

# ADVANCING AN INNOVATION STRATEGY FOR THE INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

Backgrounder and Charter Partner Invitation



**LUMINARY**

Advancing Indigenous Innovation for Economic Transformation, Employment and Wellbeing

 IndigenousWorks

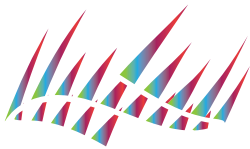
# Advancing an Innovation Strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector

This project has been made possible with the support of our Funding Partners.

Presented by



With the support of



## LUMINARY

Advancing Indigenous Innovation for Economic Transformation, Employment and Wellbeing



# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 4  |
| Advancing an Innovation Strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Sector             | 5  |
| Gaps and Opportunities Our Strategy Will Address   | 5  |
| 1. Under-representation and Baseline   | 5  |
| 2. Engagement Gap: Indigenous Businesses and Post Secondary Research Communities                 | 6  |
| 3. Indigenous/Corporate Engagement Gap   | 6  |
| 4. Lack of Cohesion and Sector Organization  | 6  |
| 5. Talent Pool and Alignment of Skills and Training  | 6  |
| 6. Culture of Innovation and Systems   | 7  |
| 7. Growing Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Service Lines and Leveraging Indigenous Branding | 7  |
| 8. Industry Infrastructure   | 7  |
| 9. Access to Capital Issues  | 8  |
| Increasing Knowledge Capital Through Co-Design   | 8  |
| Anticipated Outcomes of the Project  | 8  |
| Top-Level Budget   | 9  |
| Leveraging Existing Complementary Work and Knowledge   | 10 |
| Role of Luminary Agriculture Charter Members   | 10 |
| Potential Roles for Charter Members  | 10 |
| Signing the Luminary Agriculture Charter   | 11 |
| About Indigenous Works   | 12 |
| Contact Indigenous Works' Luminary Agriculture Project   | 13 |



## Introduction

You may already be familiar with ‘Luminary’ which is the name that Indigenous Works has given its new six-year initiative to design and implement an Indigenous innovation strategy and plan leading to economic transformation, employment, and wellbeing. The planning phase is from March - December 2021 followed by a five-year strategy and business plan 2022-2027.

In the forthcoming Luminary Dialogue we will be working with our 140+ partners to co-design a strategy to grow Indigenous-led research collaborations and increase innovation. Our goal is to close the research gap between Indigenous business and community economic priorities and post-secondary research institutions. In addition, Luminary has attracted funding to do two other projects which will also be starting up in parallel early in 2021:

(i) Advancing an Innovation Strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food sector, and; (ii) Growing and Advancing Indigenous Student Research Talent.

This document provides background information and an invitation to be part of the Luminary Agriculture Project. You may have already signed onto the Luminary Charter. Existing Luminary Project Partners who would like additional information about the Agriculture Project and would like to participate in this dialogue focusing on co-creating an innovation strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food sector should notify us of their interest. The instructions for signing the Luminary Agriculture Charter are provided towards the end of this document.

Your Invitation

**2020 CHARTER PARTNERS’  
PLANNING INITIATIVE TO ADVANCE  
INDIGENOUS INNOVATION FOR  
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

Growing Increased Cooperation and Collaboration  
among Indigenous Businesses and Communities, University  
and College Researchers and Research Agencies.

Luminary will benefit from Indigenous Works’ established track record and reputation of the past 22 years operating as a national Indigenous NGO with the mandate to increase Indigenous engagement in the Canadian economy. Indigenous Works will provide management expertise and administrative support to Luminary.

Indigenous Works is an ISO-certified organization with a focus on Indigenous employment, partnership development, and now also working to increase Indigenous capacity to leverage research funds, build research enterprises and capacities, and use research as a catalyst to innovation, employment, economic growth, and wellbeing.

## Advancing an Innovation Strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Sector

In the current Covid environment, issues of food security and food sovereignty have been raised as matters of high importance among Indigenous communities and businesses. Engagement in the modern commercial side of the agriculture and agri-food sector is still somewhat nascent for Indigenous people though there is a long history of agricultural activity and robust traditional economies. Our Luminary Agriculture project will focus on the role of research and innovation as the catalyst to new employment, business growth, and increased wellbeing for those engaged in this sector.

