

Innu Child & Family Services Pathways Development (2022-26)

Funding Proposal

May 2022



Submitted by the Innu Round Table Secretariat (the "IRT") in support of the Innu Nation, Labrador, Spring 2022

A proposal to Indigenous Services Canada, further to "Capacity-building funding for An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families"

See: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1612285531713/1612285570871>

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1. Introduction and Project Phases

The Innu are working toward the development of an Innu law in child and family services, delivering services by Innu, for Innu, based on Innu values. This is transformational change.

Looking at the big picture, the first 5 years that have built towards this dramatic change have already occurred. Before 2017, there was no funding for any Innu led Innu child and family services. The only employee of an Innu organization in child and family services was a non-Innu person recently placed on secondment.

In the past five years, the Innu have changed things significantly. A key part of the difference that has already occurred so far is the growth of Innu service providers. And while we are still working within the confines of provincial laws, those laws have slightly changed, and federal minimum standards now play a role as well. Moreover, an agreement between Innu and CSSD modifies how the provincial system interacts with the Innu services. More specifically, in these last 5 years Innu have:

- **Created an Innu Prevention Agency.** The Agency was created by both communities in 2019 and housed within the IRT Secretariat, serving both communities. Its services include prevention programming and the Innu Representatives who act as advocates for Innu children in interaction with Children, Seniors and Social Development ("CSSD"). The Innu Representatives program makes use of complementary developments in provincial and federal law. The Agency has the potential to grow under the Innu law as well.
- **Opened 4 Innu placement facilities, with a fifth underway.** The fifth facility will complete the original plan to have 5 staffed facilities. The staffed facilities have succeeded in significantly limiting the extent to which any Innu children are placed outside of the Innu communities. While not all children previously placed in care outside the Innu communities have returned, any new out-of-community placements are now exceedingly rare and limited to cases in which specialized services are being accessed. The Innu placement facilities are run by corporations within each Innu community, Shushepeshipan Ishpitentamun Mitshuap in Sheshatshiu (established by SIFN) and Mushuau EPH and Group Home Inc. in Natuashish (established by MIFN).
- **Updated the relationship between Innu and provincial services.** A new Protocol Agreement is in place with CSSD, promoting a more open and collaborative working environment. Information is shared openly. Innu services are building capacity, gaining new insight into the current system and a more in-depth understanding of the service population. While there are still disagreements, both sides report that the Protocol Agreement has brought about day-to-day improvements felt on the ground.
- **Built a plan for reconciliation in child welfare.** The Inquiry has now recently begun. By promoting truth-telling and building understanding, it will fulfil important functions in helping to prepare everyone for the larger changes that need to take place next.

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- **Started preliminary work on an Innu law.** In the last two years, key background work has taken place. An Innu Summit on child and family services was held in early 2020 that finished with the Innu Nation executive providing a mandate for creation of a comprehensive Innu law in child and family services. Innu Nation assigned the IRT Secretariat as technical lead for that work, and asked it to secure further funding. Following that, a committee was formed. The committee has been laying the foundation by digging up and analysing written sources to inform the Innu law; discussing foundational values and principles; creating a program for Elder interviews; and starting to review recorded Elder interviews. Covid limited the work on the Innu law that could be achieved in the last two years. Nevertheless, a strong start is in place, building an Innu system from the ground up.

This proposal looks ahead to the next 5 years. The fifth year is targeted as a negotiation year for a Coordination Agreement and is accordingly not included within this funding proposal (with the understanding that negotiations have separate funding). Thus, this proposal sets out a plan for continued capacity building over the upcoming 4 years towards the creation of an Innu law, operating as part of an Innu system, with steps in place to be prepared for its implementation.

2. Selection Criteria

The Labrador Innu plan to exercise jurisdiction within the next four years. A key moment in exercising our jurisdiction will be the passage of our own law by the Innu Nation, which we plan to occur within that four-year time frame. However coming into force would be delayed (at least for most of the law) pending Coordination Agreements negotiations. Coordination agreement negotiations as to resourcing and transitions of responsibilities will inform the transition.

The IRT Secretariat was assigned by the Innu Nation as the technical lead for this project. It has a strong record of financial and administrative management and accountability. Plans and financial documents are reviewed by its Board of Directors and presented regularly to partners at trilateral IRT meetings.

