

# Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's ("ISED") Indigenous Intellectual Property Program

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Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's ("ISED") Indigenous Intellectual Property Program ("IIPP") is now accepting applications for the 2025-2026 funding period.

Applications are due by August 12 on or before 11:59 p.m. (Pacific Time).



## Background

Intellectual property ("IP") generally refers to property rights to creations of the mind, including inventions, literary and artistic works, or governmental, organizational or business names and logos. IP rights, such as patents, trademarks and copyrights can be leveraged to protect Indigenous IP. For instance, trademarks can be used to authenticate arts and crafts made by Indigenous artists, such as "Genuine Cowichan"<sup>1</sup> and "Genuine Cowichan & Design"<sup>2</sup> trademarks, and "official marks" can be used to protect an Indigenous nation's name and emblem.<sup>3</sup>

However, IP laws may not adequately protect all forms of Indigenous IP. For instance, while existing IP laws can assist in protecting contemporary forms of Indigenous IP, they often fall short in protecting traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, which include knowledge or expressions developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community.<sup>4</sup>

Protecting Indigenous IP can be accomplished through the strategic use of a mix of existing IP rights, and Indigenous laws, protocols and guidelines. It also requires advocating for change nationally and internationally.

## What is ISED's Indigenous Intellectual Property Program ("IIPP")

The IIPP Grant is a potential funding stream for Indigenous organizations seeking to protect their IP, including both contemporary and traditional knowledge and expressions. The IIPP funds Indigenous-led projects related to IP, Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous cultural expressions in an effort to increase Indigenous peoples' strategic use of the IP system and participation in IP discussions.

There is \$150,000 in total available funding. There are three application streams:

1. **World Intellectual Property Organization (“WIPO”) Travel**, which can provide grants up to \$6,000 per person/per trip to support Indigenous organizations, as “accredited observers”, to participate in WIPO sessions and events related to IP and Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous cultural expressions;
2. **Small-Scale Initiatives**, which can provide grants up to \$15,000 for small-scale and short-term IP-related initiatives; and
3. **Projects**, which can provide grants up to \$50,000 for IP-related projects that are more complex or comprehensive than Small-Scale Initiatives.

## Eligible Activities

Some possible activities that may be eligible for funding include:

1. travelling to WIPO events, meetings or negotiations relating to IP and Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous cultural expressions to support Indigenous organizations, as “accredited observers”,<sup>5</sup> to advocate for better protections;
2. developing guidelines or protocols relating to Indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions;
3. developing an IP strategy; and
4. organising and hosting workshops, conferences, seminars, meetings or other similar events with a focus on IP and protecting Indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions.

Eligible Indigenous organizations include but are not limited to First Nation, Inuit or Métis governments and organizations, bands, tribal councils, Indigenous self-government entities, and local, regional or national Indigenous organizations.

To be eligible for funding, proposed projects and activities led by eligible Indigenous organizations must:

- focus on IP; and/or
- have a connection to the protection of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous cultural expressions.

## For more information

See the **IIPP Grant — Program Guide**

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Trademark Database, “Genuine Cowichan — 0792175”, owned by Cowichan Band Council.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Trademark Database, “Genuine Cowichan & Design — 0792174”, owned by the Cowichan Band

## Council

<sup>3</sup> For instance, see **Metlakatla First Nation's application for an official mark for "Metlakatla — 0924873"**

<sup>4</sup> World Intellectual Property Organization, "Traditional Knowledge", online:

<https://www.wipo.int/en/web/traditional-knowledge/tk/index> and see also "Traditional Cultural Expressions", online: <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/traditional-knowledge/traditional-cultural-expressions/index>

<sup>5</sup> See WIPO Observers, online: <https://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/observers/index.html>

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