The Charter partners who sign up to the Luminary Agriculture project will commit to taking part in a national Dialogue to co-design a 5-year innovation strategy for the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector with a focus on food sovereignty, jobs, and business growth. Together, we will map the current state of the sector, and create a new profile document which offers a truer and more robust description about Indigenous engagement in the agriculture and agri-food sector, both now and how it could look in the future. Our Dialogue will identify ways of increasing: (i) collaborations between post-secondary researchers and Indigenous businesses; (ii) research knowledge mobilizations and new agriculture and agri-food product/service innovations; (iii) employment and business development. It will also document the ways that Indigenous communities and businesses are currently innovating in the sector. It will explore new value-creation models, examine new social innovations, and innovation for wellbeing, all in the context of agriculture and agri-food.

The project is transformative because it will reset the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector on a stronger foundation of Indigenous research and innovation. Currently, there is an engagement gap between the Indigenous business and the research communities which is hindering Indigenous advancements and innovations in the sector.

## Our Strategy will Address Gaps and Opportunities

Our project offers a way for non-Indigenous businesses and institutions that have interests, expertise, and knowledge in the agriculture and agri-food sector to engage with the Indigenous community in a methodical way, to increase Indigenous learning about current and future product/market opportunities, and to identify plans and projects by which Indigenous communities can leverage these opportunities to advance their participation in the sector.

### 1. Under-Representation and Baseline

The Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector lacks the baseline and documentation needed to advance development, planning, and strategy formation. Luminary partners see opportunities to engage with the Indigenous community, but the Indigenous players and influencers in this sector remain largely hidden because of the lack of documentation which explains which businesses and organizations are engaged and what and how they contribute. The sector lacks a quantitative and qualitative description and a thorough mapping of the organizations and their activities within this ecosystem.



## 2. Indigenous/Corporate Engagement Gap

There is also an engagement gap between non-Indigenous agriculture and agri-food businesses and Indigenous businesses involved in this sector. The current engagement gap is captured in Indigenous Works' 2017 survey of national companies and the finding that '85% of corporate Canada is disengaged with no credible plans to work with Indigenous people, businesses, and communities' leaving Indigenous companies with a lack of connections and entry points to the non-Indigenous businesses and organizations in this sector.

## 3. Engagement Gap: Indigenous Businesses and Post-Secondary Research Communities

There is an engagement gap between Indigenous businesses/communities and the research community. We want to identify the research ecosystem changes needed to improve this situation. We also need tools for communities and businesses to identify their own research needs, and a better organization of the network of researchers that Indigenous communities and businesses can call on to help solve their research problems.

## 4. Lack of Cohesion and Sector Organization

In general, the groups and organizations that do have a vested interest to grow the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector in alignment with Indigenous goals are loosely knit and there are only informal relationships between and among them. The further development of the sector and the adoption of an innovation agenda will depend upon better improved coordination of the people and organizations that make up the ecosystem. Indigenous businesses need to be able to know where they can get assistance and which organizations do what. New systems are needed to increase performance of the ecosystem.

## 5. Talent Pool and Alignment of Skills and Training

The agriculture and agri-food system accounts for 6.7% of Canada's GDP or \$111.9 billion and employs approximately 2.3 million people. Of those employed in the industry, the agricultural (farm) population was 592,575 people of which 15,765 individuals (2.7%) self identified as Indigenous persons.

Now and post-Covid it is imperative that Indigenous businesses embrace a culture of innovation equipping themselves with the skills needed to innovate new branded product/service lines and sell into national and global markets they are not yet reaching. The adoption of a culture and strategies for innovation are a way for Indigenous businesses to achieve new levels of resiliency so that they are better able to respond to market changes which are opening and closing at extraordinary speeds due to changing demands, materials shortages, and supply chain interruptions, all of which have become more pronounced during Covid. There are also new opportunities to be gained by building on current Indigenous perspectives of innovation and their application to goals concerning food sovereignty and food security.



