



Ms. Valerie Bradford, M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Science and Research
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G6

Dear Colleague:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, I am pleased to submit on behalf of the Government of Canada (the Government) the response to the eleventh report by the Standing Committee on Science and Research (the Committee) entitled *Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Science in Canadian Research and Policy Development* (the Report), which was presented to the House of Commons on June 19, 2024.

Indigenous ways of knowing deepen and enrich our understanding of the interconnectedness of the world in the circle of life. The Government is firmly committed to supporting Indigenous researchers and their communities. This is why Budget 2024 announced \$30 million to support Indigenous participation in research, with \$10 million each for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners. The Government thanks the Committee for sharing a commitment to Indigenous research by preparing a thought-provoking report that draws on the insights, wisdom, and lived experience of the many witnesses who provided testimony and written briefs.

The Report makes fifteen recommendations on bringing Indigenous Knowledge and science more fully into research and policy development. The Government Response groups the recommendations into three themes: (1) Weaving Indigenous Knowledge and Science with Research and Policy; (2) Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples on Research Funding; and (3) Advancing Reconciliation to Support Indigenous Knowledge and Science. The Response accepts in principle Recommendations 1–5 and 7–15. Recommendation 6 is respectfully acknowledged as initiatives are identified that support the intent through an alternative approach. As the Committee heard, this Response recognizes that a single definition cannot encompass Indigenous Knowledge, which is dynamic, place-based, and reflects the diverse worldviews of Indigenous Peoples.

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Given its role in government-wide science and research policy, Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada led the Response in close collaboration with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The Response involves numerous federal departments, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Canadian Heritage (PCH), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the Department of Justice, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), the Public Service Commission (PSC), Statistics Canada, and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). Federal agencies and organizations also provided valuable contributions, including the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the National Research Council (NRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Polar Knowledge Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).

After studying the Report, the Government Response is provided under the three themes.

1. Weaving Indigenous Knowledge and Science with Research and Policy (Report Recommendations 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13)

Seven recommendations focus on bringing Indigenous Knowledge and science more fully into research and policy development. These include Recommendation 1, on building links between researchers and communities, and Recommendations 8 and 9, on supporting Indigenous data sovereignty. Recommendation 6 focuses on mechanisms to increase Indigenous participation in policy development. Recommendations 10, 11, and 13 explore involvement in policy development through greater Indigenous recruitment, advancement, and training in the federal public service. The Government is committed to ensure Indigenous Knowledge and science plays an important role in research and policy development.

Involving Indigenous Communities on Research Projects

Recommendation 1 calls on the Government to encourage researchers to build relationships with Indigenous communities before identifying specific research projects. The Government accepts the recommendation in principle within the scope of the federal role in research. The recommendation's intent aligns with efforts to include relationship-building in federal research initiatives relevant to Indigenous communities.

CIRNAC supports Indigenous communities across Canada through the Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program to monitor climate and the impacts of climate change using Indigenous Knowledge systems and Western science. Indigenous-led projects are driven by community priorities to

collect data, build capacity, and foster reconnection to the land while generating holistic knowledge to inform adaptation.

The Regional Partnerships and Research Program supports science research, harvest, and monitoring studies, which can include the work of Indigenous organizations in conjunction with science-based monitoring programs. Ensuring researchers engage with local and Indigenous communities throughout their project, including during the development stage, is a key consideration in the selection process. The program's support of Indigenous organizations, such as during the Baffin Bay and Davis Strait Strategic Environmental Assessment, also builds skills and capacity for Indigenous leadership in knowledge engagement.

The Northern Contaminants Program conducts research and monitoring of long-range contaminants in the Canadian Arctic. The program's Call for Proposals recommends engaging Indigenous communities early and throughout the duration of a project. Scientists are encouraged to work with community leaders, Elders, hunters, and other knowledgeable individuals to engage Indigenous Knowledge in the design and conduct of the study. Community input into research and sensitive and sound researcher–community relations is important and must be clearly demonstrated in project proposals.

To further illustrate the Government's efforts, additional initiatives that promote relationships with Indigenous communities as part of research activities include:

- The Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning aims to become a hub for Indigenous scholars who are looking to join a teaching and research organization that supports innovative community-based research. Federal funding has enabled Dechinta to expand programming outside of the Dene territory to other communities in the Northwest Territories, such as the Beaufort Delta, as well as to remote regions of the Yukon, such as the Mackenzie Mountains.
- The Nunavut General Monitoring Plan provides for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on the long-term conditions of the environment, people, communities, and economy in the Nunavut Settlement Area. The Plan gathers existing eco-systemic and socio-economic monitoring data and identifies gaps where more monitoring needs to occur. Data gathering includes both Indigenous Knowledge and scientific knowledge from industry and governmental sources.
- The Canadian High Arctic Research Station provides a world-class hub for science and technology in Canada's North that complements the diverse network of research facilities across the North. The research station project received the 2023 award for Excellence in Engagement and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples by the Real Property Institute of Canada.

The federal granting agencies—NSERC, CIHR, and SSHRC—also play an active role in fostering relationships between researchers and Indigenous communities, as called for in Recommendation 1.

