



Strange Lake Joint Impact Statement Guidelines & Indigenous Engagement and Participation Plan

Technical Review Memo

October 22, 2024
Submitted to the Impact Assessment Agency

Prepared by:
Innu Nation



Introduction

The Strange Lake Rare Earth Mining Project (Strange Lake; the Project), proposed by Torngat Metals Ltd. (Torngat; the Proponent), is located within the traditional lands of Innu Nation. The Project includes the construction and operation of an open-pit mine, featuring a 1,500-meter airstrip, a metal mill, waste rock and tailings piles, and a 170-kilometer road to new harbor facilities on the Labrador coast. With a production capacity of 36,000 tonnes per day and a 30-year lifespan, the Project poses significant risks to Innu Nation's lands, waters, and way of life.

As Innu people, we hold profound cultural, spiritual, and environmental connections to these lands, which are protected by our rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. It is essential that this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) comprehensively assess all potential impacts with full and meaningful consultation, based on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

It is necessary that our rights, knowledge, and connection to the land are fully integrated into all stages of the project. The proponent and IAAC must recognize that we are not mere stakeholders—we are s. 35 rights holders, as recognized by Canada in Incremental Treaty Agreements, and have an accepted land claim which includes the area affected by this project, which the Province and Canada have been negotiating with Innu Nation since 1996 for purposes of concluding a modern treaty in the near future. The EIS must reflect this reality and ensure that the voice of Innu Nation is central to decisions affecting our land, culture, and future.

Technical Review

The Innu Nation, along with our technical advisors, Tamarack Environmental, have completed a review of the draft Joint Impact Statement Guidelines (JISG; the Guidelines) and the draft Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (IEPP) prepared by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC; the Agency) for the Strange Lake Rare Earth Mining Project Federal Impact Assessment (IA).

The comments in Table 1 and 2 identify comments and associated recommendations relevant to the JISG and IEPP to ensure that the potential impacts that the Project will have on:

- (a) our Aboriginal rights and interests; and
- (b) Particularized potential impacts on the Innu Nation members who live in the reserve community of Natuashish and who are also members of Mushuau Innu First Nation¹.

¹¹ The Innu people now residing in Natuashish, most of whom are members of Mushuau Innu First Nation, have already suffered profound negative cultural, health and socio-economic impacts by being moved to Davis Inlet in the 1960s (they relocated to Natuashish in 1996), torn away from our close connection to our lands and culture that we experience when we live in the country (*nutshimit*) as we still do as a deep part of our cultural connection to our land. This land will be profoundly affected by this project if it goes ahead. The history of what happened to the Mushuau Innu when they moved to Davis Inlet is part of what needs to be assessed in order to consider the socio-economic impacts of this proposed project.

are comprehensively assessed by the Proponent and Agency. This will aid in the development of proper avoidance, mitigation, management and accommodation of those impacts, if the Innu of Labrador give their consent to this Project proceeding.

As a Nation potentially impacted by the Project, we request that you incorporate all Innu Nation's recommendations in Table 1 and 2 or provide us with written rationale as to why you have not. Please note that Innu Nation will record and track the recommendations that are not incorporated, should this result in impacts to our Aboriginal rights and interests of Innu Nation as a whole, and particular impacts on the Innu Nation members who are part of Mushuau Innu First Nation and reside in the reserve community of Natuashish, being unaccounted for in the IA.

We intend to continue to take an active role in the IA as a highly impacted Nation. We look forward to working with the Agency on the Strange Lake Rare Earth Mining Project.

Table 1: Comments and Recommendations on the draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines

Comment #	Comment	Recommendation
1.	<p>The text in section 6.1 of the JISG states <i>"The proponent must demonstrate that they have made best efforts at collaboration and continue sharing information with all Indigenous groups."</i> Innu Nation notes that the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) does not hold Indigenous rights under section 35 of Canada's Constitution. A 2024 decision of the Federal Court confirmed that NCC has not been recognized as an Aboriginal people of Canada or as having s. 35 rights by Canada or the courts, and Canada has not given any formal legal status to NCC through its MOU with NCC.² In addition, the Federal Court found it was undisputed that NCC's land claim has been rejected multiple times because of the lack of evidence to support NCC's claims.³ The Newfoundland and Labrador courts held in the mid-2000s that NCC's "unproven claim" triggered "a low level of consultation" regarding the construction of the Trans-Labrador Highway in southern Labrador. Since the 2007 court case, NCC's claim has been rejected <u>twice</u> by Canada on the basis that there was insufficient evidence to show NCC has any legitimate claim to be a distinct people. The Federal Court's 2024 decision unequivocally affirms that NCC has never been recognized as an Aboriginal rights-holder. Therefore the NCC cannot be considered an Indigenous group or indigenous organization for the purposes of this IA.</p>	<p>Amend the Guidelines and Section 3 of the IEPP to explicitly define Indigenous groups as only those recognized under section 35 of Canada's Constitution. This ensures that only groups holding section 35 rights, like the Innu Nation, are included in the consultation process.</p> <p>The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) is not to be treated as an Indigenous group or as an indigenous organization in this IA</p>

² *Innu Nation Inc v Canada (Crown-Indigenous Relations)*, [2024 FC 896](#), at para 65.

