
CULTIVATING ABUNDANCE

First Nations Perspectives from the BC-First Nations
Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum



ROYAL BC MUSEUM ARCHIVES ITEM D-08958 - TALH-TANS ON THE WAY TO THE HUNT

The title of this document, *Cultivating Abundance*, recognizes that Indigenous Peoples have inhabited and cared for the landscapes and ecosystems comprising what is now called British Columbia since time immemorial. Indigenous Peoples' laws, values, and stewardship traditions maintained complex ecosystems and an abundance of wildlife that in turn sustained vibrant Indigenous Nations, communities, and cultures. The title also points to the ongoing vital role of Indigenous Peoples' jurisdiction, knowledge, and stewardship practices in restoring abundant and diverse wildlife populations across their traditional territories.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of *Cultivating Abundance* is to provide a record of the work and perspectives of First Nations participants in the BC-First Nations Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum ('the Forum'), which was formed in December 2018 in response to BC's 'Improving Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Initiative'. *Cultivating Abundance* provides a narrative that captures the perspectives of First Nations forum participants regarding proposed amendments to the *Wildlife Act*, the new *Together for Wildlife* strategy, as well as wildlife and habitat issues outside the scope of the strategy.

As part of BC's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action, the Province is collaborating with Indigenous communities to 'co-produce' potential solutions for wildlife and habitat conservation. *Cultivating Abundance* describes the worldviews and principles within which the Forum operated to identify and propose these potential solutions, including short-term amendments to the *Wildlife Act*. The Forum also provided technical advice to the BC government on the development and implementation of its new wildlife and habitat conservation strategy, *Together for Wildlife: A Proposed Pathway Forward for Wildlife and Habitat in British Columbia*.

The Forum's contributions to the *Together for Wildlife* strategy allowed First Nations forum participants to advance longer-term goals such as co-management, Indigenous knowledge in decision-making, public education on Indigenous rights, data sharing, Indigenous Guardian programs, and capacity-building for shared stewardship¹ of wildlife and habitat. However, given the scope of the Forum and the breadth of wildlife and habitat issues identified, some perspectives could not be included in the final *Together for Wildlife* strategy document.

Cultivating Abundance thus provides necessary background and context for the Forum's work. In this document, we explain the concept of Ethical Space, which is informed by First Nations forum participants' perspectives on collaboration, cooperation and communication. Ethical Space is a space where multiple knowledge systems and multiple layers of jurisdiction co-exist in a co-management framework. Within this framework, the narrative changes to include the aspirations of First Nations members to support BC's shift to co-management with trust and mutual respect. This document also provides perspectives on research, monitoring and enforcement, funding and capacity building, and guidance from First Nations forum participants on how to collaboratively develop objectives for wildlife and habitat conservation. It is, finally, the perspective of the First Nation participants of the Forum that meaningful commitment to co-management and joint decision making on wildlife and habitat issues can only be achieved when First Nations and provincial governments are adequately resourced. Sustained funding and capacity-building for all parties² is required to support successful and collaborative implementation of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy.

¹ Stewardship, for the purposes of this document, can be thought of as the responsible care of wildlife and habitat in ways that maintain, enhance, and restore ecosystem function while taking full and balanced account of the interests of society, including future generations.

² For the purposes of this document, 'parties' refers to decision-makers (Indigenous governments and Crown governments -- that is, the Province of British Columbia and Canada) and stakeholders (for example, environmental organizations, industry, and user groups).

Introduction

The lands and waters that have come to be known as the Province of British Columbia are home to some of the greatest cultural and biological diversity on the planet. The rich natural abundance of wildlife and diverse landscapes that define British Columbia can in large part be attributed to the ways Indigenous Peoples have shaped these special places over thousands of years.

However, due to the harsh impacts of colonization over the past 150 years, Indigenous Peoples and the lands, animals, and habitats they rely upon have suffered a great deal. The result has been a steep decline in the ability of First Nations to make decisions over their homelands, including the stewardship of wildlife and wildlife habitats. Competing pressures on the land and wildlife such as extractive industries, compounded by the accelerating impacts of climate change, have put people, ecosystems, and wildlife under increased stress.

With these times of great change and risk come opportunities to re-empower Indigenous stewardship and ensure that future generations can, with a personal sense of stewardship, also enjoy the lands and waters as peoples of the past once did.

BC-First Nations Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum

One such opportunity is the Government of British Columbia's 'Improving Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Initiative.' As part of the Province's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the government is collaborating with Indigenous communities to 'co-produce' potential solutions for wildlife and habitat conservation and stewardship. The BC-First Nations Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum was formed in December 2018 to facilitate this collaboration.

The Forum is comprised of provincial government staff and participants from more than 40 First Nations across British Columbia. The Forum is not a political body, and First Nations participants do not represent their respective Nations. Their involvement is purely technical, as they provide advice to the Province to improve its laws, policies, and regulations with respect to wildlife and habitat stewardship and conservation. The Forum's work is not consultation and does not substitute for the Province's constitutional duty to consult with all First Nations governments in British Columbia regarding legislative or policy solutions proposed by the Forum.

Wildlife Act Amendments

The Forum began by identifying and proposing short-term amendments to the *Wildlife Act* that would uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights, responsibilities, and relationships with wildlife and wildlife habitat in the province. These proposed amendments include:

- a non-derogation clause to prevent the *Wildlife Act* from infringing on Aboriginal and treaty rights;
- hierarchy of access to wildlife (conservation and public safety; First Nations' needs for food, social and ceremonial purposes; licensed hunting);
- the ability for the Minister to enter into government-to-government agreements for things like Protocol Hunting and Sheltering; and
- incorporation of Indigenous knowledge, laws and customs into decision-making (regulations/policies to be developed over time).

Together for Wildlife: A Proposed Pathway Forward for Wildlife and Habitat in British Columbia

Following completion of an Intentions Paper regarding the proposed *Wildlife Act* amendments, the Forum provided technical advice to the BC government on the development and implementation of its new wildlife

and habitat conservation strategy, *Together for Wildlife: A Proposed Pathway Forward for Wildlife and Habitat in British Columbia*. Collaborative development of the strategy allowed First Nations forum participants to advance a more comprehensive vision beyond the short-term *Wildlife Act* amendments.

Together for Wildlife sets the direction for wildlife and habitat conservation in British Columbia from 2020 to 2030. The strategy's five goals and 23 actions are guided by the following vision statement:

“Wildlife and their habitats are thriving, adaptive to change, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians.”