In 2023, NSERC announced Dr. Mark Green as a Scholar in Residence. Dr. Green is a professor of civil engineering at Queen’s University, as well as an Indigenous researcher who sits with the Turtle Clan in the Kenhtè:ke Longhouse in Tyendinaga. The position was created to ensure the unique and novel viewpoints from an Indigenous researcher perspective are considered as part of the renewal of NSERC’s programs, policies, and processes. Additionally, NSERC’s Northern Research Supplements program provides top-up funding for holders of NSERC Discovery Grants to help defray the high costs of conducting research in the North. Evaluation criteria for applications to this funding opportunity explicitly highlight the importance of building relationships with Indigenous partners.

CIHR’s Project Grant Program requires applicants to identify if their research proposal involves Indigenous Peoples and to explain how they are engaging with the Indigenous community. Reviewers evaluate this information against the level of engagement required by Chapter 9 of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS), which pertains to research involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada. In addition, CIHR’s Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research program supports strategies that fully engage Indigenous communities and traditional Indigenous Knowledge to establish a sustainable foundation for Indigenous health research. Furthermore, CIHR’s Institute of Indigenous Peoples’ Health fosters the advancement of a national health research agenda to improve and promote the health of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada.

SSHRC formed the Indigenous Advisory Circle in 2014, which includes an Indigenous Elder, Indigenous researchers drawn from the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis groups, as well as non-Indigenous researchers with in-depth experience working in partnership with Indigenous communities. A crucial component of the Advisory Circle’s work has been to craft a definition of Indigenous research. SSHRC uses this definition both to inform its own work and to serve as a reference for the research community. For example, the definition is incorporated into the *Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Partnership Grant Applications*, which helps funding applicants incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) considerations into the development of partnerships and conceptualization of research projects for SSHRC’s Partnership Grants.

Supporting Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Recommendations 8 and 9 emphasize the importance of First Nations Principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) and Indigenous

data sovereignty in research and policy development. The Government accepts Recommendations 8 and 9 in principle, which strongly align with a transformational Indigenous data initiative and efforts to incorporate OCAP® into federal activities.

The Government is committed to supporting Indigenous self-determination, including facilitating and supporting Indigenous data sovereignty. Budget 2021 provided \$81.5 million to launch the *Transformational Approach to Indigenous Data* (TAID) initiative, which will develop First Nations, Inuit, and Métis-led statistical capacity in the form of distinctions-based institutions, organizations, or functions.

The initiative funded the First Nations Information Governance Centre to advance the development and implementation of the 2020 First Nations Data Governance Strategy, which has First Nations Principles of OCAP® as a guiding principle. The initiative funded Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to develop an Inuit data strategy and the signatories of the Canada–Métis Accord to develop their data strategies to reflect their own vision of data sovereignty. The Government has also advanced Indigenous research priorities by permanently funding the First Nations Regional Health Survey and the First Nations Regional Social Survey, as well as the ‘Qanuippitaa? National Inuit Health Survey.’

The Government committed to supporting Indigenous data sovereignty through the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UN Declaration Act) Action Plan and the 2023–2026 Data Strategy for the Federal Public Service. In March 2023, the Government established the Working Group on Indigenous Data Sovereignty to accelerate the implementation of UN Declaration Act Action Plan Shared Priorities, Measure 30. The working group is building a whole-of-government approach to supporting Indigenous data sovereignty.

Statistics Canada places a high priority on collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and is committed to making data available to better inform decision-making while ensuring privacy and security. The TAID initiative provided the opportunity to further advance engagement with Indigenous partners and to support development and implementation of data governance strategies. This included co-developing best practices and governance tools through multiple projects that will be foundational to building a strong future for Indigenous data sovereignty and cohesive national statistics. The initiative also supported the continued development and delivery of training through the Indigenous Statistical Capacity Development Initiative, which supports First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders, organizations, and communities to build data and research capacities and foster statistical data literacy.

The following additional federal activities support Indigenous data sovereignty in response to Recommendations 8 and 9:

- The interdepartmental Indigenous Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (I-STEM) Cluster, which is hosted by AAFC, has been active in building relationships with Indigenous partners on data sovereignty. In 2020, the I-STEM Cluster and the First Nations Information Governance Centre initiated a collaboration to create training initiatives, such as online modules, workshops, tools, and case studies, to provide science-based federal staff with OCAP® education specific to their unique needs, including federal scientists in the natural and environmental sciences. Phase Two of the collaboration, which will be initiated in Fall 2024, will build on the relationship and work already completed to co-develop a diverse set of methods and impactful tools.
- PHAC also engages closely with the First Nations Information Governance Centre on the Public Health Data Steering Committee. PHAC is leading the development of a Public Health Data Agreement where Indigenous engagement, while respecting data sovereignty, is a critical component of modernizing public health data sharing to effectively address longstanding health inequities.
- CIRNAC's suite of climate change programs funds Indigenous-led research initiatives. The supported projects respect the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty principles, including OCAP®, by vesting resources in Indigenous communities, governments, and organizations to own, manage, and mobilize their data and research. The Northern Contaminants Program, in collaboration with the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan and Polar Knowledge Canada, has developed guidelines that include a definition of data that incorporates all ways of knowing: Western and academic, Indigenous, traditional, as well as local ways of knowing.
- In 2021, the federal granting agencies launched the *Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy*, which promotes practices aligned with Indigenous data sovereignty and cites OCAP® as an example of a guiding framework, while emphasizing that a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented. The policy recognizes that data must be managed in accordance with data management principles developed and approved by Indigenous communities, and on the basis of free, prior, and informed consent.

