



Stakeholder Needs Assessment

10 YEAR SCIENCE AND PROGRAM REVIEW

Needs Assessment Workshop Summary Report

Indigenous Peoples

November 16, 2017

Aurora Room, Lister Centre, University of Alberta



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1.0 Introduction

In 2017, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute entered its 10th year of formal operations. Over the past decade, the ABMI has developed valuable baseline data on biodiversity and land cover to support natural resource management in Alberta. Initial decisions about the ABMI’s scope and direction were based on stakeholder feedback gathered between 2002 and 2006—a time when Alberta lacked a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring program. Ten years later, as part of the ABMI 10-year Science and Program Review, a series of needs assessment workshops are being run again to collect feedback on the performance of the Institute to date and gather input on a range of emerging initiatives. This input will inform decision-making on ABMI operations going forward.

2.0 Background

To formally engage groups across a range of sectors, this past spring the ABMI launched a 10-year Science and Program Review. The Review has two components: 1) a Science Review to evaluate the Institute’s scientific framework and the extent to which it has delivered on its initial scientific objectives; and 2) a Needs Assessment to evaluate the range of products and services provided by the ABMI and how they meet stakeholder and community needs. The Needs Assessment primarily comprises a series of facilitated workshops, with a survey administered before each.

The Science Review and Needs Assessment receive strategic oversight from the Science Expert Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group, respectively. Each committee is responsible for assessing the results of their respective review processes and developing a final report, which is then submitted to the Steering Committee overseeing the whole process. The Steering Committee will submit recommendations to the Board of Directors by March 31, 2018. The Board of Directors will then assess and prioritize those recommendations to guide future operations.



Figure 1 ABMI 10-Year Science and Program Review process visualization

3.0 Needs Assessment Workshops

As a first step in developing the needs assessment workshops, the ABMI identified various groups to engage. These include groups with a historical relationship with the ABMI, as well as additional groups that would likely be interested in using ABMI data to meet their own strategic priorities. Representatives of each of these groups were invited to join the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) that oversees the Needs Assessment process. In turn, the SAG membership nominated specific individuals to participate in the workshop process. In total, 10 facilitated workshops were held over the fall of 2017.

3.1 Workshop objectives

The objectives for the 9 facilitated workshops were to:

- assess the ABMI's range of products and services, and the extent to which they meet needs;
- understand current and emerging biodiversity information needs; and
- gather feedback and input on the ABMI's products under development and how they address needs.

The workshops were designed to assess the value and limitations of the ABMI's core monitoring program, as well as emerging ABMI products and services, and the extent to which they fulfill biodiversity information needs now and into the future.

4.0 Workshop Methods

The agenda for this session was fluid, and discussions occurred at several points throughout the day; however, some targeted topics were presented and discussed:

- Part 1 – Background presentation on the ABMI's objectives for engagement, and a brief history
- Part 2 – Discussion about needs, challenges and objectives
- Part 3 – Indigenous Knowledge 101 presentation
- Part 4 – Linking Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science in Environmental Monitoring
- Part 5 – ABMI 101
- Part 6 – ABMI Innovations: presentations about the newly developed WildTrax and NatureLynx

4.1 Who was there?

ABMI Needs Assessment workshops were targeted, sector-specific sessions. One of the goals of the workshops was to engage with as broad a cross-section of each group as possible. Kelsey Dokis-Jansen and Matthew Whitehead distributed invitations to Indigenous communities across the province and the session's participants in the end comprised seven representatives from First Nations and Métis communities.

4.2 What did the different sessions look like?

A) Background presentations

There were four presentations delivered by ABMI staff and co-facilitators:

- *Welcome and engagement objectives* – Tara Narwani

- *Indigenous Knowledge 101* – Matthew Whitehead
- *Linking Indigenous Knowledge and western science in environmental monitoring* – Kelsey Dokis-Jansen
- *ABMI 101* – Tara Narwani

The presentations were designed to provide information about Indigenous Knowledge, background information about the ABMI, and about whether and how the tools already developed by the ABMI could support Indigenous initiatives in communities across the province.