First Nations forum participants worked with provincial staff to articulate principles to guide collaborative implementation of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy, including recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Aboriginal rights, respect for diverse worldviews and value systems, and acknowledgement that all things are interconnected.

Together for Wildlife includes a dedicated chapter titled “Advancing Reconciliation: A Shared Path with Indigenous Governments.” In this chapter, the Province commits to seven key actions:

1. Create and support the operation of a formal “British Columbia - First Nations Wildlife Forum” to continue providing Indigenous perspectives on the development of provincial policies and legislation.
2. Commit to advancing co-management and shared decision-making, in partnership with Indigenous governments.
3. Develop communications materials to educate the public regarding the nature of Indigenous Peoples' Aboriginal and treaty rights, worldviews, relationship with wildlife, and approaches to stewardship.
4. Develop policies and procedures for incorporating Indigenous knowledge into statutory and non-statutory decision-making, in collaboration with Indigenous governments.
5. Evaluate existing Guardian programs to identify models and best practices for developing formal compliance program, in collaboration with Indigenous governments.
6. Develop models and approaches for data sharing to inform co-management and shared decision-making between Indigenous governments and the Province.
7. Invest in capacity-building for Indigenous governments to participate in all aspects of wildlife stewardship.

Cultivating Abundance explains the Indigenous principles and philosophies that guided collaborative development of British Columbia's *Together for Wildlife* strategy. In addition, this document provides a record of First Nations forum participants' aspirations that landed outside the scope of the strategy. These aspirations are articulated here to acknowledge First Nations participants' bold vision and to provide inspiration for further transformative changes in the relationship between the Province of British Columbia and First Nations regarding wildlife and habitat stewardship and conservation.



ROYAL BC MUSEUM ARCHIVES ITEM H-03359 - NATIVE WOMAN FLESHING A MOOSEHIDE

SECTION A: A CONTEXT FOR FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES

Worldviews, Principles, Rights and Responsibilities Informing Indigenous Relationships to Wildlife and Habitat

In the First Nations territories of British Columbia, Indigenous approaches to wildlife stewardship differ fundamentally from Western-based approaches to wildlife 'management.' Indigenous Peoples' relationships with wildlife are best articulated in terms of stewardship and reciprocity.³ These relationships may be understood in terms of worldviews, principles, and rights and responsibilities. It is essential that Crown⁴ governments, stakeholders and the general public better understand these approaches in order to inform policies and strategies regarding wildlife and habitat stewardship that align with 21st century values.

Worldviews

While Indigenous worldviews vary amongst First Nations, and while they may also change over time, some concepts are universal, such as the belief in interconnectedness, interdependence, and an understanding of the Earth as our Mother.

The concept that all of life is interconnected is a worldview that guides the way in which many Indigenous Peoples see themselves as part of the natural world. This sense of interconnectedness informs spirituality; cultural practices such as dance, storytelling, and ceremony; and governance. It is a holistic perspective that recognizes the intrinsic value of all living and nonliving things. This is important to consider when talking about wildlife 'management,' which in a Western worldview tends to lose the context of reciprocity, responsibility and interconnectedness.

Another commonly shared worldview among Indigenous Peoples is that the Earth is our mother and that everything on Mother Earth has a spirit. Unsustainable resource exploitation not only damages Mother Earth, but it also damages our relationship with Her and impairs our ability to live healthy and fulfilled lives.

Principles and Values

Following from these worldviews, First Nations forum participants articulated a set of principles and values to guide a new approach to wildlife and habitat stewardship in BC:

1. Approaches to wildlife stewardship must reflect the geographical, geopolitical, ecological, linguistic, and cultural diversity of BC – many Nations have unique ways of stewarding wildlife and habitat, and these must be respected and accepted.
2. Wildlife stewardship is rooted in our relationships to wildlife which reflect social and ecological needs and considerations that align with Indigenous rights, responsibilities and values.

³ In the worldviews of many Indigenous Peoples, animals and other nonhuman beings exist in a social relationship with humans. Reciprocity refers to the give-and-take in this relationship: humans observe proper protocols maintain respectful relations with the animals, which in turn sustain human communities.

⁴ The Crown refers to provincial and federal governments, which are constitutional orders of government in Canada. Only the Crown can fulfill the constitutional duty to consult Indigenous Peoples on matters affecting their rights.

3. Indigenous Peoples, due to their unique and historic ties to the land and its life-giving ecosystems, have rights to and responsibilities for wildlife and habitat.
4. The Crown – understood in the most general terms – is burdened by the duty to consult and accommodate. This includes the Crown in right of Canada, as well as the Provinces. Court references to 'the Crown' as the duty-bearer are all-encompassing and not confined to any particular form of governmental institution.
5. The inherent rights, roles, and responsibilities as granted by the Creator to Indigenous Peoples should be understood and accepted by the Crown.
6. Wildlife and habitat stewardship must consider the needs of future generations.
7. Natural Law⁵ is the basis for humans' relationship with wildlife.
8. Non-Indigenous peoples (including the general public and resource users) also have responsibilities for wildlife and habitat in Indigenous Peoples' traditional territories, and they are expected to uphold these responsibilities through Natural Law.
9. Wildlife and habitat must be viewed as not only something we can benefit from, but as something to which we are obliged to 'give back' in meaningful ways – that is, mutual respect and reciprocity in our relationships with the natural world is essential. Reciprocity also results in the principle of 'cultivating abundance.'
10. Reconciliation between peoples is tied to reconciliation between humans and our relationships with the lands, waters, and wildlife. The principle of living together in mutual interdependence also needs to be applied to our nonhuman relations.
11. We will all benefit if we respect and accept Indigenous Peoples' rights and responsibilities concerning wildlife and habitat stewardship, in the spirit and practice of reconciliation.

Rights and Responsibilities

Indigenous Peoples' rights to wildlife and habitat are enshrined and recognized in the Constitution of Canada, treaties (historic and modern), case law, and government policy. Despite this, Indigenous rights are not acknowledged in BC's current Wildlife Act.

Aboriginal rights and title, as well as historic and modern treaties, have implications for the Wildlife Act that ought to be reflected in revised legislation. First Nations forum participants believe that this can be done by integrating Indigenous asserted and treaty rights into BC's *Together for Wildlife* strategy in a way that respects and accepts Indigenous rights as recognized by the Canadian Constitution (Section 35), case law, and government policies (including adoption of international covenants to which Canada has committed, such as UNDRIP).