The IRT Secretariat brings strong experience in this sector through:

- Delivering Prevention services to both communities, for the last five years
- Delivering Innu Representative services to both communities, for the last three years
- Leading the development of plans for the Placement facilities, and with the execution of those plans, over the last five years
- Chairing the IRT trilateral process including child & family services committee meetings for the last ten years

If there are any questions about meeting the selection criteria, please follow up with us.

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3. Project Elements

As a capacity-building proposal, this proposal is really aimed at two interacting goals:

(1) the *development of the Innu law*, and

(2) the *preparation required to implement this law through effective Innu services*. We note that additional preparation for implementation and transition planning will occur during the Coordination Agreement negotiations but is not part of this proposal.

There are a number of different elements that will be required in the next four years, set out below:

a. Committee

In the past two years, a distinct Innu Law Committee met to work on the Innu law in child & family services. Most meetings were online; two meetings were able to occur in person.

This year, the Innu Law Committee's functions will be absorbed into a broader Innu CFS Pathways Committee that will provide guidance on all Innu child & family services work. This will allow a closer integration between services development and law development. The plan is for this committee is to meet monthly. It will also function as the Innu caucus of the trilateral IRT Innu CFS Committee. The Committee includes:

- The CFS Agency Director of IRT Secretariat
- The Innu Law Coordinator
- A representative from Innu Nation
- The Executive Director of IRT Secretariat
- The Social Health Director of SIFN
- The Health Director of MIFN
- The Senior Sheshatshiu Innu Representative for CFS
- The Senior Mushuau Innu Representative for CFS
- The Executive Director of Shushepeshipan Ishpitentamun Mitshuap (established by SIFN)
- The Executive Director of Mushuau EPH and Group Home Inc. (established by MIFN)

In addition, technical support is provided by Olthuis Kleer and Townshend LLP ("OKT") and by social worker/consultant Michelle Hawco.

While the Innu CFS Pathways Committee will have responsibilities that mix current services and development of the Innu law, only the Innu law costs will be attributable to this proposal. We anticipate that about 50% of the work will relate to the Innu law, and have budgeted accordingly.

b. Interviews

Plans are already underway to interview Tshenut (Elders), in order to gain further insight into the Innu practices and principles. Additionally, older recorded interviews are now also being

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reviewed and assessed. At its heart, this work draws out the threads that make up the unwritten Innu laws that will be modified and codified through the current work on a written law.

This work was planned out in previous years but could not get underway due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other limitations. It will continue in earnest under this proposal, with a focus on completion over the first project phase (years 1-2). The work will be carried out primarily by Innu consultants and the Innu Law Coordinator, with the support and involvement of the Committee.

OKT's articling student Jolene Ashini will assist with legal analysis of the interviews. Jolene is not only the first Innu Nation member to graduate from law school, she has also pursued specialized training in techniques to draw out existing Indigenous laws and their underlying principles from traditional and other sources. She is within the first cohort to graduate from University of Victoria's unique joint degree in both common law and Indigenous law (JD/JID). Jolene's involvement brings a truly rare and valuable training and experience to bear on the interview material and written material analysis (see below).

Tshenut will be approached as a priority over the coming 6 months, with further work on interview analysis to follow. After Tshenut are approached as a priority, other key knowledge holders within Innu Nation may also be contacted.

c. Written research

The Committee and OKT have already started a compilation and analysis of written sources that were created by Innu and that shed light on Innu values and principles relevant to child and family services.

Other written research components will occur over the course of this proposal, concentrated in the first project phase (i.e., years 1 and 2):

- Further compilation and analysis of Innu and Innu-relevant sources
- Compilation and analysis of non-Innu or wider sources relevant to lessons learned, best practices with a focus on Indigenous models, and policy options

Jolene Ashini (OKT) will be leading the Innu traditional law portion of this analysis. Social work researchers and other researchers may also be used for the sector-based best practices research.

Connection will also be made with academic sources to research lessons learned on other indigenous models of child welfare practice that have been developed and reviewed in the last number of years.

d. Community Input & Feedback

The inquiry will be a major opportunity to hear directly from community members. Listening to what they have to say will be an important information-gathering component.