Increasing Indigenous Participation in Policy Development

Recommendation 6 calls on the Government to leverage existing mechanisms to enable Indigenous communities to provide policy advice and recommendations, with specific reference to the National Advisory Committee (NAC) under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA). The Government acknowledges

Recommendation 6, and the Response explores additional mechanisms that support Indigenous involvement in federal policy development.

The NAC is an advisory body required under the CEPA composed of one representative for the federal Ministers of the Environment and Health, representatives from each province and territory, and up to six representatives of aboriginal governments drawn from across Canada. The purpose of the NAC is to provide an opportunity to advise the federal Ministers of the Environment and Health on certain proposed regulations and environmental matters. CEPA defines 'aboriginal government' in a specific way, which has resulted in the Cree Nation Government and Nunatsiavut Government as the only current aboriginal government members of the NAC.

Canada will continue to leverage existing structures for co-development efforts with Indigenous partners, including three permanent bilateral mechanisms with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. In December 2022, Inuit Leadership and Canada endorsed the Inuit-Crown Co-Development Principles. In January 2024, Métis Nation Leaders and federal Cabinet Ministers agreed on a set of co-development principles. Similar efforts are underway by the Assembly of First Nations to finalize a set of co-development principles.

The Inuit Nunangat Declaration on the Inuit–Crown Partnership outlines how the federal government and Inuit leadership will work on shared priorities through the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee (ICPC). Through the ICPC, Inuit and the Crown have co-developed detailed work plans for cross-cutting shared priorities which are advanced through interdepartmental Working Groups with Inuit and federal co-leads to achieve transformative change.

The Prime Minister, the Presidents of the Métis National Council, and its Governing Members signed the Canada–Métis Nation Accord in 2017, which established the Canada–Métis Nation Permanent Bilateral Mechanism and committed to establish a process for co-development and to work together effectively to identify and advance shared priorities. During their 2023 Summit, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to work in partnership with the Métis National Council to build a more prosperous future for all Métis citizens.

By supporting Indigenous input in federal policy development, a number of other federal activities align with the spirit of Recommendation 6:

- The Government's *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* identifies broad goals and objectives for science and research, which were co-developed with Indigenous partners. Science and research occurring in and pertaining to the North and the Arctic is led, funded, and carried out by a broad network of

governments, organizations, and communities that increasingly use approaches that recognize Indigenous Knowledge as fundamental to addressing knowledge gaps and deepening an understanding of the region. The Framework builds on strategies developed by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, such as the *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy* and the *National Inuit Strategy for Research*, as well as the *Parnasimautik Consultation Report* produced by Nunavik Inuit.

- ECCC's new Indigenous Science Division is an Indigenous-led division which was created in January 2022. The mandate of the division is to more effectively bridge, braid, and weave Indigenous science into ECCC's policies and programs to inform and enhance decision-making. This includes aligning science planning with Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities; creating science and knowledge materials that aid cultural and language revitalization; and recognizing Indigenous capacity in local and regional place-based science and knowledge practices.
- Established in 2005 and funded by PHAC, six National Collaborating Centres for Public Health work together to promote the use of scientific research and other knowledge to strengthen public health practices, programs, and policies in Canada. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health aims specifically to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis public health renewal and health equity through knowledge translation and exchange. The centre supports a renewed public health system in Canada that is inclusive and respectful of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Enhancing Indigenous Recruitment, Advancement, and Training

Recommendations 10, 11, and 13 pertain to Indigenous involvement in the federal public service as a way to influence policy development. Recommendation 10 calls on the Government to enhance Indigenous hiring and recruitment. The Government accepts Recommendation 10 in principle, which aligns with government-wide efforts to provide resources and tools to support Indigenous recruitment, as well as initiatives undertaken within individual federal organizations.

The PSC provides a variety of resources and tools to support federal departments in Indigenous hiring and recruitment. The Indigenous Centre of Expertise offers a variety of information and guidance for hiring managers and staffing specialists, including the Indigenous Recruitment Toolbox and Indigenous Career Pathways tool. The toolbox provides information on establishing inclusive qualifications, creating attractive job advertisements, conducting culturally sensitive assessments, proposing appointments, and addressing challenges or barriers to Indigenous employment. The Indigenous

Career Pathways tool facilitates matching job seekers with hiring managers. The PSC has also developed a dedicated web page, entitled 'Government of Canada jobs for Indigenous people.'

