

Step 1: Submission of a expression of interest

<https://indigenusinnovate.org/downloads/a-grand-challenge-for-indigenous-innovation-round-1.pdf>

Wagalus 'namima - Rainbow Clan

The expression of interest includes a requirement to provide a short summary of your innovation (limit of 500 characters including spaces) and answering three (3) questions. The questions are:

Summary: 2SLGBTQQA+ representation is needed in all spaces and at all levels, including in ceremony and when we practice our culture. This project will help to start the work to elucidate the traditional ways of 2SLGBTQQA+ recognition among the Musgamakw prior to colonization and determine ways to be recognized in our ceremony and culture today, as determined by folks who identify as 2SLGBTQQA+. This virtual and land-based community-building initiative will bring forward 2SLGBTQQA+ voices and desires and begin to build more inclusive and representative cultural spaces.

1. What is the problem addressed by your innovation? Provide details on the specific context you are proposing to work in. (limit 1500 characters including spaces, approximately half of one page)

The understanding of gender and gender roles among the Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw has been profoundly altered by colonialism. This has negative impacts on all of our people but has particularly disadvantaged women, gender non-conforming and 2SLGBTQQA+ folks. These insidious, lasting impacts have embedded themselves in our ceremonies, our governance, and our everyday lives and have altered the ways we see ourselves and each other.

Work has begun in the communities to have conversations about roles of women in our culture, but 2SLGBTQQA+ folks have not been included in those conversations at this time.

Men are the speakers, the chiefs, and the singers in our potlatches. They are honoured first, fed first, and gifted first. This treatment creates an atmosphere where cis-gendered men are most valued and can leave gender non-conforming, and

2SLGBTQQIA+ people feeling unheard and unseen in our ceremonial spaces. It is vital for gender non-conforming and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people within our nation to see themselves represented in public spaces, including ceremony. Seeing oneself reflected in the greater social context fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging.

Gendered roles within our nation are pervasive, and create power dynamics. There are teachings that, traditionally, certain dances could only be danced by one gender and that songs can only be sung by men. Where does this leave our people who don't identify as a man or a woman?

2. What is your proposed innovation? (limit 3000 characters including spaces, approximately 1.5 pages)

Wagalus 'Namima: Rainbow Clan is a program that aims to uplift and provide a support network for Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intesex and, Asexual, and gender non-conforming and gender non-binary people. We will be holding an on-the-land gathering for those in our community who identify as such.

Prior to the gathering we will be doing research into what it means traditionally to identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+. We will build a virtual support network for this community where we can uplift each other, and talk openly about our struggles and successes.

We will hold educational sessions for those in the Musgamakw community who do not know what it means to identify as gender non-conforming, or 2SLGBTQQIA+.

The gathering will take place on the land. We will host cultural learning sessions, as well as sessions on how to survive in the wilderness. All instructors/speakers will be 2SLGBTQQIA+. The ultimate goal of the gathering is to be in each others' presence; to empower and look after one another.

Timeline:

- Create virtual community of 2SLGBTQQIA+ and gender non-conforming Musgamakw

- This will catalyze connections between 2SLGBTQQIA+ Musgamakw. Many of our people do not live in our territory, and may not feel comfortable or welcome going into the villages. Creating a virtual community first will begin the process of group forming. We can prepare for our time on the land together. Find out what the needs of the group are and start the process of trust-building.
- This will develop into a community of support for those who don't feel safe talking about their gender identity.
- Research into what it meant to identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+ within our culture prior to contact, and what it can mean today
 - Ask what other nations do, what they have done, and share resources.
- Education component for other Musgamakw citizens
 - Many of our people will have questions about what it means to be 2SLGBTQQIA+. To help relieve some of the pressure from the people who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+ of having to explain themselves and their identity to their family, we will be creating a network and resource community that people can turn to for information. We will also support the building of allyship in our communities.
- Two 2-week on-the-land camps for gender non-conforming, gender non-binary and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
 - Learn survival and cultural skills
 - Learn from presenters on gender, fluidity, & sexuality
 - Learn from presenters on colonial impacts on gender roles
 - Create a traditional song that honors their identities

3.What are the current approaches being used to address the problem you identified and how will your idea address it more effectively? (limit 1500 characters including spaces)

There are currently no Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw specific programs for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Those within our nation who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+ have not received acknowledgement or recognition from our community as a whole.

The role of women within our culture is being examined and greater representation is being fought for, in and out of ceremony. This needs to happen for all of our people, no matter how they identify.

Āk̄ala is an all women led organization. The Founder and CEO identifies as a 2-spirit indigequeer. Members of the board of directors identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+. We are all passionate about our culture, our people and our territory. We are uniquely qualified to deliver this project as we live the indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ experience.

We have presenters, instructors and researchers in mind to help deliver this program and ensure its success.

Āk̄ala Society has run land and water-based programs that combine survival skills with cultural skills. We pivoted quickly during the pandemic to develop and deliver the Digital Youth Network and Community Gatherings programs. We have been meeting with the Musgamakw Dzawadaḡenuḡw youth and the community every week since April 15th. This has encouraged learning and connections during this time of physical isolation.