With the incorporation of Indigenous rights as an essential foundation for the *Together for Wildlife* strategy, wildlife and habitat stewardship in BC has the potential to become more effective, morally legitimate, and legally grounded in recognition and respect for these inherent rights and responsibilities.

⁵ There are many definitions of Natural Law. From an Indigenous perspective and for the purposes of this report, we use a definition crafted by Eli Enns: "The laws that all living and non-living things are bound and governed by; they are the inescapable patterns of life and death, and the ebb and flow of positive and negative energy that drives the unfolding of reality at both the micro and macro levels of the universe."

First Nations are not 'stakeholders' to consultation processes, but rather are decision-makers over matters relating to their homelands and traditional territories. Unfortunately, many British Columbians are largely unaware of Indigenous cultures, Indigenous Peoples' historic and modern ties to their lands, and the Province's responsibilities to uphold treaty rights under the Canadian Constitution. In many cases, local non-Indigenous governments do not fully understand First Nations rights, as demonstrated by their support for certain decisions over wildlife and habitats that violate those rights.

We as First Nations forum participants believe that, in implementing the Together for Wildlife strategy, the provincial government has a responsibility to address these issues by educating the public and delegated local governments about Indigenous Peoples' rights and shared responsibilities in wildlife and habitat stewardship. The Provincial Crown also has a responsibility to uphold these rights during consultation processes, and the government should effectively communicate to stakeholders, delegated local governments, and the public that it has this responsibility.

Also important for the Crown to consider is that Indigenous Peoples and their governance systems embody an intrinsic sense of responsibility to effectively steward the lands and wildlife with which they have maintained reciprocal relationships for millennia. Those responsibilities stem from Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous laws. Responsibility implies stewardship and care-taking – making thoughtful, well-considered decisions today so that future generations will be able to enjoy the bounty of the land and healthy relationships with all living things. Many studies support the link between Indigenous Peoples' lived experience and expert abilities to steward their homelands for diversity and abundance.⁶

Truth-telling, Ethical Space and Trust

Since the establishment of British Columbia as a British Colony, colonial policies have sought to undermine Indigenous Peoples' systems of governance, including wildlife and habitat stewardship. As a way to build trust that is consistent with the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, and in the spirit of reconciliation as committed to by the Crown, the history and impacts of such policies must be acknowledged. Many Indigenous Peoples view such truth-telling as a precondition for reconciliation.

The Forum heard much of this truth-telling from First Nations participants. Many shared personal stories of the ways that provincial government legislation — including the Parks Act, Wildlife Act, and Forest and Range Practices Act — has undermined Indigenous Peoples' ability to maintain relationships with wildlife and the land in accordance with pre-existing Indigenous laws and governance structures. As a result, there is a deep mistrust of Crown intentions, which must be addressed in the spirit of collaboration and towards reconciliation. As First Nations participants in the Forum, we believe it is the responsibility of the provincial government to hear these hard truths from participating First Nation communities as it seeks to consult and receive feedback on the *Together for Wildlife* strategy and its implementation, and to address the resulting feedback with bold transparency.

Truth-telling can be facilitated through a process called 'Ethical Space' (see Figure 1). In Ethical Space, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments collaboratively develop protocols framed by pre-existing treaties, other agreements, and inherent Indigenous rights. Scholar Willie Ermine of the Sturgeon Lake First Nation wrote that, "Ethical Space is formed when two societies, with disparate worldviews, are poised to engage each other."⁷ It is a space in which all knowledge systems (Indigenous and Western) are validated and respected (also called 'two-eyed seeing') and where it is possible to arrive at joint decisions arising out of mutually-agreed protocols. This is where the process of trust-building begins.

⁶ E.g., Schuster et al. 2019. "Vertebrate Biodiversity on Indigenous-Managed Lands in Australia, Brazil, and Canada Equals that in Protected Areas." *Environmental Science & Policy* 101: 1–6.

⁷ Ermine, Willie. 2007. "The Ethical Space of Engagement." *Indigenous Law Journal* 6(1): 193-203. Also see "What is Ethical Space?" (2010 talk at McMaster University) www.youtube.com/watch?v=85PPdUE8Mb0

Ethical Space is not a new concept; it existed as a way in which Indigenous governments, local/regional leaders and the Crown engaged with each other until about 150 years ago. It created the space for the original peace and friendship treaties, which were rooted in mutual respect and reciprocity and which supported co-existence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

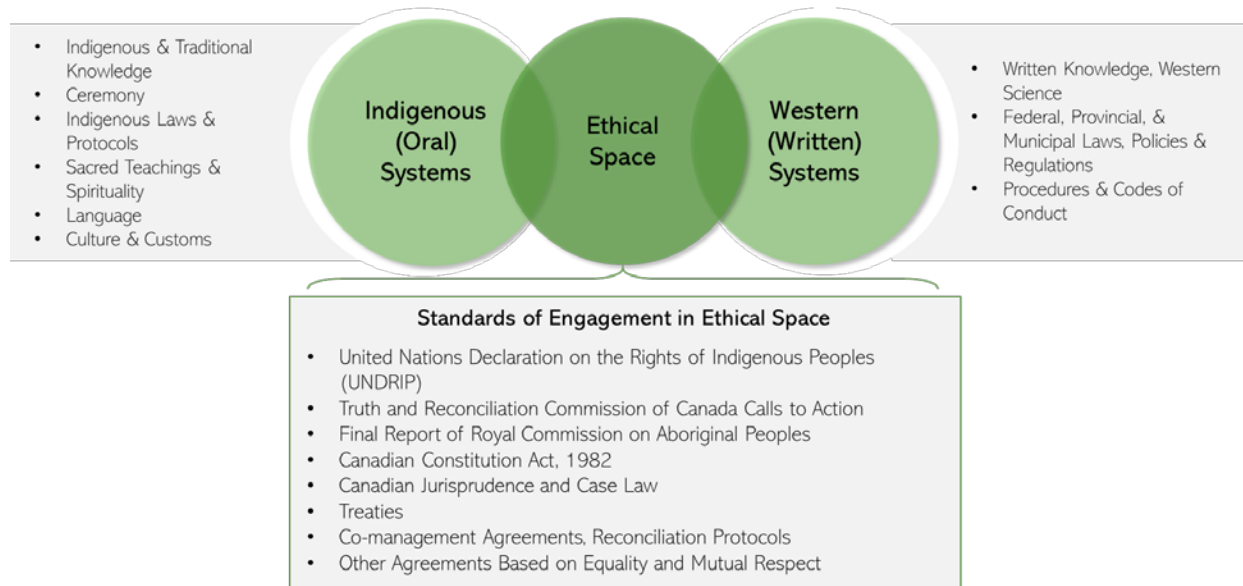


Figure 1. Ethical Space. Adapted from Alberta Energy Regulator 2017. "Voices of Understanding – Looking Through the Window." www.aer.ca/documents/about-us/VoiceOfUnderstanding_Report.pdf. See also Indigenous Circle of Experts 2018. "We Rise Together: Achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 through the Creation of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the Spirit of Practice of Reconciliation." http://bit.ly/ICE_Report_2018