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After the inquiry, the Committee will take stock of what was heard and identify where it needs to focus in on more specific questions, or hear more from certain groups. This will occur during the second phase of this proposal, (i.e., years 2-3). At a minimum, meetings will take place with the various Innu staff groups in the different organizations involved in child and family services directly or indirectly (within: IRT, SIM, MEGH, SIFN, MIFN). Other sessions may be required to seek feedback on particular issues or with particular groups, such as youth, parents, foster parents etc.

Once an initial system concept or outline is prepared, feedback will be sought on the model (year 2-3). A draft law, once available, will also be shared for further feedback (anticipated year 3-4).

External feedback may also be sought out as the Committee and Innu leadership determine.

e. Leadership Roles

Opportunities to brief and seek direction from Innu leadership will take place initially through the IRT meeting schedule. This will provide an opportunity for an internal meeting about 3 times per year, plus an opportunity to update external government partners.

Following the inquiry, we expect several in-depth leadership sessions will be required, including:

- Year 2 or 3: Review of initial system concept / outline; instructions for drafting
- Year 3 or 4: Review of draft law and related detailed elements
- Year 4: Passage of the law

Innu leadership will also be involved in other key decisions, and in ongoing communications and community outreach.

f. Data Initiative

The major report by Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (the “IFSD”) titled *Measuring to Thrive* (2020) emphasized that Indigenous child and family wellbeing is multi-faceted and linked to community wellbeing as well. If we are to deliver services successfully, and if we are to be able to measure our successes and see our shortcomings during implementation, we need ongoing in-depth knowledge of how Innu people are doing. We also want to track certain system activities.

To do this we need to start now in planning a comprehensive data initiative. This is complex. We conducted preliminary consultations in early 2022, which confirmed that currently data on Innu wellbeing is compartmentalized, incomplete, inconsistent, and largely outside Innu hands.

We agree with national leaders in the sector such as the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and IFSD that an evidence-based approach is important. This data initiative is not an easy component but we consider it essential to full and accountable implementation.

Significant new data gathering will be required, along with new ways to implement Innu-based management, control, possession, analysis and use of the data. Getting there will require a multi-

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layered approach. We plan to develop a collaboration between an Innu staff level (building capacity), professional consultant support, and a partnership with at least one major institution such as MUN and/or IFSD.

During the first 1.5-year phase of this proposal (i.e., during the inquiry), the data work will focus on planning and getting the relationships in place. This phase will include a data workshop to bring people together and discuss the current Innu situation with wellbeing data and start to explore potential new approaches. The first phase will involve hiring or transitioning key staff, retaining a consultant, and securing partners. It will also include scoping work and perhaps initial work on project design.

In the post-inquiry phase (project years 2-3), data system design will be completed, with the necessary IT purchases and contracts in place, and the necessary authorities to transition existing Innu data.

We hope the data initiative will be ready to move into baseline data gathering and analysis in approximately year 3. Depending on how things progress, it is possible that baseline work may need to push to year 4. At a minimum, we recognize the priority of completing baseline work before implementation begins in earnest.

Nevertheless we must recognize that “baseline” is a somewhat misleading term to an extent, given that transitional work has taken place over the past 5 years already as indicated in the Introduction above. There is no way to wind back the clock. But some retrospective work may be required. It is possible that the inquiry may be able to assist with some of that retrospective data-gathering or analysis. Protocol Agreement terms also may help to retrieve earlier data.

g. Human Resource Capacity Building – Professional Development and Training

Without a skilled Innu workforce to implement it, an Innu law would just be words on paper.

An education and training initiative is thus a key part of our child and family services program development and capacity building. We plan to continue an initiative we have started with Memorial University of Newfoundland (“MUN”). This initiative focuses on making post-secondary educational opportunities in child & family services *accessible* and *relevant* to the Innu.

This project would not pay for any educational costs, other than targeted staff training. When it comes to any education leading to a degree, diploma or certificate, we will continue to rely on post-secondary institutions and the financial supports in place through those institutions as well as federally and provincially.

Rather, this project would pay for unique coordination and social support costs to enable Innu to pursue those qualifications specifically in the child & family sector. This project would also continue to support Innu efforts to adapt those programs to Innu culture and realities.

