

December 18, 2023

Standing Committee on Science and Research  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
Canada

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Dear Chair,

On behalf of The Canadian Mountain Network (CMN), we greatly appreciated the opportunity to appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research and share our experiences and thoughts on the Integration of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Science in Government Policy Development. We appreciate the committee's interest and thoughtful questions on this topic.

CMN has demonstrated through direct action over the last four years, how we as a country can effectively braid Indigenous and western knowledge systems to influence and adapt policy and regulations for the better.

On December 6, 2023, we were informed that we have been awarded 5 more years of funding to transition to Braiding Knowledges Canada (BKC) to continue our work past April 1, 2024. Although the funding is less than what we had requested, it is a significant contribution and will serve as a foundation to allow BKC to leverage more partners and collaborators to achieve a vision for Canada in the braiding of knowledges. We look forward to supporting the important work of this Standing Committee.

**Specifically, we offer the following advice:**

The government must invest in organizations that can help implement the principles of the UNDRIP Action Plan, to recognize, elevate and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and Science into the Canadian scientific landscape. This can be done by enhancing the influence of self-

determined, place-based and co-produced knowledge within Canada's science culture. Our model has proven to be highly effective at achieving these outcomes.

There is a need for experienced not-for-profits, such as BKC, that are supported by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis researchers and communities, and non-Indigenous contributors to the research ecosystem, to facilitate linkages between Indigenous-led, place-based, community-driven research and various cross-cutting, federal priorities. BKC, as a boundary-spanning organization, can offer the collaborative space and opportunity for federal departments to connect with local knowledge and initiatives in a streamlined, meaningful, and impactful way.

We consider it also essential that the government maintain and accelerate a national network of established Indigenous-led and co-led environmental knowledge hubs like the ones created by CMN. CMN has supported the creation of Knowledge Hubs across Canada, led and co-led by Indigenous communities, Elders, Knowledge Holders, Indigenous Guardians, and Western researchers. These research, knowledge mobilization, and training centers engage local, regional, provincial, territorial, and federal organizations to address shared knowledge needs and priorities. Each Hub recognizes and respects the value of Western and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being and is dedicated to bringing these knowledges and approaches together in a productive way to support evidence-based decision-making. This foundation is enhanced by the diverse organizations involved, including 42 universities, 12 provincial and territorial government departments and 12 federal departments and agencies, 34 not-for-profit organizations, and 50 industrial and private sector partners.

As noted during our testimony with the Committee, CMN's project on enhancing the reintroduction of plains bison is one example of this success. By including cultural monitoring and Indigenous knowledge in Mîní Rħpa Mâkoche, also known as Banff National Park, in 2017, 16 bison were released in the northeast section of the park. This herd has since grown to over 60 animals roaming freely throughout the reintroduction area. Although they have been involved with parks for more than 100 years, 2021 marks the first time Stoney Nakoda First Nation has worked with Parks Canada on a wildlife study. However, there are also important lessons in this work that remain. The recommendations from this work remain under consideration by Parks Canada. In order for the mobilization of knowledges into government policy development we collectively must shepherd these opportunities forward. That is not to say all recommendations are to be adopted as written, but it is to say that dialogue must extend beyond reporting to implementation. Indigenous research that is working within the confines of colonial systems provides significant opportunity for those systems to change; reconciliation through research and its implementation.

For the committee members who wish to learn more about traditional knowledge systems, we refer you to Section 3.0 of the Bison Cultural Study (see attached). There is a discussion on

Ethical Space by Willie Ermine, Braiding Knowledge by Potawatomi Elder Robin Wall Kimmerer, Two Eyed Seeing by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall, as well as Biculturalism by Chief John Snow. There are many Indigenous methodologies, from many regions and it is this richness and diversity that provides the opportunity to work together to find solutions. Solutions will come from a variety of Western methods, along with Traditional Knowledge methods, that will likely be determined by local groups. There is also a brief discussion on the differences between Western Science and Traditional Knowledge in Section 4.0 Policy Direction and Section 5.0 Methods, that committee members may find useful.