A profoundly shifting political, legislative, and policy landscape nationally and internationally is now reviving Ethical Space. The BC and federal governments have endorsed and committed to implement UNDRIP. They have also committed to acting on the TRC's Calls to Action. The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognized Aboriginal rights under Section 35, and recent Supreme Court of Canada rulings have reinforced Aboriginal title and rights to traditional territories and resources.

We believe that Ethical Space can and ought to be created in the process of developing policy decisions and legislation for wildlife stewardship on a government-to-government basis, where trust is built, and Western science and Indigenous knowledge systems are equally acknowledged and valued.

Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication

Collaboration and Cooperation

An Ethical Space approach to wildlife and habitat stewardship encourages decision-makers and stakeholders to collaborate to achieve shared outcomes and foster common respect for the benefit of all. Decision-makers include Indigenous and Crown governments, while examples of stakeholders include private corporations, resident hunters, guide-outfitters, trappers, academia, non-consumptive users,⁸ and environmental non-governmental organizations.

⁸ 'Non-consumptive users' refers to those who enjoy and appreciate wildlife and landscapes for their own intrinsic value. Just knowing that these animals and places exist in healthy numbers brings comfort to such 'users.'

Within Ethical Space, collaboration and cooperation – especially with regard to wildlife stewardship – take on a different meaning. Ethical Space allows for the coexistence of both multiple knowledge systems and multiple layers of jurisdiction, in which Indigenous Peoples not only co-manage Crown objectives, but also their own.

Communications and Public Outreach

The *Together for Wildlife* strategy will fundamentally shift the way that BC and First Nations work together in the areas of wildlife stewardship. Therefore, communications and public outreach will be required to build understanding of the roles, rights, and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples in this evolving relationship. First Nations forum participants spoke of the need for government staff to understand Indigenous Peoples' rights and the government's duty to uphold these rights as affirmed in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, case law, and the government's policies, laws, and regulations.

First Nations participants also spoke of the need for the provincial government to communicate the nature and basis for Indigenous Peoples' rights and responsibilities in wildlife stewardship to stakeholders and the general public. It is essential that stakeholders and the general public understand Indigenous Peoples' roles as co-management partners with the Province in the development and implementation of government-to-government agreements, policies, and regulations, including the *Together for Wildlife* strategy. The public needs to understand that, in the context of efforts toward reconciliation, shared stewardship that upholds Indigenous Peoples' rights and responsibilities to wildlife will ultimately benefit all British Columbians.

SECTION B: SHARED DECISION-MAKING AND GOVERNANCE

Relations between Indigenous societies and the Province have long suffered from colonial practices, with the Province making decisions and taking actions on behalf of Indigenous societies. We now have the potential to correct this imbalance through a renewed relationship using Ethical Space to advance reconciliation, build trust and mutual respect, and share decision-making authority.

All lands in British Columbia, regardless of whether they are covered by historical or modern treaties, are subject to Indigenous jurisdiction, which coexists with Crown jurisdiction. In recent decades, Indigenous governments and communities have been reclaiming decision-making authority, re-establishing jurisdiction over their lands and waters, and re-asserting/re-orienting their relationships with wildlife.⁹ The *Together for Wildlife* strategy has the potential to reflect a significant shift – from Ministerial orders that are rooted in unilateral, colonial-based jurisdiction to shared decision-making and jurisdiction with Indigenous governments and authorities, including hereditary systems of governance.¹⁰

Priority and Security of Rights in Wildlife and Habitat

Treaties and court rulings have affirmed the existence of Indigenous Peoples' rights to wildlife (whether for sustenance, economic, cultural, or spiritual values) and land (i.e., wildlife habitat). Yet, disparities remain between what ought to be happening for wildlife and habitat stewardship and what is actually happening on the land. It is time this matter was reconciled.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Formal recognition of the hierarchy of priorities for sharing wildlife harvest: (i) conservation and public safety, followed by consumptive uses under (ii) Indigenous treaty rights and Indigenous asserted rights (i.e., section 35 rights, but not enshrined in treaty), (iii) resident and non-resident hunters (as per the provincial (wildlife) Harvest Allocation Policy).

The Forum sought to enshrine this hierarchy of priorities in provincial law by recommending amendments to the *Wildlife Act*. As First Nations forum participants, we believe that Indigenous governments and the Province should commit to working together, on a First Nation-by-First Nation basis, to define the scope of matters pertaining to decisions based on the interests of (i) public health and safety, and (ii) conservation. In the context of wildlife and habitat stewardship and conservation, these joint arrangements will help prevent subversion of Indigenous Peoples' rights to wildlife and habitat.

- Provincial accountability to uphold Indigenous governments' right to determine their own communities' needs related to wildlife harvest, food security, and food sovereignty.
- Public outreach and communications materials explaining the legal context of these rights.

⁹ UNDRIP Article 18, Section 1: "Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions."

UNDRIP Article 24, Section 1: "Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their healthy practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services."

¹⁰ UNDRIP Article 32, Section 1: "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources."

- Processes and procedures for enabling Protocol Hunting and Sheltering that will be developed and implemented jointly by Indigenous governments and the Province on a First Nation-by-First Nation basis.

Co-management of Wildlife and Habitat

A priority goal for First Nations forum participants is to support movement towards long-term co-management (stewardship) of wildlife and habitat in BC that is acknowledged and accepted as such by Indigenous governments and the Province. As co-management partners, Indigenous and Crown governments share in the stewardship of natural resources, and together Indigenous and Crown governments will define the scope, mandate, and functions of the co-management arrangements to be used.

Differences between Indigenous and Crown governments (e.g., worldviews, value systems, governance structures, historical injustices) pose challenges for co-management efforts that will need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. In addition, accounting for cultural, ecological, and geopolitical differences requires a flexible approach that may look very different across the province and from one First Nation to another.