As recruitment occurs at the level of departments and agencies, the following illustrates further actions to attract and retain Indigenous candidates that align with Recommendation 10:

- The Policy Analyst Recruitment and Development Program is NRCan's flagship recruitment and career development program. Since the program's Indigenous Stream was introduced in 2021, Indigenous participants have been offered targeted supports and development opportunities from application to program graduation. Through the Indigenous Stream, NRCan has been able to attract a steady flow of talented Indigenous policy analysts. NRCan also offers an Elders in Residence program, providing staff access to diverse, distinctions-based Elders who are actively engaged in their communities and in traditional practices.
- AAFC's Indigenous Science Liaison Office provides support for Indigenous-focused recruitment and retention initiatives, particularly in STEM disciplines for technical positions at departmental research centres, through a culturally appropriate approach. AAFC has undertaken a national, external, candidate-centered staffing process to recruit Indigenous candidates to its research centres.
- The CFIA has partnered with ISC since 2017 to offer professional development programs for Indigenous employees to further enhance skills and experience, while enabling networking and advancing careers. The two programs at ISC are the Indigenous Career Management for Employees Program and the Indigenous Management Development Program. Most recently, the CFIA has created new Indigenous Liaison positions in its four geographic areas (Western, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic).
- In 2023–2024, the NRC created Indigenous Engagement Advisor roles as part of a new Indigenous Strategy Engagement Team. The team provides NRC employees with advisory services related to Indigenous engagement and partnerships, and supported development of the NRC's Indigenous Engagement Strategic Plan for 2024–2029.

Recommendation 11 focuses on bolstering training requirements for public servants on Indigenous history and practices. Subject to the flexibility given to organizations to determine specific training needs, the Government accepts Recommendation 11 in principle based on the diverse and evolving training and learning resources available for federal public servants.

As the Employer for the core federal public administration, TBS enables and equips Deputy Heads in respecting commitments towards equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, reconciliation, and accessibility. Training on EDI, including Indigenous history and practices, are not prescribed by TBS, allowing Deputy Heads the flexibility to determine specific training needs or learning activities based on organizational needs and enabling employees to determine the training appropriate for their careers. As part of collective bargaining in 2023 with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the Employer and the bargaining agent committed to review available employment equity, diversity, and inclusion training courses for employees in the core public administration to identify gaps and better promote training opportunities. The findings will be leveraged to ensure Treasury Board policies and recommendations support diversity, equity, inclusion, reconciliation, and anti-racism in the workplace. An inventory of these training courses will be created, with options to address any gaps.

The Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) offers learning aligned with the Government's priorities and obligations and is committed to continue to develop learning and training products on Indigenous history, cultures, and realities. Learning products are available on the CSPS learning platform in self-paced, virtual, and in-person options, in addition to a mobile app, job aids, videos, an audio series, and regular events. The CSPS Indigenous learning curriculum is developed in collaboration with a variety of Indigenous partners and in alignment with the UN Declaration Act and Action Plan. In partnership with CIRNAC and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, TBS and the CSPS are collaborating on implementing a commitment under the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee on Inuit foundational training for public servants.

Federal organizations also provide training for public servants that support the intent of Recommendation 11. To illustrate the diversity of training available, selected examples include:

- CIRNAC provides whole-of-government support to federal officials on consultation and accommodation obligations with Indigenous groups. Elders and knowledge keepers and Indigenous representatives are integral to this training, which supports federal officials to better understand Indigenous practices and perspectives. CIRNAC also delivers training on modern treaty and self-government implementation to promote awareness across the federal government. CIRNAC and ISC have implemented a mandatory Indigenous Cultural Competency Learning Policy to ensure all employees, regardless of position, continue to build Indigenous cultural competencies by requiring 15 hours annually of culturally competent learning.
- The I-STEM Cluster has co-developed and delivered four tailored, immersive, and interactive eight-session workshops for federal STEM staff to foster in-depth intercultural competency for Indigenous and non-Indigenous federal

scientists and science professionals. These workshops, which were designed and facilitated by Indigenous STEM staff, have trained over 500 federal public servants between 2019 and 2024. AAFC also delivers ongoing Indigenous awareness sessions to its departmental staff, which trained over 1,500 staff in 2022–2023 and 2024.

- NRCan has established the Circle of Nations Indigenous Learning Centre with a mandate to create a Centre of Excellence to support cultural literacy training, knowledge exchange, and best practices for public servants to learn about Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing. The Circle of Nations programming directly supports all departmental employees in completing eight hours of annual mandatory Indigenous cultural competency training.

Recommendation 13 calls on the Government to examine experience criteria for public service positions to recognize cultural experiences in hiring and promotion decisions. The Government accepts Recommendation 13 in principle within the scope of the delegated authority for merit criteria. The PSC does not set merit criteria for public service positions, as criteria is delegated to Deputy Heads to subdelegate to the lowest authority level possible within the organization. However, the PSC provides guidance to express merit criteria in a way that reflects qualifications without creating barriers. Those responsible for hiring for public service positions can include qualifications such as experience working with Indigenous communities, on-the-land experience, or cultural experience.

2. Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples on Research Funding (Report Recommendations 2, 3, 4, 12, and 14)

The Report makes three recommendations on collaborating with Indigenous Peoples on research funding programs delivered by the federal granting agencies. Recommendations 2, 3, and 4 align with tri-agency and agency-specific measures to build relationships with Indigenous communities affected by research and ensure Indigenous research is appropriately reviewed. Recommendations 12 and 14 call for enhanced support for Indigenous research, researchers, students, and post-secondary institutions.

