



Editorial Board
Science

2 February 2023

Dear Dr. Vignieri,

On behalf of our coauthors, we are pleased to submit the manuscript Braiding Endangered Species Laws and Indigenous Rights for Meaningful Species Recovery for your consideration as a *Policy Forum* in *Science*. We, Dr. Clayton Lamb and Chief Roland Willson, co-lead the manuscript with help from other Indigenous and non-Indigenous coauthors. Herein we braid world views, ecological knowledge, policy and legal expertise to identify gaps in endangered species laws hindering wildlife recovery and the protection of Indigenous rights.

With the recent COP 15 meetings, the world has formalized the importance of Indigenous leadership in biodiversity recovery. From smaller nations like Costa Rica to large nations like Canada and Brazil, the “30 by 30” goal will only be achieved by formally including Indigenous-led conservation efforts in national conservation policy (1, 2). Yet, after several decades, endangered species laws, such as the United States Endangered Species Act of 1973 or Canada’s Species at Risk Act of 2002 have done little to include Indigenous perspectives in restoring imperiled species (3, 4).

With contributions from Indigenous and non-Indigenous coauthors, scientists and hunters, Elders and academics, we share new perspectives to guide the next generation of species recovery policy that explicitly braids endangered species recovery and Indigenous rights. We focus on three high-profile species—salmon, caribou and bison (5–7)—where recovery targets for endangered species set out by colonial governments were decoupled from the governments’ binding agreements with Indigenous peoples. We use these examples to highlight where Indigenous rights provide legal standing to propel species recovery beyond minimum viable populations to levels that once again sustain human connections and fill ecological roles (8).

With high-profile changes to legal frameworks to conserve nature—including the renegotiation of salmon management under the international Columbia River Treaty (9), and recent landmark victories in court decisions centered on the environment and Indigenous treaty rights (10)—it is a crucial time for scientists and policymakers to understand the interplay between culturally-important species and Indigenous rights.

This work has been reviewed by an Indigenous rights specialist Mr. Joshua Lam of Sage Legal, and a species at risk policy expert, Mr. Martin Olyszynski at the University of Calgary’s Faculty of Law.

Sincerely,



Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations



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