## 6. Culture of Innovation and Systems

The conversation about the definition of innovation and how it applies in the context of Indigenous communities is one that we intend to have in the Luminary Agriculture Dialogue. Indigenous people have a long history as innovators. However, in the way that innovation is measured in the business context, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses in Canada fall behind in 'commercial' innovation. Every year, the Global Innovation Index (GII) created by Cornell University, INSEAD and the World Intellectual Property Organization ranks the innovation performance of nearly 130 economies around the world. In the 2019 GII study, Canada ranked 17 out of 100 on the Global Innovation Index. Switzerland, Sweden, and USA ranked 1 to 3, respectively. But what would Canada's placement be if we were just looking at Indigenous businesses? Probably significantly lower, more like the rankings of some emerging countries such as The Republic of Malawi, which scored 118. The conditions describing the lack of innovation in Malawi are similar to the conditions Indigenous people in Canada are experiencing. There are many barriers to commercial innovation.

- Poor or under-developed science and innovation culture.
- Colleges and universities have in the past by-passed Indigenous people and communities in efforts to identify their own priorities and conduct their own 'Indigenous research'.
- Indigenous people and businesses have had few opportunities to understand and explore the value of research to innovate their own businesses and economies.
- There are critical engagement gaps between the research and Indigenous communities. The collaborations and cooperation needed with the research community are not yet in place to cultivate community-led research agendas.

- There are no systems in place to assist Indigenous businesses to identify the researchers that have the expertise needed for their research issues.
- Indigenous businesses engaged in the Agriculture and Agri-food sector lack the organization and administrative hubs to effectively launch and network collective research strategies. They lack the infrastructure and systems to effectively mount open-innovation systems.

## 7. Growing Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Sector Lines and Leveraging Indigenous Branding

Indigenous ability to improve their competitiveness and productivity depends on adopting both the culture of innovation and acquiring the organizational and management skills needed to grow innovation acumen as part of their normal business operations. Businesses need to become more resilient or they will be unable to compete.

Growth of Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food branded products and services have potential for global markets. Indigenous branding can also help to grow awareness of Canadian brands by virtue of a lead product line. Think of the way in which the application and brand of a laser engraved polar bear trademark initially helped establish a unique niche for Canadian (Northwest Territories-mined) diamonds in a busy global diamond marketplace.

## 8. Industry Infrastructure

The Luminary Dialogue will explore the infrastructure enhancements needed by the Indigenous agriculture sector to better grow and encourage Indigenous-led research collaborations, increase Indigenous business innovations, and grow innovation for wellbeing. We will co-design the features of an infrastructure hub that could provide the leadership, sense of identity, as well as the governance and management systems and mechanisms needed to create a more effective research and innovation ecosystem for the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector. The systems' enhancements could include being able to match business research needs with researchers, track sector developments, and act as a 'knowledge holder' for new research.

The 12-month project will consist of four main phases following start-up including **Phase 1** - Comprehensive Mapping to Build a New Profile of the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Sector; **Phase 2** - Recruit Additional Charter Members; **Phase 3** - Hold Luminary Sector Discussions and; **Phase 4** - Produce an Indigenous Innovations Strategy for the Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-food Sector. Parts of these phases will be undertaken concurrently.





## 9. Access to Capital Issues

Luminary will add new perspectives and research to these issues as it pertains to an Innovation Strategy for the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector by exploring new sources of capital that are not currently being leveraged. We are speaking of the alignment of a sectoral innovation strategy with 'Impact Investments'. Working with Rally Investments, these specialists in Impact Investments will conduct the incremental research needed to create a capital vehicle(s) to advance food sovereignty for Indigenous communities across Canada. We will explore this capital market, develop investment options, and develop/disseminate two white papers to educate prospective impact investors, and test their interest in future Indigenous agriculture and agri-food business growth including plant protein-based product/service business lines and others.