Ensuring Indigenous Perspectives Guide Funding Programs

The Report calls on the Government, through the federal granting agencies, to ensure research projects have established relationships with Indigenous communities (Recommendation 2) and funding programs include appropriate representation on review panels (Recommendation 3) and timelines for participation (Recommendation 4). The Government accepts these recommendations in principle and, given their related subject matter, provides a consolidated response that outlines tri-agency and agency-specific measures that support Indigenous involvement in federally funded research.

Tri-Council Measures

The federal granting agencies have established measures across the agencies that align with the intent of Recommendations 2, 3, and 4.

In collaboration with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, the granting agencies have developed the strategic plan *Setting New Directions to Support Indigenous Research and Research Training in Canada*, launched in 2020. Improving the review of Indigenous research is an important feature of the strategic plan. In October 2020, the agencies established an external group to evaluate peer review and merit review models across the agencies to ensure that processes are culturally appropriate, inclusive, and relevant for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, as well as advance proper recognition and respect for Indigenous Knowledge systems and values. The group has developed guiding principles for the appropriate review of Indigenous research.

As noted above, the TCPS is a joint policy of the three federal granting agencies that expresses the continued commitment to promote ethical conduct of research involving humans. The chapter on Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada ensures, to the extent possible, that research involving Indigenous Peoples is premised on building respectful relationships, as well as encouraging collaboration and engagement between researchers and participants. As building reciprocal, trusting relationships takes time, the guidance requires continual revision.

A substantial amount of Indigenous-focused research takes place at the college level. The Tri-agency College and Community Innovation Program is one of the largest vehicles to fund applied research at colleges, polytechnics, and CEGEPs across Canada. The program, managed by NSERC in collaboration with SSHRC and CIHR, is committed to supporting research that is led by and respectfully involves and engages First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies, or individuals.

The program's College and Community Social Innovation Fund supports partnerships that foster community innovation by increasing college capacity to work with communities. Partner eligibility for the fund includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis not-for-profit organizations. In recognition of the unique need for guidance, the agencies developed and published program guidelines for research involving Indigenous Peoples and communities. The guidelines were tailored for those whose research involves Indigenous Peoples or communities, and for those reviewing these applications. The guide emphasizes that engagement must start at the beginning of project planning and continue throughout the research process.

Agency-Specific Measures

To further demonstrate alignment with Recommendations 2, 3, and 4, the federal granting agencies have also implemented additional measures at an agency-specific level.

NSERC recognizes Indigenous research as research in any field or discipline related to the natural sciences or engineering that is conducted by, grounded in, or meaningfully engaged with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, or other Indigenous nations, communities, societies, or individuals, and their wisdom, cultures, experiences or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present. This definition, informed by the Tri-Agency Reference Group for the Appropriate Review of Indigenous Research, has been adopted in NSERC's Discovery Grants and Discovery Horizons programs. Indigenous research has been especially welcomed in NSERC's Discovery Horizons pilot, where over 20% of grants awarded in the past two years have gone to projects weaving traditional knowledge with Western science or engineering.

NSERC's Guidelines on the assessment of contributions to research, training, and mentoring recognize that support for and training in traditional knowledge or Indigenous ways of knowing, including cultural practices, are important forms of contribution to research, training, and mentoring. The agency's guidelines acknowledge Indigenous data management protocols such as OCAP® as an indicator of research quality and impact.

With the guidance of its Indigenous Advisory Circle, SSHRC created an Indigenous Research Statement of Principles and related resources to support and guide Indigenous research and talent, including Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research. These guidelines specify to reviewers that community involvement and the co-creation of knowledge, as appropriate, are considered essential. The guidelines set out that Indigenous research incorporating Indigenous Knowledge systems are recognized as a scholarly contribution, and that Indigenous research must respect relevant community research protocols and current goals and should be characterized by a deep level of collaboration and ethical engagement. SSHRC relies on a community of merit reviewers with experience and expertise in Indigenous research to judge the extent to which the guidelines may be applied to a particular research proposal or program of study or work. To support greater involvement of Indigenous partner organizations, SSHRC developed a new category of funding eligibility for Indigenous not-for-profit organizations.

At CIHR, the Peer Review Committee in Indigenous Health Research reviews applications with a central focus on carrying out ethical and culturally informed research involving Indigenous Peoples, with the intent to promote health through research that is consistent with Indigenous values and traditions, responds to Indigenous priorities, is pursued in appropriate partnership and collaboration with

Indigenous communities, and follows Chapter 9 of the TCPS. The committee reviews applications using the full range of relevant disciplinary methodologies, with an emphasis on the integration of advanced health research methods with community-based approaches, multi-sectoral partnership models, participatory action research, and Indigenous methodologies.

A significant portion of the Indigenous Health Research committee is composed of reviewers with living experience, knowledge, and/or expertise. Reviewers provide their written reviews within a mentorship lens. All applications are discussed at the committee meeting to allow for the development of an explicit mentoring approach to enable all promising Indigenous health research to continue to evolve. CIHR is committed to ensuring that its investment in Indigenous health research reaches a minimum of 4.6% of CIHR's Grants and Awards annual budget, in proportion with Canada's Indigenous populations in 2016. This target has been exceeded in recent years.

