

Y2Y PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES¹

The Yellowstone to Yukon region encompasses the traditional territories and lands, reserves/reservations, and land claim settlement areas of many Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous nations have title to and/or rights and/or cultural interests within traditional territories and often have decision-making powers on land use and resource allocation.

The Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) seeks to protect and connect the region's lands and waters so that people and nature can thrive. One of the ways we do this is through engaging and supporting a variety of partners to advance the Y2Y vision on the ground, including Indigenous² governments, people, and organizations.

The purpose of this document is to guide Y2Y in building and strengthening effective and respectful working relationships with Indigenous governments, people, and organizations.

Y2Y Acknowledgments

- Y2Y recognizes and respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples across the Yellowstone to Yukon region as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to self-determination.
- Y2Y recognizes the legal and constitutional rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and in the United States, as well as the importance of the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional lands and waters.
- Y2Y acknowledges that the history of protected areas in both Canada and the United States has included rights violations, displacement, loss of access to traditional territories, and other inter-generational impacts on Indigenous Peoples.
- Y2Y recognizes the diversity of Indigenous Peoples across the Yellowstone to Yukon region, and strives to respect cultural and governance protocols in our interactions with Indigenous governments, people, and organizations.
- Y2Y understands and respects that Indigenous governments may choose to establish and manage Indigenous conservation areas (protected areas or/other designations) on their own terms, based on their specific priorities, aspirations, governance approaches, and political contexts.
- Y2Y recognizes that Indigenous Peoples' cultural and spiritual activities and practices can contribute to ecological integrity and conservation.
- Y2Y recognizes that long-standing cultural and spiritual values are associated with lands and waters, including where protected and conserved areas have been designated, and Indigenous Peoples may want to practice activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and other cultural and spiritual practices in protected and conserved areas.
- Y2Y recognizes the importance and value of Indigenous knowledge acquired by Indigenous Peoples over the course of their long relationship with the landscape.

¹ Last updated May 2019.

² The term "Indigenous" (also referred to in USA/CAN legal documents as Aboriginal and/or Indian) refers to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada, and Native Americans and Alaska Natives in the United States.

Y2Y Principles

- Y2Y aims to support Indigenous governments, people, and organizations' initiatives that are consistent with the Y2Y vision.
- Y2Y aims to engage respectfully with Indigenous governments, people, and organizations on issues that pertain to advancing the Y2Y vision while seeking to ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous views are both understood and valued (sometimes referred to as 'ethical space'³).
- Y2Y strives to engage appropriately with Indigenous governments, people, and organizations, recognizing that decision-making roles and processes vary across Indigenous Peoples.
- Y2Y seeks to communicate early and effectively with Indigenous Peoples to explore potential shared objectives and collaborative projects, and to support meaningful input and engagement in protected area and land management discussions.
- Y2Y seeks to share information, human resources, and financial capacity with Indigenous governments, people, and organizations as possible and needed to support and sustain working on collaborative projects.
- Y2Y seeks to work with Indigenous entities to apply Indigenous knowledge (including traditional ecological knowledge) that advances shared priorities. In doing so, Y2Y will seek to engage in ethical space so that both Indigenous knowledge and science (e.g., social, economic, natural, physical, and biological sciences) are valid and important contributions.

³ 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 and Practice of Reconciliation. Report and Recommendations. March 2018. <http://www.conservation2020canada.ca/ice-resources/>