B) Needs, challenges and opportunities

Throughout the day, workshop participants were encouraged to discuss:

- current and future biodiversity information needs;
- current and future barriers/challenges to accessing the required biodiversity information;
- current and future opportunities for ABMI to support Indigenous community initiatives

During the discussion, facilitators took notes to ensure no information was lost.

C) ABMI innovation

Following the discussions, participants were asked to gather for three presentations regarding emerging ABMI products and services:

- *Knowledge Translation*: Tara Narwani
- *Enhancing regional monitoring: WildTrax* – Corrina Copp
- *Creating a biodiversity network: from citizens to institutions* – Joelle Chille-Cale

After the presentations, participants were invited to discuss whether these tools would provide valuable support for initiatives they lead within their own communities. Facilitators took notes to ensure no information was lost.

D) Closing

For the final moments of the workshop, ABMI staff thanked participants for their engaged attendance. Facilitators announced that a workshop summary and presentations would be shared as soon as completed.

5.0 Workshop Summary

Feedback from each of the participant activities was synthesized and evaluated to draw out common themes under the banners of “Needs,” “Challenges,” and “Opportunities.”

5.1 Needs

Participants discussed at several points the importance of the language used by the ABMI when approaching Indigenous communities; it is important to ask how the ABMI’s tools can support their work, rather than seeking collaborations. With that in mind, most participants suggested that they believed the ABMI’s tools, such as the Mapping Portal, NatureLynx and WildTrax, would be able to support community-led initiatives; however, participants indicated a need for confidentiality of the data they collect. Participants also suggested developing Information Sharing Agreements that align with OCAP

(Ownership, Control, Access and Possession) standards. In addition, provision of training by the ABMI is needed to support communities in using these tools and leveraging ABMI data independently. Finally, for the ABMI to fully align with the needs of Indigenous Peoples, participants suggested that it would need to incorporate the principles of Indigenous methodologies into its practices.