## Increasing Knowledge Capital Through Co-Design

The Indigenous Innovation strategy will be built over the course of the coming year by engaging partners from the Indigenous, non-Indigenous agriculture and research communities who will discuss the many issues which will need to be addressed as part of innovation co-development. Getting varied perspectives from representatives of each of these groups is an important aspect of co-design. The Luminary agriculture and agri-food dialogue we will hold will result in the identification of solutions to the engagement gaps mentioned above.

Dialogue participants will also weigh in on how best to leverage the many opportunities that exist for the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector and how to best create the conditions for increased innovation.

## Anticipated Outcomes of the Project

The project will provide a significant contribution to our current knowledge about the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector. We will conduct a comprehensive mapping leading to the completion of a new Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector Profile which will enhance non-Indigenous businesses and organizations' abilities to engage with Indigenous organizations participating in this sector. Our Profile will include a report about the current systems and networks needed to enhance the research ecosystem to better enable Indigenous research knowledge dissemination and mobilization.

The Profile will also contribute to an understanding of the Indigenous sector's labour, skills, and access to talent priorities by: (i) defining the skills requirements that Indigenous agriculture and agri-food businesses need to innovate new Indigenous branded product and service lines, and; (ii) providing an inventory and a preliminary curriculum of Indigenous innovation skills needed to grow new agriculture and agri-food product and service lines, such as those focusing on plant protein opportunities; (iii) documenting the systems needed to impart those skills; (iv) identifying the systems and skills needed for post-secondary research organizations and Indigenous organizations to engage with one another for the purpose of building more research collaborations to explore new research; (v) documenting the skills inventories, curriculum, and systems needed to grow and impart the engagement skills needed to increase such collaborations.

The project outcomes will also include a 5-year Indigenous Innovation Strategy in agriculture and agri-food sector with a focus on food sovereignty, product/service opportunities, jobs, and business growth.

Our Indigenous agriculture and agri-food strategy will include the development of a new Indigenous innovation model which brings together traditional Indigenous ways of innovation with western concepts of innovation. The model will have the benefit of being co-designed. It will address fundamental questions such as what innovation really means in the Indigenous context, and how Indigenous culture and outlook can contribute toward product/service branding in the sector? How can we learn from and leverage Indigenous principles and characteristics of innovation which are inherent to Indigenous peoples and their traditional knowledge of agriculture and agri-food? There are opportunities to grow Indigenous agriculture and agri-food brands which build the dimensions of Canada's own current brand. This has great potential for global markets. As part of the project outcomes, we will also document up to 25 concrete examples of new product/market innovations which could be developed for the





plant protein market and other areas. A further outcome will be the completion of 10 case studies of Indigenous organizations currently engaged in research collaborations who are providing proof of concept that these future product/market developments could be achieved.

Currently the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector lacks a coordinating vision. We have suggested that food sovereignty could be a lightning rod to develop this vision. Creating more dialogue and research about food sovereignty and what it means for Indigenous people will go a long way toward inspiring a greater sense of sectoral community, help build networks, and pull more players toward common goals. Identifying the goals and opportunities for new product/market lines will be a major part of the outcomes of our five-year innovation strategy.

This project will address a core issue facing Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector businesses and organizations who lack the capital to grow new product/service lines. Opening new sources of capital via impact investment streams will be explored. As a further project outcome, we will work with Rally Impact Investors to develop a Market Research Study to understand the impact investment landscape for the intersection of agriculture and agri-food, food security, plant protein and other opportunities, and the Indigenous economy. The market research study we conduct with Rally will be disseminated in two white papers providing opportunities for a layered approach to educating key stakeholders. This will include a high-level presentation of the impact investing landscape, investors, and opportunities, exploring questions such as: (i) what type of capital is

needed and on what terms; (ii) who is currently supplying capital and which investors are not at the table; and (iii) what are the strengths and gaps with respect to capital structuring and acquisition skill sets?

Some of the outcomes of the strategy we develop will be more difficult to measure. Indigenous Works has held discussions about this with Statistics Canada and they have committed to helping us build a framework by which to measure the potential impacts of the five-year innovation strategy we will be developing as part of the Luminary initiative.

