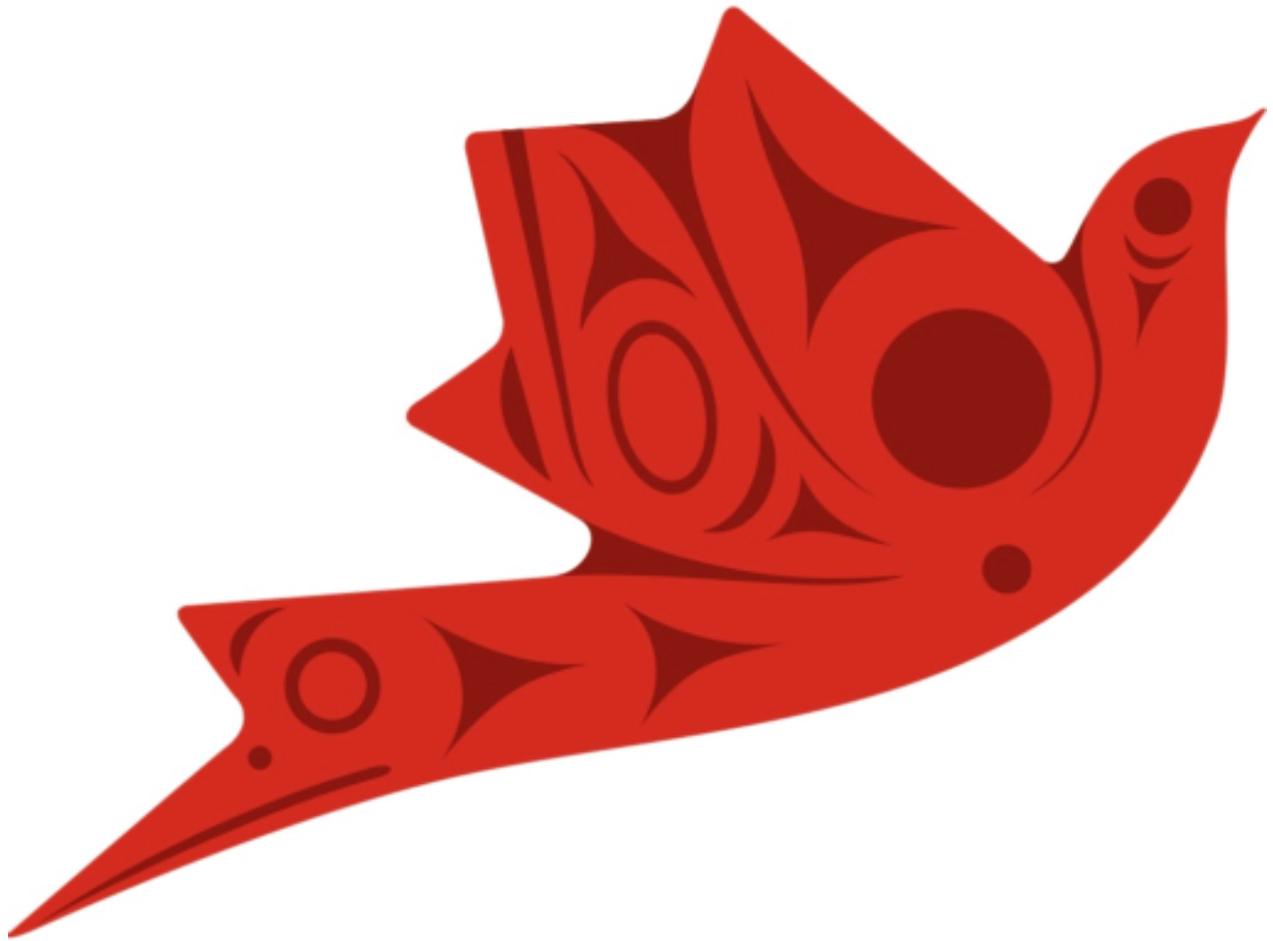


**l'Initiative
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**Indigenous
Innovation
Initiative**



Advancing Indigenous Gender Equality

A Grand Challenge for Indigenous Innovation



Advancing Indigenous Gender Equality through Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship

Indigenous people in Canada experience huge inequalities across health, social and economic opportunities. The Indigenous Innovation Initiative's work is to enable Indigenous peoples and communities to become innovators and entrepreneurs so they can identify and solve their own challenges, transform lives, drive inclusive growth and improve health.