5.2 Challenges

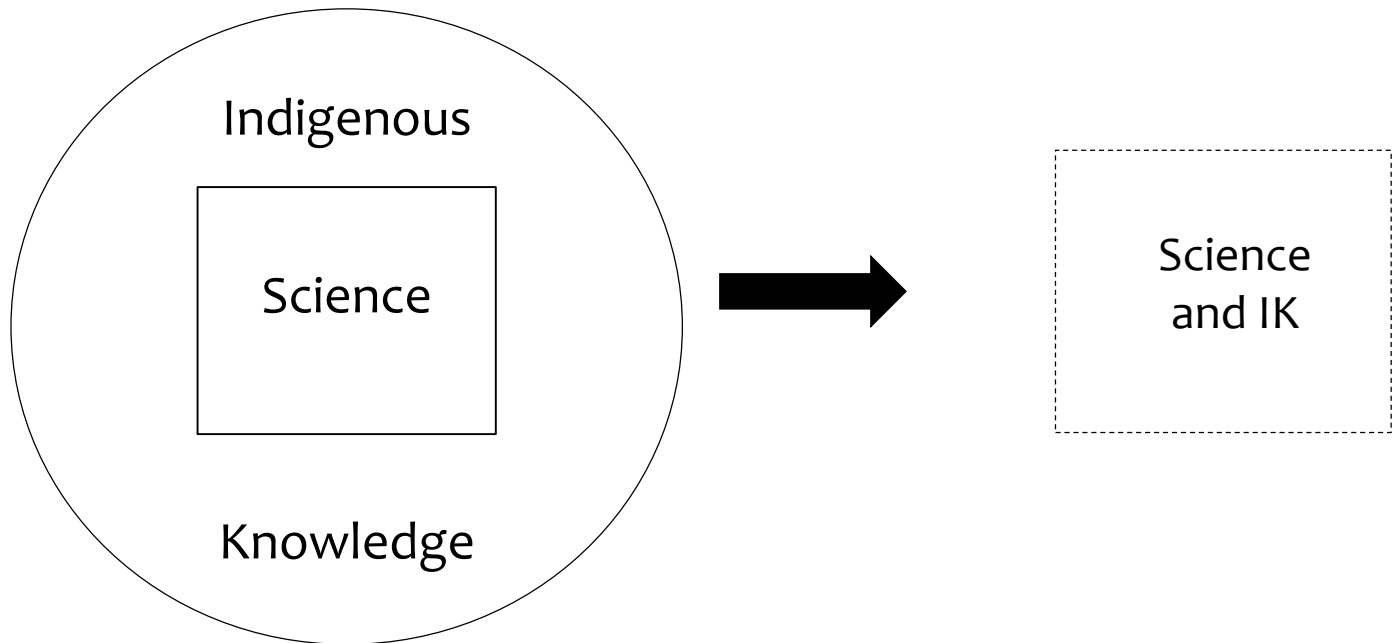


Figure 1. Dokis-Jansen, 2017.

Several challenges regarding biodiversity information were identified throughout the day. A fundamental challenge discussed is the feeling in Indigenous communities that Indigenous Knowledge is marginalized within the context of Western approaches to environmental monitoring. Indigenous knowledge tends to be more qualitative, and therefore different from the quantitative data collected in Western methods of research and monitoring. Indigenous perspectives may be misinterpreted or removed during the process of “translating” it into English and into formats that are recognizable to Western Science.

In addition to this, communities are often left with the burden of proof when there are environmental issues on their land (e.g., in the Caribou Range plans). Traditional Ecological Knowledge does not always align within the quantitative data required by regulators, which leads to challenges for Indigenous communities as they work to build cases that demonstrate environmental impact from both Western and Indigenous approaches. In addition, although engagement occurs, it often involves bringing Elders from across the province into a room and asking them to speak. Matthew Whitehead pointed out that Elders are akin to the “data” in Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and without research methodologies in place, these meetings can be fruitless. Finally, at least one participant mentioned the challenge of bringing together representatives from all of the communities across the province into one room at one time to share information for workshops such as this one.

5.3 Opportunities

As a result of these discussions, several opportunities for the data and tools developed by the ABMI to support Indigenous community initiatives were outlined. First, publicly available ABMI data has the potential to support communities in addressing the challenge of the burden of proof. Secondly, several individuals expressed interest in using both NatureLynx and WildTrax within their communities. To support the use of these tools and products, opportunities for partnerships to seek funding for implementation, and for the ABMI to provide training via webinars and in person to various community members, were discussed. In particular, the opportunity to provide training with Indigenous youth was highlighted.

6.0 Moving Forward

This workshop marks the beginning of what will hopefully be a long and continuously growing relationship between the ABMI and Indigenous Peoples. Opinions and concerns shared at the workshop will not be considered as a formal consultation or approval of planning going forward, but as a step toward developing meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities who see value in the ABMI's tools, and are interested in working together to improve biodiversity monitoring and conservation across Alberta.

Throughout the session, conversations highlighted areas where the ABMI can invest effort to support Indigenous communities. In particular, the ABMI will explore the opportunities of:

- Hosting additional in-person workshops to build relationships and provide training and information;
- Providing online training and information to Indigenous communities via webinars;
- Exploring possible partnerships with interested communities to seek funding opportunities.

Results of the workshop will be incorporated into the Needs Assessment Report, and used by the 10-year Review Steering Committee to develop a series of recommendations for the ABMI Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will use these recommendations to make decisions about ABMI operations going forward. Your feedback is invaluable in helping to shape the ABMI's next ten years of operations. Thank you.

Appendix 1 – Workshop attendees

Appendix 2 – Workshop notes

Appendix 3 – Workshop evaluation forms

Appendix 4 – Workshop presentations

Appendix 5 – Workshop information package