

## House of Commons' Standing Committee on Science and Research

### Study on the Integration of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Science Policy Development

Brief Submitted by Assistant Professor Danika Billie Littlechild

February 9, 2024

#### Recommendations:

1. That the study of the SRSR Committee emphasize the considerable diversity of Indigenous Peoples; and that this diversity should be protected and nurtured in the design or implementation of government policy. In relation to this, the SRSR Committee recognize the difficulty in reflecting this diversity fairly in a brief study. Therefore, while the study will reflect the experiences and contributions of various witnesses, as well as the views and policy recommendations from First Nations, Metis, Inuit and others, future government policy or policy review must be designed in partnership and with direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in order for their concepts, interpretations and needs to be met.
2. More specifically, that the SRSR Committee express their respect for a multiplicity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems in play, and avoid creating artificial binaries (“us” and “them”).
3. That the SRSR Committee propose the development of a formalized mechanism(s) that can serve as a methodology for partnership or direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in government policy development or policy review, in relation to inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems.
4. That the SRSR Committee propose that such formal mechanism(s) be convened further to legislation, such as the Ministerial advisory committees under section 7 (1) of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (S.C. 1999, c.33) that supports the protection of the right to a healthy environment; or other Canadian legislation related to environment or decision making respecting the environment.
5. That the SRSR Committee recommend future work relating to direct participation of Indigenous Peoples in government policy development or review be deemed an element of:
  - a. the implementation framework around the right to a healthy environment under section 5.1(1) Part 1 of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (S.C. 1999, c.33)
  - b. the implementation of the Government of Canada's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan 2023-2028 (specifically, sections 32-51)
6. That the SRSR Committee recommend an Indigenous-led process for the development of a formalized mechanism(s), which provide autonomy to Indigenous Peoples in design and substance.

## Supplementary Documentation:

The following are two exemplars relating directly to the mandate of the SRSR Study.

### A. Alberta

In 2016 the Government of Alberta legislated monitoring and reporting requirements that included establishing parallel advisory panels to advise the Chief Scientist and the Government of Alberta on Alberta's Environmental Science Program (*Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, RSA 2000 c E-12 at section 15). The Science Advisory Panel provides independent advice and recommendations on the program's priorities and methodologies, scientific quality, relevance and integrity. The Indigenous Wisdom Advisory Panel advises the Chief Scientist and Government of Alberta regarding how to respectfully apply traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous wisdom to Alberta's Environmental Science Program. I provided support and facilitation for the IWAP Mandate and Roles Document, which created a framework to accomplish appropriate advice. I have attached the Mandate and Roles Document, which is publicly available online, to this Brief. You can also find more information about the Panels and the Office of the Chief Scientist online at: <https://www.alberta.ca/office-of-the-chief-scientist>

### B. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, to which Canada is a party, is the first and most longstanding formalized mechanism for the inclusion and integration of Indigenous traditional knowledge.

<p>Article 8(j) Working Group, Convention on Biological Diversity</p> <p>8(j) Each contracting Party (including Canada) shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:</p> <p>Subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovations and practices.</p>	<p>L'Article 8(j) stipule que</p> <p>Chaque Partie contractante, dans la mesure du possible et selon qu'il conviendra :</p> <p>Sous réserve des dispositions de sa législation nationale, respecte, préserve et maintient les connaissances, innovations et pratiques des communautés autochtones et locales qui incarnent des modes de vie traditionnels présentant un intérêt pour la conservation et l'utilisation durable de la diversité biologique et en favorise l'application sur une plus grande échelle, avec l'accord et la participation des dépositaires de ces connaissances, innovations et pratiques et encourage le partage équitable des avantages découlant de</p>
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	l'utilisation de ces connaissances, innovations et pratiques.
<p>The Conference of the Parties has established a working group specifically to address the implementation of <a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> and related provisions of the Convention. This working group is open to all Parties and, indigenous peoples play a full and active role in its work. Traditional knowledge is considered a "cross-cutting" issue that affects many aspects of biological diversity, so it will continue to be addressed by the Conference of the Parties and by other working groups as well. In particular, in <a href="#">decision VII/19</a>, D the Conference of the Parties requested the Ad Hoc Working group on Access and Benefit-sharing with the collaboration of the Ad Hoc Working Group on <a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> and Related provisions to elaborate an international regime on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing with the aim of adopting an instrument/instruments to effectively implement the provisions in <a href="#">Article 15</a> and <a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> of the Convention and the three objectives of the Convention. This is an ongoing priority of the Convention.</p>	<p>La Conférence des Parties a établi un groupe de travail spécifiquement dans le but d'examiner la mise en œuvre de l'<a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> et dispositions connexes de la Convention. Ce groupe de travail est ouvert à toutes les Parties et les représentants de communautés autochtones jouent un rôle complet et actif dans ses travaux. Les connaissances traditionnelles sont considérées comme une question « transectorielle » affectant de nombreux aspects de la diversité biologique, de sorte qu'elles continueront à être adressées par la Conférence des Parties aussi bien que par d'autres groupes de travail. En particulier, dans la <a href="#">décision VII/19</a>, section D, la Conférence des Parties a prié le Groupe de travail spécial sur l'accès et le partage des avantages, avec la collaboration du Groupe de travail spécial sur l'<a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> et les dispositions connexes, d'élaborer un régime international sur l'accès aux ressources génétiques et le partage des avantages, en vue d'adopter un ou plusieurs instruments qui puissent mettre en œuvre de façon efficace les dispositions de l'<a href="#">Article 15</a> et de l'<a href="#">Article 8 (j)</a> de la Convention et les trois objectifs de la Convention. Ceci est une priorité constante de la Convention.</p>

**Biography of the Witness:**

Danika Billie Littlechild is a registered member of the Ermineskin Cree Nation, with strong ties to Kehewin Cree Nation through her late mother. Danika is an Assistant Professor at Carleton University. She is a UNESCO Chair on Collaboration for Indigenous-led

Biodiversity Conservation, Health and Well-Being, held with Dr. Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine and Dr. Brenda Parlee, the latter of whom provided testimony to this Committee on December 4 of 2023. Danika is a Co-Principal Investigator of the Arramat Project, a NFRF-Transformations funded project on Biodiversity Conservation and the Health and Well-Being of Indigenous Peoples. Danika was the Co-Chair of the Indigenous Circle of Experts convened under the Pathway to Canada Target 1 which produced the *We Rise Together Final Report* on reconciliation in the context of conservation and biodiversity. Danika was the Vice President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization) from 2014-2018 and served in many other roles with the Canadian Commission from 2001-2014. Prior to joining the academy in 2020, Danika practiced law for two decades. Danika has served as an advisor to Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous organizations in Canada and globally.