Our Vision is to improve people's lives through Indigenous innovation.

The Indigenous Innovation Initiative was started to address challenges like these and spark community-led Indigenous innovation. Based on what we learned from the Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund (IIDF) in 2017, what we have heard from community members, and from what Grand Challenges Canada has learned by running their other programs for over 10 years, we are now ready to move to the next phase and launch our first round of seed funding for the Advancement of Indigenous Gender Equality through Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship.

Indigenous Innovation

Indigenous peoples' resilience is rooted in their deep knowledge and relationships to land, community and spirit. For Indigenous peoples and communities, social innovation is a concept that resonates within their core worldviews and values.

Innovation isn't always about creating new things. Innovation sometimes involves looking back to our old ways and bringing them forward to this new situation.

Senator Murray Sinclair, 2015, Indigenous Innovation Summit

For too long Indigenous peoples have been forced to endure prescribed systems of governance, assistance, education and economic security. The realities of extreme wealth disparity, racism, and the resulting intergenerational trauma call for restorative action. Innovation is the key to progress and its expressed purpose is to improve people's lives. Social innovation, social finance, social enterprises—all have their root in a desire to improve the more vulnerable, disadvantaged or afflicted people's lives.

In many cases it will be more difficult for an Indigenous individual to start and effectively manage a new or innovative business or organization. There are additional barriers for Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons in the entrepreneurship, business and innovation space.

Some of the common challenges they face are access to capital needed to build their business, as well as having all the knowledge or capacity needed to run it successfully and/or having the right networks to help it grow and thrive.

In developing this program, we have considered frequent business barriers, like access to capital, knowledge and networks, as well as how we can be mindful of other socio-economic barriers that Indigenous women and gender diverse people may face such as poverty, education level, discrimination, access to programs and supports, housing, single parenting, impacts and prevalence of child welfare, and violence.



On the more encouraging side, Indigenous Peoples created businesses at 9 times the rate of non-Indigenous Canadians[1]. Additionally, more than a third of Indigenous businesses created employment for others, and almost all businesses that had at least one employee, had an Indigenous employee[1]. This demonstrates the potential impact on employment rates for Indigenous peoples by supporting more Indigenous entrepreneurship.

We also know however that sole proprietorships are the most common form of business by Indigenous women entrepreneurs[1]. This will be an important aspect to explore with the program—to ensure that Indigenous women and gender diverse peoples have the specialized supports needed to establish the most appropriate and accelerative model to optimize their business needs.

Access to the financial support for Indigenous organizations and communities to kickstart innovative projects or initiatives from our program will be profound, and potentially life changing.



A Call to Action

This Grand Challenge for the Indigenous Innovation Initiative seeks bold ideas that will advance equality for Indigenous peoples across Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in urban, rural, remote and Northern regions. Approaches must be grounded in Indigenous community and/or Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and being and apply a gender lens in its considerations on equality. Indigenous women and gender diverse innovators and/or -led projects will be given priority.



Types of Projects

Projects will be given seed funding amounts of between \$100,000 to \$250,000 to support projects working to demonstrate a proof of concept. Projects should have the potential to successfully transition to scale-up in future. Applications from all sectors and industries will be considered, including but not limited to health, social, arts and fashion, technological, scientific, business, industry, food security, hospitality and tourism, education, justice, environmental and clean-tech, and others.



Solutions Should:

- Be unique: We seek proposals that are "off the beaten track," daring and clearly different from regular practice;
- Are culturally acceptable and inspire ongoing use;
- Be cost effective;
- Have a strong likelihood of achieving an ongoing impact in the community;
- Have the potential to be scalable to other Indigenous community settings; and
- Are able to be monitored, measured and evaluated.

[1] Promise and prosperity: Aboriginal Business Survey. Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB). 2016.

For more information, including how to apply, please visit IndigenousInnovate.org.