Shared decision-making and co-management are often thought to mean the same thing. They do not. Shared decision-making involves First Nations governments and the Crown working together to make decisions over wildlife and habitat conservation, and both partners are seen as equal. Co-management, or co-stewardship, refers to the implementation of decisions arrived at through shared decision-making; this process may also involve stakeholders such as non-profit organizations and industry. Ultimately, what shared decision-making and co-management look like is up to each First Nation to determine with the Crown.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Co-management arrangements that are transparent,¹¹ that build trust with Indigenous governments, and that function to develop and implement wildlife stewardship policies and actions, including the Together for Wildlife strategy, via a process of shared decision-making.
- Respect for the decision-making authority and involvement of Indigenous governments and the Province collectively in the full spectrum of strategic, operational and project level planning for wildlife and habitat stewardship as it pertains to natural resource and land-use decisions.
- Objectives and priorities for wildlife populations that are established collaboratively by Indigenous governments and the Province in a manner that respects (i) the ecological potential and social needs of the species, (ii) the ecological capability and effectiveness of the habitat, and (iii) the social expectations and demands for consumptive and non-consumptive values to society consistent with the priority of rights. It is accepted that natural resource values cannot all be maximized simultaneously; thus, tradeoffs are inevitable in order to balance biological, social, and economic objectives. First Nations forum participants identified five key considerations for such objective-setting:
 1. Implement a rigorous approach to co-managing vehicular access on public lands in B.C., as this is a significant threat to wildlife and habitat stewardship, as well as Indigenous Peoples' use and enjoyment of their traditional territories.
 2. Secure the amount and quality of habitat over time and space (i.e., habitat supply) to account for impacts that are both within and beyond the control of wildlife/habitat managers by prioritizing wildlife and habitat needs over resource extraction.
 3. Support the creation of new provincial government policies that promote wildlife abundance.

¹¹ In the context of co-management arrangements, transparency refers to the degree to which information is readily available, in an accurate and timely manner, to those participating in the endeavor.

4. Review the boundaries commonly used by the Province for objective setting and management planning and seek to redefine them to better-align with ecological and cultural realities.
 5. Collaborate to identify shared goals and priorities for the restoration of wildlife habitat and other on-the-ground stewardship actions.
- Collaboratively developed policies and procedures to support immediate action in the case of catastrophic events that affect wildlife or habitat (e.g., forest fires, floods, droughts, disease outbreaks).
 - Application of an ecosystem-based approach, with solutions developed and implemented at the regional, watershed or similar scale. Planning at this level may mean working with two or more First Nations whose boundaries may be shared (and/or areas of interest which may overlap).
 - Collaborative development of wildlife and habitat stewardship legislation (e.g., BC's proposed *Species-at-Risk Act*)
 - Collaborative development of processes, policies, and procedures for First Nations consultation in British Columbia.
 - Alignment of provincial regulations with Indigenous communities' management decisions and regulations, such as harvest closures.
 - Processes to seek input and support from stakeholders, as appropriate.
 - Opportunities for Indigenous governments, as the Province's government-to-government partners, to participate in advisory bodies and authorities such as the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT) and regional roundtables, in a format and approach chosen by First Nations.
 - Co-management and joint decision-making that prioritizes Indigenous Peoples' food security and food sovereignty, as they define these (i.e., the impacts on traditional foods and medicines need to be considered when making joint resource management decisions).
 - Policies and procedures for joint decision-making by Indigenous governments and the Province regarding restrictions on consumptive use of wildlife for legitimate purposes such as recovery of wildlife populations. A mutually agreed understanding of factors involving conservation and public health and safety is essential.
 - Policies and procedures to identify and empower Indigenous-led conservation opportunities, such as establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and habitat stewardship/hunting management areas.

Government-to-Government Agreements on Wildlife and Habitat

Government-to-government agreements concerning wildlife and habitat have existed since the first treaties were signed. To this day, treaties, treaty-related measures, land use plans, strategic engagement agreements, co-management agreements, and other arrangements set forth mutually agreeable terms by which matters such as wildlife and habitat stewardship are addressed. Many of these have fallen far short of meeting their goals. However, collaborative initiatives such as the *Together for Wildlife* strategy could help create opportunities to build upon and expand the role of past agreements while supporting new approaches to finding Ethical Space as it pertains to wildlife and habitat stewardship.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- A commitment from the Province that it will not delegate responsibilities for wildlife or habitat to a non-Indigenous third party (e.g., Crown corporations, natural resource societies, environmental non-

governmental organizations, and private industry), but rather will uphold the requirement for government-to-government relations and appropriate recognition of Indigenous governments and leadership.

- Policies and procedures to ensure that existing agreements (e.g., treaties, strategic engagements, co-management agreements, and protocols) are respected, upheld, improved as needed and, to the extent they are viewed as successful, used as examples for new agreements.
- Published guidelines on processes for reaching agreement.¹²
- Agreements that reflect a Crown commitment to consistent application and enforcement of legislation, policies and regulations relating to wildlife stewardship in all resource sectors with clear accountability.
- Formalized province-wide policies and legislation regarding consultation processes with First Nations regarding consumptive uses (i.e., hunting regulations, Limited Entry Hunting, Guide Outfitting, etc.) in government-to-government agreements.
- Adequate funding for flexible agreements over the long term to support the government-to-government relationships they serve. Periodic review and renewal processes are essential.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western Science

The incorporation of Indigenous knowledge systems¹³ – both traditional and modern – into shared decision-making for the development and execution of plans for wildlife and habitat stewardship is essential. Numerous studies and articles have determined the vital importance of applying Indigenous knowledge systems together with Western scientific research for sound policymaking.¹⁴ First Nations participants consistently raised this topic at Forum meetings, the key message being that Indigenous knowledge systems need to be central to the Province's approaches to wildlife and habitat conservation, including the *Together for Wildlife* strategy.

Indigenous knowledge is embedded in Indigenous practices for stewarding complex ecosystems and the wildlife that depend on them. These systems of knowledge are based on lived experience on the land by Indigenous knowledge holders, as well as on oral transmission of knowledge over hundreds or even thousands of years. This is place-based knowledge and can help address many stewardship-related challenges.

However, Western science still constitutes the basis for Crown government-led stewardship of wildlife and habitat. Indigenous knowledge systems are still routinely overlooked, removed from their jurisdictional context in Indigenous legal systems, and/or undervalued, and the central tenet that all things are interconnected is ignored.

