

Questionnaire for Federal Election Candidates

With Canadians scheduled to go to the polls September 20, Innu Nation, the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and the Mushuau Innu First Nation are calling on all federal parties and candidates in Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to upholding their rights and defending their interests.

We are asking you, as a federal election candidate, to provide us with your position on the following issues that are of concern to our people.

ISSUE 1: Muskrat Falls Rate Mitigation Deal – Impacts on Innu of Labrador

On August 10, 2021, Innu Nation, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Mushuau Innu First Nation launched a lawsuit against the Government of Canada (Canada) and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. The claim is based on the fact that Canada and NL took direct, deliberate, and decisive action to extinguish the financial benefits that the Innu of Labrador were promised in the Muskrat Falls Impacts and Benefits Agreement (IBA) in return for their consent to the building of the hydroelectric project. Those benefits were negotiated as compensation for loss of land, to close existing socio-economic gaps, and as a means of providing financial security for future generations of Labrador Innu.

- Question 1: Do you support the position of Innu Nation, the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and the Mushuau Innu First Nation that their rights were violated by Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Furey when they negotiated the Muskrat Falls rate mitigation deal without Innu participation or consent?
- Question 2: Will you insist that Innu Nation, the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and the Mushuau Innu First Nation be provided with the detailed financial modeling used to reach the rate mitigation deal and that they be given the opportunity to review the deal and ensure that the benefits they were promised under the terms of the Muskrat Falls IBA are protected?
- Question 3: Will you insist that Innu Nation, the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, and the Mushuau Innu First Nation be given their rightful place at the negotiation table and that their consent be required before any agreement is finalised?

ISSUE 2: Follow-up Report to the CHRC on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador

On August 9, 2021, the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) released the third report on the Human Rights of the Innu of Labrador, as a follow-up to two previous reports on the rights of the Innu, issued in 1993 and 2002. The report is scathing. It details how, for fifty years, the Government of Canada has failed to exercise its constitutional responsibilities to the Innu of Labrador, and it states that the Innu of Labrador continue to face systemic discrimination and significant obstacles to the full enjoyment of their rights. Furthermore, it outlines several areas in which significant gaps in government services still exist, including health care, child and family services, education, language, culture, housing, and the justice system. The CHRC calls on Ottawa to accelerate a modern treaty negotiation to resolve Innu land title, allow for self-government, and close socio-economic gaps. It states the need for a “reset of the negotiating process.”

Question 4: Do you commit to reviewing the CHRC report closely and to giving full and serious consideration to the recommendations it contains?

Question 5: Will you commit to the conclusion of Modern Treaty with the Innu of Labrador within three years?

Question 6: Will you commit to working closely and meaningfully with the Innu of Labrador, to ensure that their priorities and values are reflected in any action taken?

ISSUE 3: The UNDRIP Act and FPIC

On June 21, 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (the UNDRIP Act) received Royal Assent, marking a historic milestone in Canada’s implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The UNDRIP Act is Canada’s first substantive step towards ensuring that federal laws reflect the standards set out in UNDRIP. The two key goals of the UNDRIP ACT are:

1. To affirm UNDRIP as a universal international human rights instrument with application in Canadian law; and
2. To provide a framework for the Government of Canada to implement the Declaration.

The UNDRIP Act has several potentially significant implications for Indigenous groups, government authorities and resource project proponents, as it recognizes:

- The right to participate in national decision-making, with respect to decisions that may affect their rights or their ways of life;
- The right to be consulted with respect to any project that may affect them;
- The right that any project that may significantly impact their rights and ways of life not be carried out without their free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

Question 7: Do you agree that the Government of Canada breached its obligation to respect the Innu of Labrador’s right to free, prior and informed consent when it negotiated the Muskrat Falls rate mitigation deal with the Government of Newfoundland?

Question 8: Do you endorse the UNDRIP Act, and will you uphold the Act if you are elected?