MUN is looking at creating two new programs: an Innu-specific stream for earning a Bachelor of Social Work, and an Indigenous Child and Youth Care program, to become available at the newly designated Labrador campus. The Innu BSW would lead to more Innu social workers with

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recognized degrees, and may also provide for other credentials for partial completion. Child and Youth Care is aimed at people who would work in placement facilities. Currently, the Innu placement facilities have pursued individualized training. An accessible Child and Youth Care program could replace some of that with credential-based education, for some workers, enhancing staff qualifications at the Innu placement facilities.

This piece started in the past year or so through the Community Well-Being and Justice Initiatives (the "CWJI") funding and is underway; it requires funding to continue building capacity. In the CWJI-funded phase, an Innu BSW Advisory Group was formed with Innu and MUN representatives. During the next phase a Steering Committee model is recommended that will connect to the overall Innu CFS Pathways Committee.

Two positions are necessary at this stage to support this work, as well as continuation of consultant support to facilitate the processes required, and plan a face to face two day planning meeting.

1. One position will be student outreach coordination, who will work with the Innu and MUN to streamline the registration process for Innu interested in social work, provide student support, help with translation, and provide orientation and training for students and staff involved in the Innu Bachelor of Social Work or Indigenous Child and Youth Care program.
2. A second position will be an Innu- MUN liaison who will work closely with MUN representatives on the development of the curriculum. This is critical to ensuring the Innu history and context is integrated into the curriculum for the Innu BSW program. This position will work collaboratively with the MUN Graduate Assistant, a part time position that has been approved to be funded by the MUN school of social work.

These positions and the human resource capacity building initiative will support:

- the formation of an Innu BSW program, along with the potential for credentials associated with partial completion of that program;
- the MUN Labrador Campus' Northern and Indigenous Child and Youth Care program currently under development.
- and training goals for learning and development for Innu Agency employees.

h. Implementation Planning – Service Model

In reaching out to early adopters of C-92, we have heard feedback that to have an effective and efficient negotiation process at the Coordination Agreement stage, it is important to first have a clear sense of not just *what* the law will be, but also *how* it gets delivered. This close attention to the question of "how" is sometimes called a service model.

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We plan to work on our service model in year 4, after the core system design and elements of the law have taken shape. By that time, drafts of the the law will be underway if not yet formally passed.

We consider the development of a clear service model to be important to plan our needs for implementation including staffing, program planning and overall preparedness.

In addition to preparing us for implementation, we believe this will also assist in our readiness for negotiations, planned for year 5 (beyond the scope of this proposal). It will assist in our ability to communicate what we need in terms of transition planning, resources, and coordination during implementation.

i. Communications

The creation of Innu Law and the ongoing development of an Innu Child and Family Services Agency is transformative for the Innu communities. It is important that regular communications are happening with community members and other stakeholders. Plans will be made to develop a website, and other communication strategies as a way to engage community members and keep them up to date on the progress of the agency and aware of developing programs and services that are available to them in both communities.

j. Core Support

The Innu Law Coordinator is a key member of the Innu Law development team and will continue to coordinate all aspects of the Innu Law development and support tasks related to the Innu law work as assigned by the Committee or by the Agency Director.

The Agency Director of Prevention will oversee the Coordinator and the work on Innu Law development. Her salary is already covered through the Prevention budget so does not form part of this proposal.

The OKT legal team will provide legal and strategic advice, legal research and analysis, drafting/editing, and other technical assistance as required. As noted above, this includes Jolene Ashini, the first Innu law graduate, who has specialized training that is directly relevant to this work. It also includes OKT partner Judith Rae, who has a law degree and MSW, and has worked with the Innu for the past 13 years.

IRTS consultant Michelle Hawco, and experienced social work professional, will support coordination, development and planning activities based upon the priorities established by the Innu committee and Agency Director.

Other consultants may be required for additional technical support in the areas of data (information management/information technology) and financial planning/costing for implementation. Part time administrative support will be provided internally.