In addition to the granting agencies, Polar Knowledge Canada strategizes with Indigenous organizations and researchers to design and implement Indigenous-responsive calls and funding application review processes. Funding criteria for each new proposal is actively evaluated with the aim of facilitating relational-based, as opposed to transactional, outcomes by supporting meaningful Indigenous engagement and collaboration founded on mutual learning and reconciliation principles. Polar Knowledge Canada also engages with systems change considerations across the research funding process to foster meaningful engagement with Indigenous partners in its Northern and Arctic research mandates.

Investing in Indigenous Students, Researchers, and Research

This Response has outlined a number of granting agency measures relevant to the Committee's recommendation to enhance supports for Indigenous students and researchers (Recommendation 12). These include establishing Indigenous advisory bodies, developing the tri-agency strategic plan *Setting New Directions to Support Indigenous Research and Research Training in Canada*, and adopting Indigenous-focused policies, guidelines, and processes to guide program application and review processes. The Government accepts Recommendation 12 in principle and the Response highlights further efforts from the federal granting agencies, in addition to those in previous sections, to support Indigenous students and researchers.

One key measure is support provided specifically for Indigenous graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. For example, educational institutions may recommend applications from Indigenous student researchers to the doctoral awards competition beyond the institution's application quota. These additional awards to promising Indigenous students help address barriers to accessing higher education. To further strengthen support for Indigenous Master's students,

in September 2022, NSERC and SSHRC were pleased to launch the Indigenous Scholars Awards and Supplements Pilot Initiative. This initiative provides financial support to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis master's students in social science, humanities, natural science, and engineering programs.

In addition, NSERC offers several initiatives that support participation of Indigenous scientists and engineers in the research ecosystem, fostering Indigenous research leadership and self-determination. For example, Indigenous Student Ambassadors grants support Indigenous doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows in visits to schools and Indigenous communities to encourage greater Indigenous participation in science and engineering. NSERC has capitalized on the talent pipeline created by this program and hired three Ambassador alumni in 2024–2025.

Another notable NSERC initiative is PromoScience, launched in 2000, which is a national initiative to support science outreach groups and organizations. The initiative's goal is to increase science literacy among young Canadians and boost the number of students who pursue studies and careers in STEM fields. In 2016, NSERC started targeting groups that are under-represented in scientific and engineering careers, including Indigenous Peoples. PromoScience also supports activities that encourage Indigenous undergraduate students to pursue graduate studies in natural sciences and engineering.

SSHRC has established a range of measures to support Indigenous graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. For applicants who identify their proposal as advancing Indigenous research, SSHRC ensures that external assessors, either Indigenous or non-Indigenous, have experience and expertise in Indigenous research. Instructions have been added for members of SSHRC's doctoral and postdoctoral adjudication committees to take into account special circumstances that may have had an impact on the academic or career paths of Indigenous applicants. SSHRC also makes concerted efforts to include experts in Indigenous research in doctoral and postdoctoral adjudication committees. SSHRC has also established a master's scholarships for Indigenous students as part of the Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security program administered in collaboration with the Department of National Defence.

To support Indigenous students and researchers, CIHR invests in the Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research Program, which supports Recommendation 12 by taking a comprehensive approach to capacity building in Indigenous health research. The network of centres supported by this program advance strategies that fully engage Indigenous communities and traditional Indigenous Knowledges to establish a sustainable foundation for Indigenous health research.

Recommendation 14 calls on the Government, through the CFI, to invest in Indigenous research and post-secondary institutions. The Government accepts Recommendation 14 in principle on the basis of long-term investments by the CFI in Indigenous research, as well as forthcoming investments from the recently established Northern Fund.

The CFI has a long-standing commitment to supporting Indigenous research and post-secondary educational institutions through investments in research infrastructure. Since 2012, CFI has invested nearly \$79 million in 203 infrastructure awards to support Indigenous or related research through the Innovation Fund, College Fund, and John R. Evans Leadership Fund. Recognizing the unique challenges Indigenous and Northern researchers face, such as high administrative costs and limited institutional capacity, the CFI launched the Northern Fund in January 2024. This fund, developed after extensive consultations with Indigenous communities across the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut, aims to invest \$25 million over five years in research infrastructure led by Northern institutions and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

The Northern Fund's objectives include investing in research infrastructure to enable Northern-led research, enhancing research capacity in Northern regions, and generating social, cultural, health, environmental, or economic benefits for Northern communities. To address the unique barriers faced by these communities, the Northern Fund covers 50% of eligible project costs and includes administrative expenses and operational maintenance funding through the Infrastructure Operating Fund. The Fund is accepting applications until 2028, with funds distributed until fully committed by the final round of funding decisions expected in March 2029. Moving forward, the CFI will publicly announce awardees, finalize agreements, and monitor progress towards achieving the program's objectives, ensuring continued support and advancement of Indigenous and Northern research.

3. Advancing Reconciliation to Support Indigenous Knowledge and Science

(Report Recommendations 5, 7, and 15)

The Report recognizes that advancing Canada's journey towards reconciliation will also provide a strong foundation to support Indigenous Knowledge and science. Recognizing the need to continue to move forward on the path to reconciliation, this section describes the Government's progress on recommendations with a wider scope than Indigenous Knowledge and science, including key action plans and reports (Recommendation 5), self-determination and co-management (Recommendation 7), and Indigenous language revitalization (Recommendation 15).