## Top-Level Budget

This is a 13-month project with a budget of about \$490,410. We have confirmed \$245,205 from Protein Industries Canada and \$100,000 from our main industry partner Nutrien. The balance of \$123,406 has been provided by the federal department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's AgriDiversity Program.

As mentioned, Statistics Canada has signed on as a Luminary partner and it has stated a willingness to develop a framework by which to assess the impacts of an Innovation strategy. Also, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada has a standing research MOU with Stats Canada and we will leverage that to request economic data from Stats Canada to help us build the Indigenous sector profile.

We will also leverage Mitacs funding to hire grad students to assist with the research and delivery of the project. This is not included in the project budget.



## Leveraging Existing Complementary Work and Knowledge

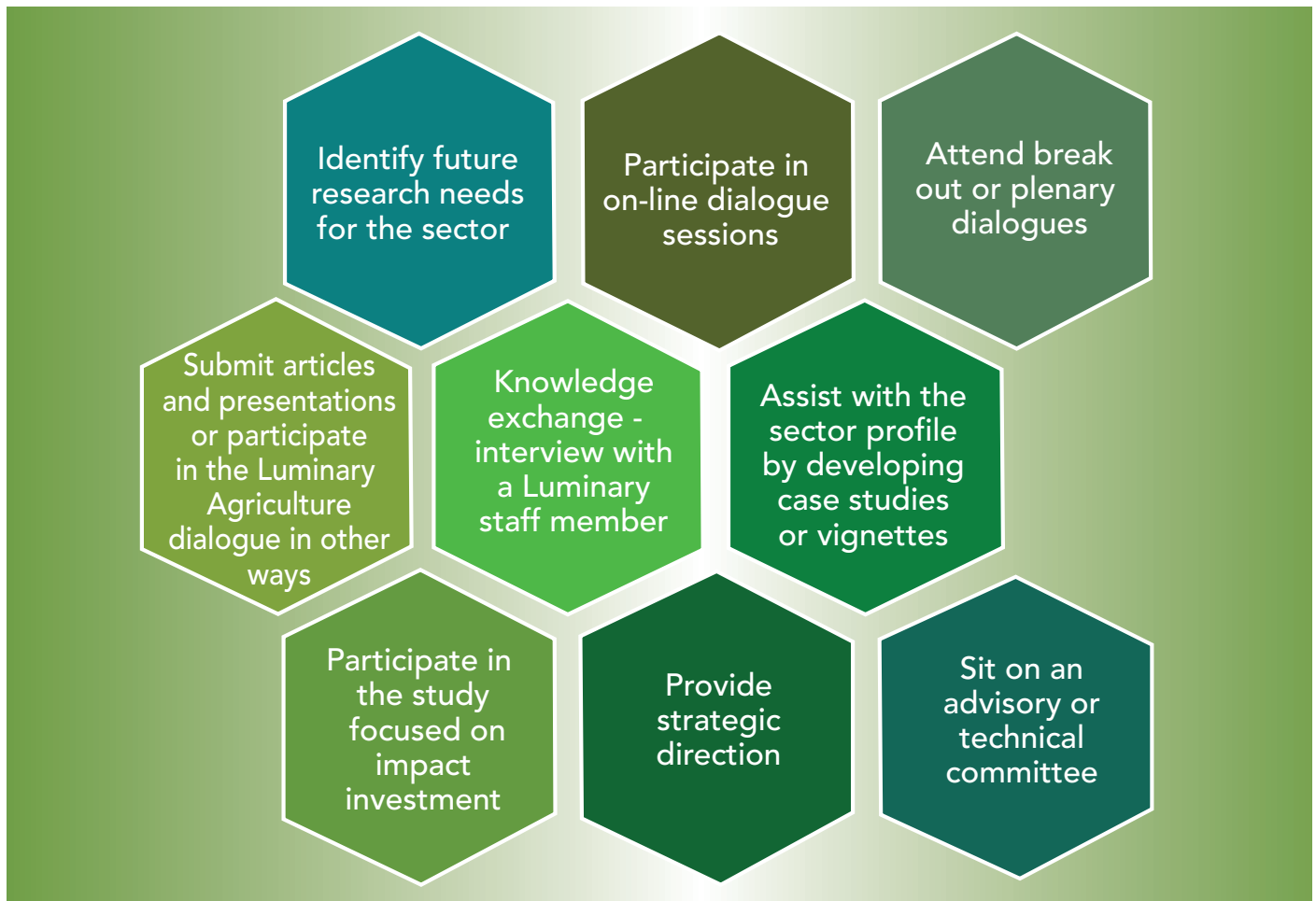
We have done a preliminary scan of the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector. Much more needs to be done to create a more robust profile of the sector. The profile document will describe a wide spectrum of Indigenous commercial agriculture and agri-food businesses as well as community enterprises which have a focus on traditional agricultural activities for cultural and wellbeing goals.