4. Workplan

Components:	Phase 1: Inquiry & Information-Gathering Year 1 – 2022-23 Year 2 – 2023-24 (in part)	Phase 2: Law-Building Year 2 – 2023-24 (in part) Year 3 – 2024-25	Phase 3: Passage Year 4 – 2025-26
Committee (50% of Innu CFS Pathways Committee time and costs for Innu law work)	Meeting monthly to oversee the work, provide regular direction, and assign responsibilities	Continuing to meet as required to ensure priorities are set and work continues on timely basis	Continuing to meet as required to ensure priorities are set and work continues on timely basis
Interviews	New Tshenut (Elder) interviews completed; Innu Law Coordinator Joyce Poker is overseeing this work Review of old recordings of Tshenut interviews; Innu Law Coordinator is responsible for conducting/overseeing this work Analysis of both of the above: Jolene Ashini, OKT	Results of the research will be assessed by the Committee and incorporated into the law development as they determine	--

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Written Research	Jolene Ashini (OKT) will conduct further analysis of Innu-created written sources (this analysis began in 2020-2022 but requires further trained analysis) Jolene Ashini (OKT) will conduct further identification and analysis of other relevant written research sources, e.g Innu stories, anthropological sources, etc.	Results of the Innu traditional law research will be assessed by the Committee and incorporated into the law development as they determine. Additional “best practices” research may occur on a targeted basis as needed, as directed by the Committee.	Additional “best practices” research may occur on a targeted basis as needed, as directed by the Committee.
Community input & feedback	Committee will ensure public messages are circulated within the Innu communities about the work on the Innu law. The inquiry will provide the opportunity to hear from community members on their experience with the child welfare system over the last 50 years.	After the inquiry, the Committee will take stock of what was heard and identify where it needs to do further outreach to discuss more specific questions. At a minimum, meetings will take place with the various Innu staff groups in the different organizations involved in child and family services directly or indirectly (within: IRT, SIM, MEGH, SIFN, MIFN). Other sessions may be required as needed. Once an initial system concept or outline is prepared, feedback will be sought on the model.	Community review and feedback on drafts of the law Ensuring people are informed of next steps before, during and after passage of the law

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Leadership Roles	Approve committee structure Set overall direction Assist with communications and messaging	Review of outline; give instructions for drafting Approve key decisions (see Education & Training; and see Data Initiative) Assist with communications and messaging	Review of draft law; give feedback/directions Passage of the law Assist with communications and messaging
Data Initiative	Planning: An Innu data workshop may be used to bring people together and discuss the current Innu situation with child/family wellbeing data and start to explore potential new approaches. Relationship-building: Hiring or transitioning key staff, retaining a consultant, and scoping out and securing partners. Scoping: Initial work on project scope and design.	Complete data system design, with Committee & Leadership approval Carry out necessary IT purchases and put any additional contracts in place Obtain necessary authorities to transition existing Innu data Gathering of additional baseline data if possible Obtain historical data where possible	Complete baseline data gathering & analysis Prepare for transition to Innu law
Education & Training Initiative	Advisory Committee (2021-22) to transition into a steering committee that reports to the	Formal agreement with MUN put into place	Continuation of previous phase

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	main Innu CFS Pathways Committee Hiring of two positions to support the curriculum development and student outreach (working alongside the graduate student hired by MUN) Carry out tasks based on committee decisions in order to prepare for intake of Innu students	Communication with community members Assist students to register for MUN courses/programs related to child & family services	Plan for transition to Innu law
Service Model	--	--	Once draft law is available and key decisions have been made: prepare a Service Model that outlines how operations will work. This will assist with staffing estimates, program planning, costing, and overall preparedness for negotiations and implementation.
Communications	Innu Nation will lead initial communications	Continued communications	Continued communications

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	From there, IRTS will develop a communications strategy to keep community members updated External partners will mainly be updated through IRT CFS Committee meetings; further communications can be considered as needed		
Core Support (Staff, Legal, Consultant, Technical)	Innu Law Coordinator continues in place at IRTS Agency Director continues in place at IRTS (separately funded through Prevention) OKT legal and technical support, including specialized research & traditional law legal analysis Consultant support with social work experience: Hawco Consulting See also above re Data Initiative	Continued; adapt as needed	Continued; adapt as needed

All timelines and other project elements are subject to change according to the directions of Innu Nation, and other circumstances that may require adaptation. This process must be dynamic and responsive. IRT Secretariat will update ISC as required.

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5. Budget

Please see attached proposed budget.