

BOREAL FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN



Innu Nation
2007

“For us, it is always good policy to leave alone what we do not understand. Not only us humans depend on forests, but all life depends on them. We let things be, and let the forests grow naturally. This is our approach. All your science will not save you if you continue to take away what is there and what keeps us here. I know that everything depends on everything...this is the best science I can give you.”

– Innu Elder Simon Michel

1) Actions and core organizational/business strategies

Innu Nation’s mission is to protect the lands, rights and way of life of the Innu of Labrador. It seeks to carry out this mission by protecting the rights of the Innu of Labrador through political action, negotiation and direct engagement with federal and provincial governments and third party developers, and through the sound stewardship of Innu lands and resources.

Innu Nation is primarily engaged in negotiations towards a comprehensive land claim with Canada and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. These negotiations will result in a modern treaty which will provide for Innu self-governance and management or co-management over their traditional territories.

In the interim, Innu Nation is engaged in the implementation of an Interim Forest Agreement with the Province which provides for the co-management of forest resources. Innu Nation is also engaged in bodies and arrangements which provide for Innu participation in the management and monitoring of fisheries, of mineral exploration activities throughout their territory, of mining activities at Voisey’s Bay, the construction of the Trans-Labrador Highway and the proposed Lower-Churchill Hydroelectric development.

Innu Nation has also been engaged, through land rights negotiations and through membership on a steering committee, in a feasibility study process for the proposed Mealy Mountains/Akamiuapishku National Park. In future, Innu Nation will be involved in similar arrangements in respect of the proposed Lac Joseph/Atikonak Wilderness Reserve.

The Boreal Framework reflects many Innu aspirations, and facilitates discussions with governments and third party developers on the need to achieve balanced approach to protection and sustainable use. Innu Nation’s objectives are also reflected in the Framework principles which propose that planning for conservation and resource development should be led by Aboriginal people, in accordance with Aboriginal and treaty rights.

2) Short term plans nested within long term actions

In the longer term, Innu will manage significant parts of their traditional territory through self-government provisions. Innu seek to ensure that their rights throughout the whole of their territory are accommodated through effective planning institutions and co-management regimes. Innu also seek to ensure that significant portions of their traditional territory are protected under protected areas legislation.

The short term objectives outlined here support these objectives by:

- building capacity for Innu self-governance;
- developing a track record and basis of practice for co-management;
- achieving interim or permanent protection of areas of importance to Innu;

3) Scientific and traditional ecological knowledge research

Innu Nation is engaged in the following activities which are intended to inform or promote better conservation and resource planning:

- a) Work through the Sustainable Forest Management Network (SFMN) on two projects:
 - i. Ecological Decision-making models: working to develop and/or apply landscape and stand level decision making models based on ecological and cultural values;
 - ii. Aboriginal tenures project: working to better define and apply aboriginal forms of forest tenure.
- b) Training programs for Innu Guardians focused on applied traditional knowledge and scientific principles, enabling cross-cultural/cross-disciplinary exchanges between elders and scientists around specific management and planning questions.
- c) Collaborating with the Canadian Forest Service in developing a classification manual for forest ecosystem sites, integrating Innu knowledge.

4) Land Use Planning

As noted above, Innu Nation is engaged in planning and managing forest activities within Forest Management District 19, encompassing an area of approximately 7 million hectares, through a joint Innu/Provincial Forest Management Committee, in accordance with an Interim Forest Agreement.

The Forest Management Committee is preparing for ISO 14001 certification of the FMD 19 management system, which should be ready for audit in late winter 2008, and is exploring options for certification of FMD 19 under the Forest

Stewardship Council boreal standard.

5) Protected Area Designations

Through the forest management process, Innu Nation has achieved interim protection for approximately 66% of the commercial forestry landbase within FMD19a. Innu Nation is seeking to maintain or build this level of interim protection in the next planning phase, scheduled to begin in 2012 for the five-year planning period 2013-2018. In particular, the Innu Nation is collaborating closely with the Labrador Woodland Caribou Recovery Team in incorporating any data and recommendations they provide, and in the implementation of the protection for both core habitat, and recovery habitat as they are being defined.

Innu Nation is engaged in studies and in a feasibility process to define conservation objectives and describe boundary options for the Mealy Mountains/Akamiuapishku National Park.

Innu Nation is supporting the recommendations of the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Committee (WERAC) towards the establishment of the Lac Joseph/Atikonak wilderness reserve.

6) Innovative policy development supporting Framework principles

The negotiation and implementation of interim measures and final agreements between Innu Nation, Canada and Newfoundland is transforming governance and resource management within Innu territory. The development of co-management models based on Innu values, and incorporating Innu perspectives, is intended to ensure a balanced approach between protecting ecological and cultural integrity and promoting strong, sustainable economies for local communities.

7) Promotion of economic and cultural sustainability in the boreal region

Within Innu territory, Innu Nation is seeking to ensure that the development of natural resources, whether through forestry, hydroelectric development or mining, is carefully planned and managed to occur at pace and scale that is compatible with traditional Innu lifestyles and values.

This is being pursued through negotiations and consultations with governments and developers, and in future, through Innu government planning and permitting authorities.

The Innu Development Limited Partnership has expressed an interest in developing a secondary-processing facility in Nitassinan, which would produce approx 1000 homes. This is in response to the Strategic Plan to Develop Labrador Secondary Manufacturing and Value Added Wood Products Industry, prepared by Halifax Global Inc. (www.nr.gov.nl.ca)

Innu Nation is also exploring the potential for carbon credits derived through conservation action (protection of forest land) and improved management practices. Carbon models for the Innu Nation ecosystem based approach to forest management show approximately a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions over conventional forest harvesting.

8) Recognition of Aboriginal Rights

The recognition of aboriginal rights is central to the Innu Nation's mission.

9) Actual or potential impediments and problem solving

Capacity remains a significant challenge. The Innu communities are small, while the demands being placed on them are large and at times, overwhelming. Innu Nation requires the good will and at times active support of other First Nations, environmental organizations and progressive businesses to achieve its goals.

Some of the significant challenges facing Innu Nation in the near term include:

- Ensuring that the future development of the Lower Churchill hydro project occurs in a manner consistent with Framework principles. Innu Nation does not oppose the project, but wishes to ensure that the development is carried out in an ecologically and culturally sustainable manner. Innu Nation will be looking to CBI and to BLC members for support in policy development and potentially, in political engagement with the Province and with potential customers/investors (eg the Government of Ontario/Hydro One).
- Assistance in managing a renewed interest in mineral exploration within Innu territory. CBI and BLC members could play an important role by engaging with national mining and prospecting organizations (PDAC, MAC) on responsible exploration.
- Assistance in preparing for future FSC certification of FMD 19. Innu Nation and the Province are presently preparing for ISO 14001. If ISO 14001 is forthcoming, Innu Nation then hopes to prevail on the Province to then undertake to FSC certification. Moving the Province towards this objective may be facilitated by the support and involvement of CBI and BLC members in government outreach, and by contributing expertise to Innu Nation in meeting some of the technical challenges within the FSC

- process.
- General support through supportive statements or quiet diplomacy for other Innu objectives, including progress towards the establishment of the Mealy Mountains/Akamiuapishku National Park.

10) Planned Communications

Innu Nation lacks capacity at present to effectively communicate. Innu Nation is looking to CBI for support on specific communications needs, and to develop an ongoing communications strategy.