**Mackenzie River Basin Board: State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report**

SOAER SoW – Peer Advice Session

**A principled approach to sharing multiple knowledge systems for the SOAER Statement of Work.**

**Context**

The vision for the Mackenzie River Basin Board’s State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) is as follows:

* To uphold the intention of the Master Agreement, by providing information about the aquatic health of the basin with the goal of informing action and decision-making.
* To build on the previous efforts of the MRBB and its committees, such as the Traditional Knowledge Steering Committee and the Bilateral Water Management Agreements made between provincial and territorial member governments.
* To recognize and affirm the inherent value of diverse knowledge systems in basin health assessment, offering a platform for equitable knowledge presentation.
* To critically approach the power dynamics associated with presenting Indigenous knowledge and Western science.
* To recognize the basin as a place of meaning for people and to tell the story of that place.

**To pursue this vision, the SOAER will:**

* Pursue the use of different information presentation mechanisms beyond conventional text-based reporting, acknowledging the accessibility and informational benefits.

Be a comprehensive assessment of the “State of” the basin, rather than a repository or platform for directly uploading knowledge – emphasizing the report's role in synthesis, analysis, and presentation over information hosting or accumulation.

**Background**

The MRBB relied on a paper by Tengo et al (2017) to guide the development of the first SOAER. In the 2 years it took to develop the SOAER, the number of papers documenting different or nuanced approaches to presenting science and Indigenous Knowledge together increased significantly. The MRBB SOAER Committee discussed which resources should be used to guide the SOAER update and have recommended a principles-based approach. The SOAER Operations document includes a number of guiding principles which serve as a basis for discussion. A small sub-group was tasked with developing this component and drafting the SoW for SOAER committee and MRBB review.

Some former SOAER Committee and MRBB members have been part of co-presentation and bridging/braiding/weaving work since their involvement with the MRBB, and some current members support work that the SOAER Committee could learn from.

**Proposed Project**

Establish a small group experienced individuals to advise on a principled approach to the SOAER update.

**Description of the work**

The SOAER subgroup will identify individuals interested in supporting this discussion.

A contractor will:

* + Interview each panel member individually to solicit feedback and reflections on the development of the 2021 SOAER. Interview questions will be provided to the consultant by the SOAER Committee. Reponses will be formatted in such as way as they be kept anonymous and shared with SOAER Committee members. If there are specific follow up items identified that fall outside the scope of the contract, the sub-group will consider next steps.
	+ Organize a half day virtual session with the advisory panel and SOAER Committee members to discuss and refine applicable principles currently included in the SOAER Operations document and develop new ones if required. Examples will be documented as one way to clarify meaning and intent behind the principles.
	+ Develop a draft report that includes principles and explanatory text that will guide the SOAER update, and a summary of interview responses.

**Value**

* The SOAER update is guided by a principled approach developed by individuals with experience working with different knowledge systems and an understanding of the SOAER.
* Current SOAER committee members learn from those with experience.
* Report serves as reference material for future SOAER update discussions.