Integrating Indigenous knowledge and Western science (known as 'two-eyed seeing') into wildlife and habitat stewardship within Ethical Space can build trust and enhance outcomes. The use of both knowledge systems

¹² E.g., Saskatchewan Indian Federated College 1996. "Co-Managing Natural Resources with First Nations – Guidelines to Reaching Agreements and Making Them Work." <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/R32-223-1996E.pdf>

¹³ For the purposes of this document, we have drawn from a couple of sources describing Indigenous knowledge and have adapted these to arrive at a definition: "Indigenous knowledge generally refers to knowledge systems embedded in the cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples, and which is based on observations and interactions with the environment. In many cases, Indigenous knowledge has been passed on from person to person over generations through stories, legends, rituals, songs, laws, or other means. The meaning of Indigenous knowledge differs among societies and cultures." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_knowledge;
www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-Indigenous-knowledge-mean

¹⁴ E.g., Diver, Sibyl. 2017. "Environmental Science & Policy Negotiating Indigenous Knowledge at the Science-Policy Interface: Insights from the Xáxl'i'p Community Forest." *Environmental Science and Policy* 73: 1–11; Thompson, Jimmy. 2019. "Indigenous Knowledge and the Future of Science." *The Walrus*, August 13, 2019. <https://thewalrus.ca/Indigenous-knowledge-and-the-future-of-science/>

provides the basis for better planning and stewardship approaches and eliminates some of the limitations inherent in Western science, such as compartmentalization and limited time horizons.

Indigenous knowledge systems and Western science, especially when navigated in Ethical Space, should be (i) valued and respected equally, (ii) used to inform and complement each other, and (iii) integrated in a harmonized system of stewardship. This is the journey that decision-makers and stakeholders can take together, and the 'container' for this journey is Ethical Space and its ability to facilitate a 'two-eyed seeing' approach. That approach allows for both systems to interact with mutual respect, kindness, generosity and other basic values and principles. In many cases, the data,¹⁵ information, and knowledge gathered through Western scientific methods and through oral means (based on observation and/or storytelling) align and support each other, since at heart they are both rooted in observations of the natural world by humans (albeit with worldviews that often differ).

However, there have been times when Indigenous knowledge or data were misused by those with whom these assets were shared and entrusted. This has eroded trust and the willingness of Indigenous Peoples to continue to share such knowledge and data – especially if their own data and knowledge were used against them. Obtaining free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) and entering into relationship protocols with First Nations are essential to any process that is respectful and true to 'two-eyed seeing.'

Fostering a relationship based in two-eyed seeing is an opportunity for the Crown to deepen its understanding of Indigenous laws and legal traditions, which in turn can play a crucial role in successful stewardship of wildlife and habitat conservation/restoration.

Acknowledging and Learning from Traditional Governance

Better understanding of Indigenous laws and legal traditions is key to good collaboration between Crown and Indigenous governments in the stewardship of wildlife and habitat, especially if undertaken in Ethical Space. Inherent in this, in the BC context, is an understanding of traditional governance structures, which transmit and apply Indigenous laws to all facets of life.

It is important for the Crown to be aware of these structures.¹⁶ Traditional governance systems obtain their right of jurisdiction through Indigenous rights frameworks, relationship to the land, and hereditary structures. Hereditary Chiefs across BC, regardless of what First Nation they are from, have a responsibility for stewardship of their entire homelands, inclusive of but not limited to reserve lands. Learning from and engaging with traditional governance systems can produce more inclusive wildlife laws and policies that more closely align with Indigenous values. Respecting these governance structures would also further enshrine and uphold the application of Indigenous laws in First Nation territories.

¹⁵ Data generated by Indigenous individuals or organizations can support Indigenous knowledge and associated stewardship decisions, but the data themselves are not 'knowledge.'

¹⁶ Despite past systemic attempts by colonial governments to eradicate traditional governance structures (e.g., banning potlaches and use of Indigenous languages), these structures continue to survive in many Indigenous communities throughout BC.

SECTION C: ENABLING SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Environmental Research, Monitoring, and Enforcement

Effective and successful stewardship of wildlife and habitat requires that we understand the natural world through two-eyed seeing, and that we uphold our responsibilities to live in harmony with it.

Environmental research through both Western methods and Indigenous knowledge systems empowers us to address important questions about wildlife and habitat. It is a means of seeking truth by shedding light on the relationship between outcomes and their cause(s). Knowledge gained in this way can then be used to inform wildlife and habitat stewardship that is successful and adaptable to changing conditions on the ground.

Monitoring selected features of the natural world through various methods can show that our stewardship is effective, and if not, that corrective measures are required. Where remedial actions are required, they may be undertaken through an adaptive management approach, which needs to be well-resourced.

Enforcement seeks to ensure that the intended outcomes of stewardship are successful and not jeopardized by illegal or non-compliant actions by individuals or entities. Ultimately, it is about ensuring that wildlife and habitat are respected and thrive.

With a presence that spans the entire province and lifestyles that are highly connected to the natural world, Indigenous Peoples are sentinels of BC's lands and waters. Creating opportunities to achieve full engagement of Indigenous governments in wildlife research, monitoring, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies will serve the best interests of all British Columbians across generations. All three elements (environmental research, monitoring, and enforcement) lend themselves to an incremental approach that can be built over the course of years and decades.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Opportunities for full involvement of Indigenous governments in the co-creation of research programs that are adequately resourced. First Nations governments/leadership and BC will collaboratively determine the goals and objectives of research at the outset, with involvement of other stakeholders and parties of interest (e.g., academia) as appropriate.¹⁷
- Requirement that Indigenous knowledge be fully accepted in baseline research for the environmental assessment of major projects.
- Acknowledgement and acceptance of Indigenous approaches to gathering research data.
- Support for education programs that nurture the development of Indigenous professional biologists (e.g., College of Applied Biology).

¹⁷ UNDRIP Article 31, Section 1: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions."

