littlechild). Photo copyright T. Howlett.

Sharing the IWAP Story

It is critical to share the IWAP’s experience and advice with Albertans. This requires development of processes and tools to ensure that the gifted advice can be shared in a clear, effective, culturally appropriate, and efficient manner, and that there is ongoing meaningful consent³⁶ from IWAP. Some tools and processes include:

- **The IWAP Meeting Report and Summary of Advice (the Report):** The Report serves as a written repository of shared stories, reflections, dialogue, and advice gifted by IWAP and its allies during the face-to-face panel meetings. The Report epitomizes the collective institutional memory of the shared journey compiled from audio recordings and the written notes. A living document, the Report may be updated to provide additional reflections shared during conference calls and at the IWAP face to face meetings; these updates are validated through the appropriate ceremony as IWAP members see fit.
- **Communication/Knowledge Translation products:** The IWAP seeks to share the story of their ground-breaking work with provincial, national and global communities of practice. Communication products are recommended to be based on written, audio and visual content used with IWAP consent. An example

³⁶ As informed by the guiding principles available online: <https://bestofprivacy.com/guidance/pipeda-guidelines-for-obtaining-meaningful-consent/>

of online content publicly sharing Panel information is: <https://www.alberta.ca/indigenous-wisdom-advisory-panel.aspx>.

- **Community relationships:** As part of the annual cycle of IWAP meetings, strategic opportunities must be created for IWAP members to dialogue with Indigenous communities and to gather on the land, particularly in the part of the province where an IWAP meeting is taking place. For example, IWAP meeting in Fort McMurray, Treaty 8 territory, on May 31 2017, included a visit to the nearby oil sand industrial sites; and during the IWAP meeting in Lethbridge, Treaty 7 territory, on May 30 2018, the IWAP members were invited to engage with youth and Elders at the South Saskatchewan Regional Planning First Nations Implementation Table.

The Journey Ahead

On diversity bringing different strengths

“The greatest strength of this panel is we are all diverse. Not all are directly involved in environmental monitoring. There is balance in diversity. Make sure everyone brings different strengths to our panel. All different cultures have historically given and shared knowledge back and forth.”

Ms. Melody Lepine, IWAP Meeting, December 4, 2018, Edmonton

Since the inception of the IWAP, the founding members have sought to co-create and model a way of nurturing an ethical space for respectful knowledge and wisdom sharing between multiple worldviews and diverse knowledge systems. The application of the guidance gifted by the IWAP members should continue to enhance environmental stewardship in Alberta by advancing the role of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge holders in the **design, implementation, and evaluation of relevant initiatives**. The success of the shared journey ahead depends on respectful sharing of collective knowledge and wisdom between IWAP members, Honourary Members, the Chief Scientist and the Minister, and implementation of IWAP’s recommendations and advice received by AEP.

**A Shared Journey: Nurturing and Sustaining Ethical
Space for the Alberta Indigenous Wisdom Advisory
Panel and Alberta Environment and Parks, 2016-2019**