We have developed a cross sectional list of organizations and businesses that are doing great work in the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector. We will work with our contacts at the universities and colleges, the federal department of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, provincial and territorial departments responsible for this

sector, contacts provided by research funders Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and Canadian Institutes of Health Research as well as those identified by universities' and colleges' R&D offices and contacts offered by Protein Industries Canada to identify the current scientific researchers that are working in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

## Role of Luminary Agriculture Charter Members

Once you or your organization commit to signing the Luminary Agriculture Charter, you will have an opportunity to take part in the Luminary Dialogue. You will be invited to participate in different breakout or plenary sessions according to your interests and availability. You may also choose to play other roles in the project as described here.



## Signing the Luminary Agriculture Charter

As a Signatory to the Luminary Agriculture Charter, I agree to participate in the planning Dialogue to co-develop a 5-year innovation strategy for the Indigenous agriculture and agri-food sector, as follows:

- Provide advice, ideas, and information in a timely way.
- Showcase our support and commitment to this planning initiative.
- Identify ways of enhancing this initiative.
- Provide input on a process to articulate the issues which will drive the different lines of inquiry leading to the strategy for Indigenous Innovation.
- Engage in thoughtful and respectful exchange pooling information, ideas, and materials relevant to this planning initiative.
- Participate in various governance opportunities for this planning initiative including advisory or technical committees and taking part in focus groups.
- Identify points of contact and commit to regular attendance at meetings, planning sessions, adhere to timelines, etc.
- Provide a copy of my company's or organization's logo for use in communications and marketing about this Planning Initiative.

|                |                       |       |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------|
| _____          | _____                 | _____ |
| Name and Title | Email (print clearly) | Date  |
| _____          | _____                 | _____ |
| Name and Title | Email (print clearly) | Date  |

Sign, scan and forward this page to the attention of Micheline Bélanger micheline@chelsea-group.net

**NOTE:** Please add names as needed for multiple participants from the same institution.

- Yes, also send me information about "Luminary", Indigenous Works' new six-year initiative to design and implement an Indigenous innovation strategy and plan leading to economic transformation, employment, and wellbeing.





## About Indigenous Works

Indigenous Works, through its Luminary initiative is the project proponent, and a national award-winning Indigenous not-for-profit organization that has attained ISO 9001 quality management certification. We were founded in 1998 as one of the recommendations of the 1996 Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples with a mandate to increase the engagement of Indigenous people in the Canadian economy. Indigenous Works is governed by an Indigenous Board of Directors with representation from private sector, Indigenous economic development corporations and independent businesses and organizations. Our Indigenous non-profit business is supported by organizations that access our memberships, services, and products. We leverage public and private sector funding for research and special projects to advance our mandate.

Formerly the 'Aboriginal Human Resource Council', Indigenous Works spent the last 22 years learning about the complex landscape which characterizes the working relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, businesses, and organizations. During its first ten years Indigenous Works ran multi-million-dollar employment projects which resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of Indigenous people working in the trades. In 2007 we refocused our organization on the role of Indigenous workplace inclusion, looking at the ways that companies develop recruitment, advancement, and retention strategies. We pioneered the development of workplace inclusion metrics based on the 'Inclusion Continuum', our seven-stage proprietary model which is used to measure and benchmark companies' efforts to achieve more inclusive workplaces along each of seven sequential stages. We rebranded in 2016 as Indigenous Works. Two years ago, we led a cross-country consultation with