- Expansion of environmental monitoring by Indigenous Guardians and the Natural Resources staff of Indigenous governments that:
 - Builds upon new and existing programs developed and led by Indigenous governments;
 - Integrates with and expands upon provincial monitoring and assessment initiatives such as the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) and Multiple Resource Value Assessments (MRVA) in order to account for a full suite of jointly developed indicators that effectively document the state of environmental conditions.
- A pathway for Indigenous citizens to take on an expanding role in compliance and law enforcement, including Indigenous, provincial, and federal rules and laws. This spectrum spans:
 - Initial liaison and dialogue between enforcement authorities (e.g., Conservation Officer Service (COS), Environmental Assessment Office, Forest Practices Board) and Indigenous governments and citizens to reach common understandings about values, interests, and concerns;
 - Where appropriate and desired, expansion of the scope of Guardian programs to include enforcement agreements and closer coordination/integration with the COS;
 - Cooperation and information sharing between Indigenous governments and enforcement authorities;
 - Spreading awareness amongst Indigenous youth about career opportunities in enforcement with the Province and Indigenous governments/leadership;
 - Mentoring of Indigenous citizens who are interested in enforcement of environmental laws—including ride-alongs during routine patrols, inspections, and investigations;
 - Education and training leading to full-time employment of Indigenous enforcement officers (whether through the COS or Guardians) – some of whom will go on to foster and perpetuate the spectrum of enforcement described here; and
 - Creation of restorative¹⁸ and/or traditional justice mechanisms, or enabling such systems where they already exist, as alternative approaches to punitive measures, particularly with First Nations community members.

Funding and Capacity-Building

Meaningful commitment to co-management and joint decision making on wildlife and habitat issues – including implementation of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy – requires that both Indigenous governments and the Province be adequately and sustainably resourced with human and fiscal resources. This implies two things. First, it entails identifying sources of sustained funding and in-kind contributions within both levels of Crown government and through other sources like philanthropic organizations and private enterprise. Second, it means empowering capacity-building within Indigenous governments for shared decision-making and for undertaking wildlife and habitat stewardship.

¹⁸ There are many similar definitions of Restorative Justice. For the purposes of this document, we are using BC's definition in its booklet *Restorative Justice*. "Restorative Justice (RJ) seeks to create just outcomes by repairing the harm caused by crime and violence. Typically, this happens through facilitating a process that addresses victims' needs and holds offenders meaningfully accountable for their actions. In this approach, crime is understood not only as breaking the law, but as a violation of people and relationships and a disruption of the peace in a community."
www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/crime-prevention/community-crime-prevention/publications/crime-prev-series3-restorative-justice.pdf

First Nations governments should be directly involved when developing funding programs, whether these programs are administered by Crown governments, philanthropic organizations, or others. Although identifying funding needs and potential solutions is best left to individual First Nations, many good principles and ideas emerged from Forum discussions and are presented below.

Funding

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Creation of an Indigenous-run, independent, and accountable funding body to administer and channel funds for wildlife stewardship and habitat conservation/restoration (e.g., the Guardian program under the Indigenous Leadership Initiative, or the Coast Funds).
- Establishment of revenue-sharing arrangements that provide primary sources of funding, so that First Nations are not dependent on funding bodies or programs where they must apply for funding.
- Co-development, with interested First Nations, of a concept paper to explore creation of a 'BC Wildlife and Habitat Restoration Compensation Program'. The paper would examine potential funding sources such as direct impact revenues (resident and non-resident hunting revenue, sport and commercial fishing, industrial logging, oil and gas, recreational pursuits) and BC's forest carbon initiative.
- Establishment of a wildlife and land fund (a 'legacy' fund), consisting of contributions from industries that have had tremendous impacts on the land base and wildlife. These funds would flow to impacted First Nations to fund wildlife and habitat stewardship and restoration initiatives.
- Establishment of an 'offsets approach,' where industry is responsible for setting aside an offset monetary value that covers the life of that industrial project (e.g., a mine) for species and habitat recovery and potential social impacts.¹⁹
- Identification of priority areas for funding in wildlife and stewardship by First Nations governments – e.g., Guardian programs, data analyses, inventories – and the creation of briefs to approach Crown and funding bodies, including the philanthropic sector.
- Creation of long-term, comprehensive programs with sustained multi-year funding (e.g., wildlife stewardship programs which may be species-specific, especially for keystone species, or landscape level monitoring programs), rather than piecemeal funding on a project-by-project basis.
- Policies and procedures to share hunting license revenues with First Nations on whose territory the hunt takes place, in order to fund co-management/stewardship.
- Creation of First Nations woodlands licenses for area-based tenures that would not be harvested but meant for restoring wildlife populations, funded by carbon offsets.

Capacity-Building

First Nations forum participants shared many ideas to build capacity of First Nations for improved wildlife stewardship. Participants also recognized that wildlife stewardship improvements will require increased provincial capacity.

¹⁹ E.g., at the Kitsault Mine north of Prince Rupert, \$100,000 per year is to be paid during mining operations for moose recovery and management, as a condition of the mine being issued an Environmental Assessment Certificate.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Adequate resources for Indigenous governments to enable them to identify and address their own funding and capacity needs in wildlife stewardship, habitat restoration, and co-management with Crown governments.
- Capacity development for Indigenous governments to review and understand data regarding wildlife populations, habitat impacts, etc.
- Resources and training to foster a cultural shift among provincial staff who work on the ground to create collaborative stewardship initiatives that foster engagement and relationship building between governments, staff, and the general public.
- Consistent government staff who are committed to building good long-term relationships with First Nations; this is important to reduce the time, resources, and staff capacity that First Nations must spend to run effective meetings with tangible outcomes, and so resources can instead be allocated to priority wildlife and land restoration projects.
- Support for First Nations to work collaboratively with neighboring Nations to increase capacity especially where issues transcend boundaries such as wildlife population decline.
- Funding for First Nations to develop capacity to participate in monitoring programs. Matching funds could come from both levels of Crown governments.

Data and Information Sharing

Good data and the information they generate are essential for informed stewardship of wildlife and habitat under a shared decision-making framework that integrates Western science and Indigenous knowledge systems.

There is a pressing need for easy access to data and information that are trusted, amenable to a range of summaries and analyses, and representative of a variety of sources and different perspectives. Achieving this will involve a meaningful integration, in an environment of mutual trust and respect, of data generated by Western science and Indigenous knowledge systems.

The Province currently collects and manages a vast array of data on wildlife and habitat in BC. Industrial operators (e.g., forest and mining companies) and others (e.g., BC Hydro) are also in possession of valuable data and information. Much of that data is not readily accessible outside the provincial system, or even to staff within it. Online data-sharing programs like iMapBC, Habitat Wizard, and Hectares BC are steps in the right direction, although further improvements could be made.

Indigenous communities also possess a wealth of information that can serve the interests of wildlife and habitat stewardship. Building trust will empower communities to share what is often considered sensitive information.²⁰

In order to advance trust and good relations between Indigenous communities and the Province, it is crucial to develop information technology (IT) systems that expand the suite of wildlife and habitat data and information available online (and which can be utilized by communities without technical access). Information and data management systems should provide users with easy access to informative data summaries generated by custom queries.