Indigenous research is sorely missing in natural resource management, wildlife research, vegetative research, climate change, etc. Because the research is missing, we also are missing in our understanding, and in the richness of information to influence policy and decision making. If we believe that good research makes good policy, then we need to enable more Indigenous research so that our understanding is more consistent with our decision making; so that we are not just talking about traditional knowledge, but we are practicing it.

With adequate funding, BKC can continue to create, support, and protect ethical spaces supporting federal priorities through mobilization of local knowledge related to environmental change, conservation, restoration, adaptation, and well-being.

There were some questions from committee members related specifically to examples of our work and successful projects utilizing our model, so we are sharing the following resources as a means of showcasing our work, in the annex attached at the end of this document, including:

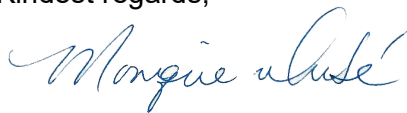
- CMN's 2022-23 annual report in both official languages;
- A summary of CMN's Strategic Science Fund proposal in both official languages;
- A short CMN video that captures the essence of what we do that can be shared more broadly;
- A paper on *10 Calls to Action for Natural Scientists*. Lawrence Ignace and Mary Jane Johnson, authors of the work, are Directors of our Board and Kate (also an author) is a researcher we support.
- An article entitled, *Researchers' responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights Too often research brings harm to Indigenous peoples*, written by Lawrence et al 2023. This article is co-written by CMN's Vice-Chair, Lawrence Ignace, and an infographic has also been included to assist with visualizing how the article could be very effective in terms of how the Standing Committee may wish to look at their work.
- The Stoney Bison Report entitled, *Enhancing the Reintroduction of Plains Bison in*

*Banff National Park Through Cultural Monitoring and Traditional Knowledge* written by Stoney Nakoda Nations, April 4, 2022. Recommendations are found in Section 7 (Page 49).

Once again, we thank the Committee for the opportunity to discuss our work with you, and we look forward to offering any type of support we can to achieve the mandate of the Committee regarding this important study.

We invite the Committee and its Members to please reach out at any time if we can be of assistance.

Kindest regards,



Dr. Monique Dubé, CMN Executive Director



Dr. Joe Dragon, CMN Board Chair

With contributions and review from Dr. Murray Humphries and Dr. Paulina Johnson (CMN Co-Research Directors), Lawrence Ignace (CMN Vice Chair) and Bill Snow (Acting Director of Consultation, Sey Tribal Administration)

## Annex

- English 2022-2023 CMN Annual Report:  
[https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/d81fb67b01/annual-report-2023\\_en\\_4oct2023.pdf](https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/d81fb67b01/annual-report-2023_en_4oct2023.pdf)
- French 2022-2023 CMN Annual Report:  
[https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/ca13f746b8/annual-report-2023\\_fr\\_23oct2023.pdf](https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/ca13f746b8/annual-report-2023_fr_23oct2023.pdf)
- English Braiding Knowledges Canada - SSF Application Summary:  
<https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/a39fb30d17/cmn-bkc-strategic-science-fund-loi-summary-1.pdf>
- French Braiding Knowledges Canada - SSF Application Summary:  
[https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/2891b9e542/ssf\\_summary\\_fr\\_3nov2023.pdf](https://a.storyblok.com/f/112697/x/2891b9e542/ssf_summary_fr_3nov2023.pdf)
- Canadian Mountain Network Legacy Video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kylJIE9UU4&t=2s>
- Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada Carmen Wong, Kate Ballegooyen, Lawrence Ignace, Mary Jane (Gùdia) Johnson, and Heidi Swanson <https://www.facetsjournal.com/doi/pdf/10.1139/facets-2020-0005>
- “Researchers’ responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights Too often research brings harm to Indigenous peoples’, written by Lawrence et al 2023 (Science). [Researchers’ responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights | Science](#)
- Stoney\_Bison\_Report\_FINAL\_Rev2.pdf