

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

Grand Challenges Canada

Enabling Indigenous Innovators to Solve Grand Challenges

Pre-budget submission to:

**The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
August 2017**

Recommendation: *We recommend that the Government of Canada fund an Indigenous Grand Challenges initiative, hosted at and powered by Grand Challenges Canada, to test and bring to scale new ideas and approaches to address persistent social and economic challenges in Indigenous communities.*

THE PROBLEM

The Government of Canada has made the renewal of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples a cornerstone of its mandate:

Because it is both the right thing to do and a certain path to economic growth, the Government will undertake to renew, nation-to-nation, the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples, one based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.

Speech from the Throne, 2017

By its own assessment, the government has, thus far, been unsuccessful in delivering on this important mandate¹. New solutions are needed to address the critical bottlenecks that have stood in the way of progress.

Innovation is recognized as being an important driver of economic, social and environmental progress and productivity and is crucial for solving complex and intractable challenges. Too often, however, innovation initiatives and initiatives are **inaccessible to or exclude Indigenous peoples**. In the spirit of reconciliation, Canada has an important opportunity to test and bring to scale new ideas and approaches to address persistent social and economic challenges in Indigenous communities by empowering communities and individuals through the **Indigenous Grand Challenges (IGC)** initiative.

¹ <http://nationalpost.com/g00/news/politics/trudeau-aides-give-liberal-government-failing-grade-on-meeting-indigenous-affairs-objectives/wcm/615244f8-ed98-4801-a49a-a6e66283448e?i10c.referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ca%2F>

EXAMPLE of INDIGENOUS INNOVATION

FIRST NATION TEENS FIND JOBS, ADRENALINE-PUMPING FUN ON YUKON MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL 'It's given them hope. It's given them pride in what they do,'

By Dave Common, CBC News, May 29, 2016

When one of Yukon's most picturesque communities went looking for economic opportunity, they found it on the mountain.



Carcross/Tagish First Nation has taken traditional hunting paths that have been around for centuries and turned them into what Outside magazine describes as the best mountain biking trail in the world.

Teens from the First Nation build, maintain and use the trails, giving them both employment and recreation in a remote area with limited options.

The trails are part of a larger push in the community to draw in tourists, who are arriving by the busload.

The First Nation has built Carcross Commons, a group of small shops geared to tourists, offering everything from high-end coffee to traditional art. As for the trails themselves, bikers ride over obstacles on the way down the mountain. Working on the trails, as well as enjoying the adrenaline-fuelled adventure of riding them, has helped teens combat social issues in the community including drug and alcohol abuse.

"It's made a remarkable change," says Carcross/Tagish First Nation Chief Andy Carvill. "It's given them hope. It's given them pride in what they do."

Drugs and alcohol took 16-year-old Jade McLoud's brother away from him a couple of years ago. He says the trail gives him purpose in life.



Jade says the teens built the trail mostly by hand, without machines.

It took years of work, including removing large rocks and overgrown trees, to develop the extensive trail system. But the effort is paying off for the young people of Carcross/Tagish First Nation, as well as the riders who come from across Canada and the U.S. to one of the best mountain bike trails they can find.

BACKGROUND

Recently, the idea of an Indigenous innovation platform has been gaining traction and has been successfully demonstrated. Building from the recommendations which emerged from the first **Indigenous Innovation Summit**, an *Indigenous Innovation Demonstration Fund* (IIDF) was launched in summer 2016. The IIDF provided grants to Indigenous organizations seeking to develop or expand their Indigenous social innovation projects and/or Indigenous social enterprises with the goal of unlocking much needed capital for these early-stage, high potential innovations. The primary goal of the IIDF was to test the idea that strategic support and funding for Indigenous innovators with big ideas could unlock and create positive change in Indigenous communities.

Despite a comparatively short application window (6 weeks over the summer in 2016), the IIDF received 71 applications from Indigenous innovators across Canada. Ten innovations were funded and almost half of the applicants were connected with resources or initiatives to help advance their ideas. The early success of this fund suggests that there is broader opportunity to launch a comprehensive approach to Indigenous innovation through an **Indigenous Grand Challenges** initiative.

Over the past year, the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada and Indigenous leaders have worked to advance and develop the IGC initiative. We have engaged and informed a range of federal political and bureaucratic stakeholders, and have conducted an extensive outreach process with Indigenous elders and leaders. We have also engaged the National Indigenous Organizations to build knowledge of and support for the IGC initiative. We are now moving towards the implementation of this important initiative by exploring potential targeted grand challenges that could be addressed.