Implementing Initiatives on Reconciliation

Recommendation 5 calls on the Government to accelerate the implementation of the UN Declaration Act Action Plan, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, and the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Recognizing the pace of implementation must allow for robust collaboration, the Government accepts Recommendation 5 in principle based on current progress and achievements to date.

UN Declaration Act Action Plan

The *UN Declaration Act* creates a lasting, whole-of-government framework to advance implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the federal level. On June 23, 2023, the Government released the UN Declaration Act Action Plan. The Action Plan was developed in consultation and cooperation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis from across Canada. The Action Plan includes 181 measures that provide a roadmap to achieve the objectives of the UN Declaration and advance transformative, lasting change for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The Action Plan is ambitious, and Canada understands the urgent need to advance its implementation. At the same time, Canada also recognizes that implementation must be sequenced and sustained over several years, given the need to work in sustainable and meaningful partnership with Indigenous Peoples in respect of all the measures set out in the Action Plan.

Action Plan Measures address a wide range of priorities, including measures required by the Act to address violence and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, promote understanding through human rights education, ensure accountability with respect to implementation of the UN Declaration, and monitor the implementation of the Action Plan. Annual progress reports are the primary tool for transparently and accountably monitoring progress on the Action Plan. The third annual progress report, tabled on June 19, 2024, was the first report following the release of the Action Plan and the first to report on whole-of-government progress in relation to the implementation of the 181 Action Plan measures. The process for development of this report will continue to help strengthen a consistent whole-of-government approach, as progress continues to be made to develop an overarching performance measurement framework, advance discussions with partners to better define progress, and enhance collaboration between departments.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Government has made significant strides towards the full implementation of the 94 Calls to Action put forth by the TRC, marking a pivotal step in advancing reconciliation efforts. As of this writing, over 85% of the 76 federally led or shared

Calls to Action are well underway, implemented, or completed. A recent milestone was reached on July 2, 2024, with the enactment of the *National Council for Reconciliation Act*. The overarching goal of all 94 Calls to Action remains focused on reducing disparities between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians, thereby fostering socio-economic equity. CIRNAC continues to play a central role in coordinating public reporting on the progress of the Calls to Action. For further details and ongoing updates, the Government's progress in fulfilling the TRC Calls to Action can be found on the dedicated reporting platform: [Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#).

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

The Government is committed to accelerating MMIWG's 231 Calls for Justice. In 2021, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People National Action Plan was released. This included the Federal Pathway, which is the federal government's contribution toward the National Action Plan. The federal government reports on its commitments through the Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report, published every year on June 3. On June 3, 2024, the federal government signaled that it is working toward approximately three quarters of the Calls for Justice within federal jurisdiction. The 2023–2024 Federal Pathway Annual Progress Report captures updates on nearly 100 federal initiatives.

Supporting Self-Determination for Indigenous Communities

Recommendation 7 calls on the Government to explore opportunities to support self-determination and co-management agreements for Indigenous communities. The Government accepts Recommendation 7 in principle, which aligns with efforts to advance Indigenous Peoples' inherent right to self-determination, as well as efforts to support co-management approaches to lands and resources.

The Government supports multiple initiatives that return control and decision-making over the use of lands back to Indigenous communities. For example, through the ISC Reserve Land and Environment Management Program, First Nations take on greater responsibility over their reserve lands by undertaking *Indian Act* land management activities on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Services. For communities seeking to manage their reserve lands outside of the *Indian Act*, the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management enables First Nations to opt out of 44 sections of the *Indian Act* to reclaim jurisdiction and full law-making authority over their reserve lands through a community-developed land code. Budget 2023 provided \$30 million over five years to enhance the Reserve Land and Environment Management Program. It also provided \$187 million over five years and \$34.5 million ongoing to support the renewal and enhancement of the operational funding formula for First Nations Land Management to ensure its continued growth and success.

The Land Use Planning Initiative supports First Nations to develop Land Use Plans as a tool which can guide community decision-making on land use, prevent incompatible land uses, and protect conservation areas, cultural resources, and traditional grounds. ISC works closely with Indigenous partners, the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association, and the First Nations Land Management Resource Centre, which provides communities with training and technical supports. Both the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association and the First Nations Land Management Resource Centre have taken over service delivery of the Land Use Planning Initiative to First Nations. The Indigenous Centre for Cumulative Effects is an ISC-funded, Indigenous-led organization whose mission is to create networks and develop and share knowledge to empower community-based approaches to culturally relevant cumulative effects assessment, monitoring, and management to support Indigenous well-being and decision-making.