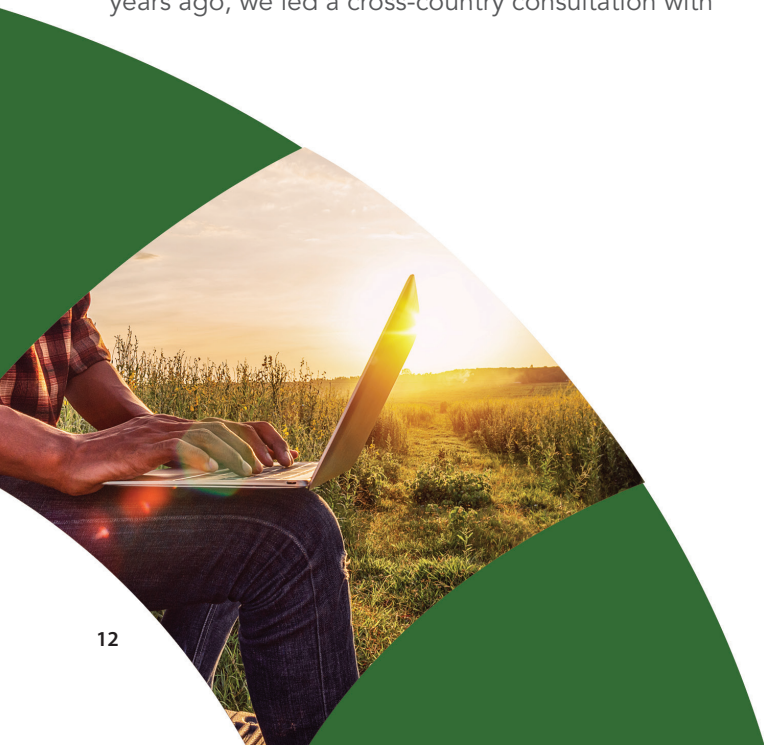
Mitacs, Indigenous organizations, businesses, and post secondaries to discover ways of increasing Indigenous research collaborations and business innovation.

Our organization has benefitted from long-term senior management continuity. Our founding President/CEO Kelly Lendsay is a Cree-Métis leader with a strong national reputation as one of Canada's foremost innovators of Indigenous workplace inclusion, workplace inclusion and partnership building. He holds an MBA degree from the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to joining Indigenous Works, he was a leader in aquatic, lifeguarding and swiftwater rescue causes and the founder of the first Indigenous Business Education and MBA program. He was honoured by the University of Saskatchewan (U of S), as one of their "100 Alumni of Influence". Lendsay has an ability to facilitate partnership bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and organizations. He has served on numerous Boards of Directors.

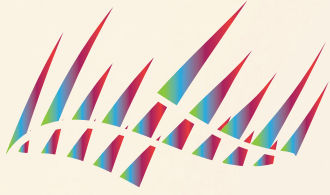
Craig Hall has been the COO since 1999. He is a former senior manager with the Government of the Northwest Territories where he worked for a dozen years up until 1997. He earned an MBA from the University of Exeter in the UK. In his government career he negotiated various federal/territorial agreements and developed expertise in policy formation and program development. Craig brings systems thinking, an ability to manage and document projects and an ability to build partnerships.

Subash Biswal is the organization's Chief Financial Officer with a background in finance and management. Originally from India, Subash worked for several years as a bank manager, controller, and general manager in the Bahamas. Before joining our finance team, he was working as controller at Siemens Transportation Group in Saskatoon. Subash has maintained exemplary administrative and financial standards within the organization for more than a decade and a half.

Indigenous Works' Board of Directors offers a mixed set of skills, knowledge, and acumen. Board members include senior Indigenous executives from Canada's largest corporations, leaders of Indigenous NGO and businesses as well as representatives from law, accounting, and Indigenous relations fields.



## Contact Us



# LUMINARY

Advancing Indigenous Innovation for Economic  
Transformation, Employment and Wellbeing

**Please send your signed Luminary  
Agriculture Charter to:**

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 **IndigenousWorks**