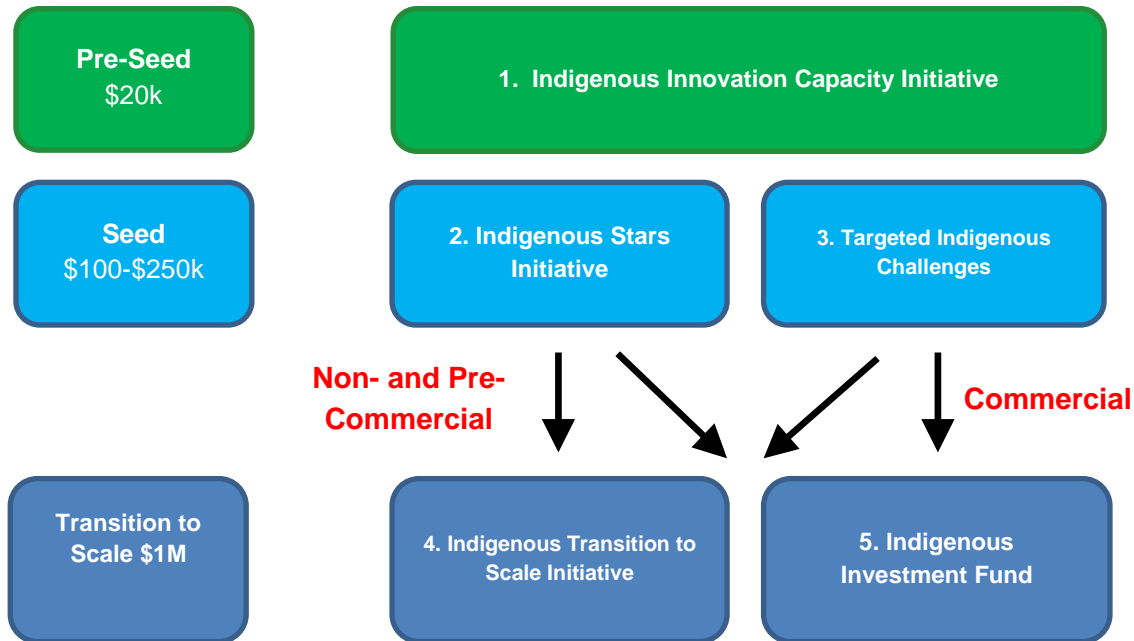
OUTCOMES

At its core, the IGC will **empower Indigenous innovation at the community level**, directly supporting the development of individual, community and enterprise level solutions to the complex and ongoing challenges faced by these communities. This grassroots driven approach fundamentally up-ends the existing problem solving dynamic; rather than solutions being imposed from the outside, transformative solutions emerge from within the community and are owned by the communities. In this way, the relationship of Indigenous people with Canada is transformed, where Indigenous people can visualize their future in Canada and are empowered to make that happen. Specific outcomes of the Indigenous Grand Challenges initiative would be:

| | Outcomes |
|--------------------|--|
| Short-Term | 1. Supporting Indigenous Innovators to solve challenges in their communities. 2. Engaging stakeholders in the non-profit, public and private sectors. |
| Medium-Term | 1. Creating a Pipeline of Transformative Indigenous Innovation. 2. Enabling Impact Investment to support and grow social enterprises. |
| Long-Term | 1. Improving community outcomes and supporting and catalyzing Indigenous innovators to solve Indigenous grand challenges. |

INITIATIVE DESIGN

Similar to GCC's current portfolio of challenges, the IGC initiative would combine specific **Targeted Challenges** in areas such as food security, clean energy, health and others, with an **open innovation platform** to support innovator-defined challenges. These challenges would have three levels of engagement:



INITIATIVE STRUCTURE

One of the most important questions in developing and delivering an outcomes-focused innovation initiative is deciding on the most effective organization to deliver the initiative. **Grand Challenges Canada (GCC)**, working with the **J. W. McConnell Family Foundation**, would serve as the delivery platform for this challenge, building on GCC's significant experience using the grand challenges approach to support transformative global health innovations.

Collectively, we are committed to a set of principles that will guide our work and which will protect the integrity of the Indigenous voice both at the strategic level and at the level of project evaluation and selection. To deliver on this commitment, GCC would create an Indigenous Grand Challenges division with the appropriate governance mechanisms, including deep engagement with and leadership by Indigenous stakeholders and innovators. This Indigenous division would be led by Indigenous leaders and would be staffed by Indigenous initiative officers.

TIMELINES and BUDGET

With over a year of design and engagement, the Indigenous Grand Challenges initiative could be delivered through **Budget 2018** and would last for five years. The initiative would be **funded at \$200M over 5 years**.