A Message from the IDA PI Panel
July 30, 2018

It’s not often that a group of diverse folks, with a varied range of backgrounds and interests, gather, and land on a commonly held commitment to advancing a regulatory initiative. But that’s exactly what the Participant Involvement Advisory Panel did!

Background

In January 2018 the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) selected a panel of 15 individuals to provide advice and guiding principles that would influence the development of the Participant Involvement (PI) requirements to support the AER’s Integrated Decision Approach (IDA).

- The selection approach and information regarding the IDA PI Advisory Panel (the Panel) members, and the Panel terms of reference, can be found here:

The Panel’s Journey

Over the course of six months the Panel met eight times, spending more than 100 hours engaging in discussion and learning from one another. Initial meetings focused on learning about one another and creating a roadmap that charted the Panel’s path to generating advice for the AER.
Panel members were selected to participate based on their individual experiences and skills; however, the intent was that Panel members were not to be advocating for, or on behalf of, the sectors that might employ them or to which they may align. Panel members worked together to break through biases, perceptions and stereotypes and to develop the necessary levels of trust to progress as a team. As one Panel member said, “we had to get uncomfortable to get comfortable”!

The Panel’s confidence grew as members started to really hear each other – and there was much to be said: “the Panel advice is a reflection of decades of not being heard.” Panel members noted that many indigenous communities and stakeholders are historically either not asked what they think, or when asked, feel ignored.

As the Panel members learned from one another and gained a broader perspective, discussions, and the subsequent advice, became much more than the scope specific to IDA PI requirements, and became about how Albertans can all work together when it comes to energy development in Alberta.

One of the Panel's early observations was that there is a significant need for interactions between the AER, industry, and indigenous communities and stakeholders. As well, it was identified that there is a fundamental role for the AER to play as an educator that helps all involved to understand how energy development works, and how indigenous communities and stakeholders can work with resource development companies and with the AER to share their concerns and interests. One of the more creative Panel members generated this illustration, to represent the interaction triangle, including the education component, as was discussed:
Every Panel session started with a smudge and a prayer that held the Panel accountable to each other, and provided a “safe space” where discussions could take place openly and with trust that all perspectives would be heard.

“We came as individuals and left as a group.” This statement from a Panel member captures the perspective of the advice the Panel generated. The Panel advice is a reflection of collective knowledge, and while there may not be consensus regarding all of the advice, all Panel members are confident in issuing the advice because it reflects a shared understanding.

Several times Panel members observed that the Panel approach to working together was “reconciliation in action” …Panel members didn’t get caught up in words or language, and instead strove to achieve a shared meaning and perspective. As was observed more than once, often the Panel members were “saying the same thing, and just using different words”. Recognizing this was fundamental to the success of the Panel.

As such, the Panel offers the AER the accompanying advice and principles. The principles are intended to guide those developing regulatory requirements if they find there is a gap in the advice or if the underlying intention of an advice statement is unclear. The advice is a body of work that it is hoped the AER considers, and that other regulators, governments and interested parties also examine when contemplating how
resource development can be progressed in a way that reflects what is important to indigenous communities and stakeholders.