²⁰ E.g., Maa-nulth First Nations have agreed to share wildlife harvest data with BC.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Evaluation of the types of wildlife and habitat data and information held by Crown and Indigenous governments/groups, and an initial scope of the potential end-uses of this data and information. This process should include identification of data shortfalls (needs) to inform effective stewardship.
- Development of tools (i.e., online programs) that take advantage of BC's powerful IT capabilities and that allow easy (user-friendly) access to data and information; both temporal (time, historical) and spatial aspects should be incorporated. These tools and options will be relied upon to (i) support stewardship in a process of shared decision-making, and (ii) inform users seeking answers to specific questions (e.g., what is the current/past moose population in Territory X? How much resident hunting occurs in Territory X? What is the success rate? Are the deer in Territory X safe to eat as a result of concerns about herbicide spraying? And if so, according to whose information?).
- Access to training that allows end-users to take full advantage of the data and information systems, including training in the interpretation of Indigenous data and information.
- Policies and procedures to enable Indigenous knowledge holders to help government staff interpret Indigenous knowledge/data from that individual or community.
- Policies and procedures to ensure respect for the sensitive nature or confidentiality of data and information – especially if Indigenous-generated – based on the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.
- Expanded incorporation of Indigenous data and information in statutory and non-statutory decision-making as trust is built.
- Policies and procedures that seek to harmonize the ability to integrate data collected under a 'Western' approach with data collected in accordance with Indigenous knowledge. This will likely require reevaluation of the spatial organization of data. For example, First Nations' territories and specific areas of interest will not always align with boundaries used by the Province to collect data – adjustments will be necessary.
- Data management systems that allow users to clearly understand the data they are working with, including the data's origin, assumptions, accuracy, limitations and cultural context. This might allow for an easy comparison of, for example, the status of a particular moose population according to (i) Indigenous sources, (ii) provincial sources, and (iii) other sources. To the extent there is agreement amongst data or information from different sources, there will be a common understanding of a need to take action via a process that could foster trust through collaboration and cooperation.
- Policies and procedures for the Province and First Nations to jointly determine data-gathering priorities in ways that ensure these priorities reflect Indigenous Peoples' values, needs and priorities. For example, provincial data collection should be oriented toward conservation needs and cultural keystone species, rather than just towards setting hunting season allocations.
- Policies and procedures for the Province and First Nations governments to jointly determine desired scope and frequency of territory-specific wildlife and habitat-related data collection, including but not limited to wildlife population assessments.

Implementation, Auditing, and Accountability

A transparent process is needed to implement, monitor, examine, and report on the implementation, successes, and failures of provincial wildlife and habitat stewardship initiatives such as the *Together for Wildlife* strategy, and to prescribe remedial actions where necessary. Improving wildlife and habitat conservation, in collaboration with First Nations as government-to-government partners, is a long-term process that will achieve success

incrementally. Accordingly, it is essential that initiatives such as the *Together for Wildlife* strategy be scoped properly, with clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines for implementation by all parties involved.

Key aspirations and ideas expressed by First Nations forum participants:

- Jointly defined roles and responsibilities, if any, that the Forum might play in implementing the Strategy. One option is to expand the Forum's scope to include representation from all regions and for all species, and to advise on the Province's implementation of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy with individual First Nations and stakeholders.
- A central role for Indigenous representatives, possibly drawn from the Forum, for facilitating cross-agency collaboration within the provincial government for implementing the *Together for Wildlife* strategy.
- Harmonization of upcoming changes in the *Wildlife Act* (and the *Together for Wildlife* strategy) with other legislation applicable to managing/stewarding wildlife and habitat (e.g., *Fish & Wildlife Heritage Act*, *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Mines Act*, *Forest Act*, *Riparian Areas Protection Act* and *Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR)*, *Water Sustainability Act*, proposed BC Species at Risk Act, *Heritage Conservation Act*, *Local Government Act*, *Transportation Act - Highways*, *Environmental Assessment Act*, *Land Act*, *Right to Roam Act*).
- Development of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives for all aspects of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy to serve as performance indicators and measure its successful implementation, especially around the Province's accountability to Indigenous governments in this process.
- A rigorous and scheduled process of auditing (assessing achievement) and reporting that holds all parties to *Together for Wildlife* strategy accountable for their role in achieving the strategy's Vision. This process should celebrate successes while addressing challenges with a focus on accountability, collaboration, adaptability, shared learning, and reconciliation.
- Transparent public outreach programs to communicate decisions, policies, and actions to implement the *Together for Wildlife* strategy in a way that builds trust and support among everyone in British Columbia with an interest in wildlife and wildlife habitat. Such communications materials should clearly communicate First Nations' role as government-to-government partners in this process.

Conclusion

The BC-First Nations Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum was formed in December 2018 to facilitate collaborative efforts to improve provincial wildlife and habitat legislation and policy. As part of the Province's commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the government committed to collaborate with Indigenous communities to 'co-produce' potential solutions for wildlife and habitat conservation.

First Nations participants in the Forum articulated their aspirations, which collectively represent a bold vision for more collaborative decision-making and respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights, responsibilities, and jurisdiction in wildlife and habitat stewardship on their traditional territories.

First Nations forum participants and government staff collaborated in good faith to develop proposed amendments to the *Wildlife Act* and draft the *Together for Wildlife* strategy. But this work has only begun. First Nations forum participants' perspectives articulated in the *Cultivating Abundance* report can provide guidance for collaborative implementation of the vision in the *Together for Wildlife* strategy. In addition, the values, principles, and aspirations expressed in this report have the potential to inspire more fundamental changes to wildlife and habitat conservation legislation, policy, and decision-making in BC in ways that uphold Indigenous jurisdiction, rights, and responsibilities in wildlife and habitat while promoting reconciliation consistent with the principles of UNDRIP.

Contact Us

For more information about the work of the BC-First Nations Wildlife Forum, please contact the Co-Chairs:

Ron Frank

Email: ron.j.frank@gmail.com

Kate Hewitt

Telephone: 250-392-7361 Ext: 227

Email: stewardshiptech@nstq.org



ROYAL BC MUSEUM ARCHIVES TEM B-03856 - KAMLOOPS MUSEUM PHOTO; SMALL HERD OF MOOSE IN THE CARIBOO