By supporting Indigenous self-determination and co-management approaches, additional federal activities align with the intent of Recommendation 7:

- DFO is committed to working in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples to support self-determination and the meaningful implementation of Indigenous fishing rights (UN Declaration Act Action Plan, Measure 36), as well as continuing to pursue fisheries-related collaborative governance opportunities (UN Declaration Act Action Plan, Measure 37). Long-standing programs, such as the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy, Aboriginal Aquatic Resource and Oceans Management, and the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, provide more than \$60 million in annual and ongoing contributions to Indigenous communities and organizations as they advance fisheries and aquatic resource management objectives.
 - Through vehicles such as Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination tables, Canada and First Nations are exploring ways to collaboratively advance shared interests. Rights Reconciliation Agreements provide for the establishment of collaborative fisheries management structures and processes between DFO and the Treaty Nations to discuss, share information, and provide advice and recommendations to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Canadian Coast Guard, and Chiefs on various fisheries issues of interest.
 - Formal collaborative arrangements may be developed to support the governance and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) under DFO's authority. Currently, 6 of the 14 *Oceans Act* MPAs are managed collaboratively. Collaborative management Memorandum of Understandings provide a venue for Indigenous partners and DFO to provide advice to decision-makers on an MPA's management while highlighting the importance of working together in the spirit of reconciliation.

- Indigenous Guardians funding is provided by ECCC's Canadian Wildlife Service to provide Indigenous Peoples with a greater opportunity to exercise responsibility in stewardship of their traditional lands, waters, and ice. Funding for Guardians initiatives supports Indigenous rights and responsibilities in protecting and conserving ecosystems, developing and maintaining sustainable economies, and continuing the profound connections between natural landscapes and Indigenous cultures. From 2018–2022, funding for the Pilot supported over 80 Indigenous-led Guardians initiatives across Canada.

Revitalizing Indigenous Languages and Geographic Place Names

Recommendation 15 calls on the Government to continue to support Indigenous language revitalization and the use of Indigenous geographic place names in federal documents. The Government accepts Recommendation 15 in principle, which aligns with ongoing Indigenous language revitalization initiatives as well as efforts to promote the usage of Indigenous geographic place names.

In accordance with the *Indigenous Languages Act*, the Government is committed to supporting Indigenous People's efforts to reclaim, revitalize, maintain, and strengthen their Indigenous languages, which includes establishing measures to facilitate the provision of adequate, sustainable, and long-term funding. PCH, through the Indigenous Languages Component of the Indigenous Languages Program, provides funding for community-driven activities, including language instruction and the development of language resources.

Since 2019, the Government has provided historic investments to support Indigenous language revitalization initiatives. Over 2019–2020 to 2028–2029, the federal government will have provided over \$1 billion from 2019–2020 to 2028–2029 in support of Indigenous languages revitalization, which also includes \$167.2 million in annual ongoing funding. This funding has supported an unprecedented increase in community-driven activities and programming, from 301 projects funded in 2019–2020 to 1,033 in 2022–2023.

The Act is implemented in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, including via a Joint Implementation Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, and PCH. Significant progress has been made in implementing the Act. PCH has introduced new distinction-based funding models that move away from departmental-led, annual, and proposal-based funding. The new models promote increased Indigenous autonomy and control over funding decisions, enable long-term and sustainable funding agreements that support multi-year strategies, and provide greater responsiveness to the distinct language priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

The new funding models represent a concrete way the Government is increasing its support for Indigenous-led, self-determined approaches for Indigenous languages. Currently, First Nations Regional Delivery Organizations entirely manage the program in four regions. PCH continues to work with partners to increase the number of First Nations organizations that undertake this role and have also introduced a long-term, ongoing funding stream to support First Nation communities. Funding now directly supports the four Inuit Land Claim Organizations, the Governing Members of the Métis National Council, and the Manitoba Métis Federation to develop and implement long-term strategies tailored to meet their unique regional and local needs.

Recommendation 15 also calls on the Government to support the increased usage of Indigenous geographic place names. The Government recognizes and supports adoption of traditional Indigenous place names in an effort to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages. NRCan plays a leadership role on the Geographical Names Board of Canada, the federal-provincial-territorial coordinating body for names of places and geographical features. NRCan has appointed three Indigenous Advisors to the Board to provide guidance and expertise to naming authorities. The department has released a dataset of over 20,000 official place names with origins in over 70 Indigenous languages and has worked to ensure the names are recorded using technical standards that properly encode and represent Indigenous language characters. NRCan continues to work with Indigenous Nations to identify additional traditional names for official recognition and use in federal maps and documents.

In 2023–2024, the National Research Council contributed to the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages through the Canadian Indigenous Languages Technology Project. This initiative saw 24 Indigenous language communities in Canada adopt new methodologies and software, enhancing educational resources and community engagement. In addition, 19 communities outside of Canada have also adopted these tools.

Conclusion

Indigenous ways of knowing draw on generations of experience and observation to inform actions and obligations in the present and shape our responses to future opportunities and challenges. Guided by and in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, the Government of Canada is committed to continuing to strengthen Indigenous Knowledge and science. The Committee's Report provides a valuable perspective on the diverse ways to advance these important commitments. The Government accepts in principle Recommendations 1–5 and 7–15, while respectfully acknowledging Recommendation 6.

The Government thanks the Committee for bringing forward the *Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Science in Canadian Research and Policy Development* report, the latest in an ongoing effort to provide thoughtful advice

on science and research policy in Canada. The Government looks forward to engaging with the Committee, the research community, and the public on ways to support Indigenous Knowledge and science and strengthen its role in research and policy development. Indigenous ways of knowing hold great potential to guide us into the future as we seek to build vibrant and sustainable communities, foster harmonious relationships, and meet the challenges and opportunities facing Canada and Canadians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Champagne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.