³ *Innu Nation*, at para 26.

	<p>The inclusion of a non-Indigenous organization as an indigenous group or indigenous organization harms Innu Nation's section 35 rights and undermines the Nation's legal standing and recognition in this process.</p>	
2.	<p>Section 6.3 indicates that the Proponent must:</p> <p><i>"support the participation of Indigenous groups in the completion of the Impact Statement, which could include funding studies conducted by potentially affected Indigenous groups who will have demonstrated interest in this regard (e.g., baseline studies, Indigenous Knowledge and Land Use studies, Indigenous-led evaluation of effects on health, socio-economic conditions, Indigenous Knowledge and land uses, cultural and physical heritage, as well as Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights"</i></p> <p>This does not capture other ways that the Innu Nation may wish to be involved during the Impact Statement phase including identification of alternatives, design of baseline studies, and assessment of effects.</p>	<p>The Innu Nation requests that additional guidance include as follows (changes highlighted in bold).</p> <p><i>"support the participation of Indigenous groups in the completion of the Impact Statement, which could include identification of alternative means for the Project, design of baseline studies, assessment of effects, and funding studies conducted by potentially affected Indigenous groups who will have demonstrated interest in this regard (e.g., baseline studies, Indigenous Knowledge and Land Use studies, Indigenous-led evaluation of effects on health, socio-economic conditions including consideration of the historic background for those conditions, Indigenous Knowledge and land uses, cultural and physical heritage, as well as Aboriginal and/or Treaty rights"</i></p>
3.	<p>Section 7.1.2 lists various baseline studies that Newfoundland and Labrador requires for the Project but fails to explicitly include the consideration of Indigenous Knowledge, land use, or cultural values. The government of Newfoundland and Labrador also has the legal obligation to uphold the Honour of the Crown through the duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous groups impacted by the proposed Project. This omission overlooks the critical role that Innu Nation plays in understanding the local environment and implies a lack of consideration of Indigenous rights on the part of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Indigenous Knowledge provides essential context for species at risk, landforms, and resource use, and should be integrated throughout the baseline studies. The exclusion of Innu perspectives risks undermining a holistic understanding of environmental and cultural impacts.</p>	<p>Section 7.1.2 of the Guidelines should be amended to explicitly require the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (should Indigenous Nations choose to provide it) in baseline studies, especially concerning land and resource use, species at risk, and areas of cultural importance for the purposes of Newfoundland and Labrador's assessment of the Project. This will ensure that the Project considers the full range of environmental and cultural impacts on Indigenous groups.</p>
4.	<p>Section 7.1.2 is incomplete in its current form, as it only lists baseline studies related to environmental factors without addressing critical aspects such as health, culture, and</p>	<p>Section 7.1.2 should be amended to include comprehensive baseline studies on the health, culture, and economic conditions of the Innu Nation, including particularized consideration of the health, culture</p>

<p>economic conditions of Innu Nation, with particular emphasis on Mushuau Innu First Nation whose members (along with Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation) are part of the membership of Innu Nation, and the vast majority of their members reside on the Indian reserve of Natuashish. These elements are deeply intertwined with land and resource use, and their exclusion limits the Project's ability to assess its full impact on Innu Nation. Innu Nation face unique vulnerabilities, and any Project operating on or near our traditional lands and the Indian reserve community of Natuashish must consider how it affects our well-being, cultural practices, and livelihoods.</p> <p>Innu Nation members now residing in Natuashish, most of whom are also members of Mushuau Innu First Nation which was established as an Indian band under the <i>Indian Act</i> in 2002, have already suffered profound negative cultural, health and socio-economic impacts by being moved to Davis Inlet in the 1960s (they relocated to Natuashish in 1996), away from our close connection to our lands and culture that we experience when we live in the country (<i>nutshimit</i>) as we still do since we have a deep continuing cultural and spiritual connection to our land. This land as well as our community residing in Natuashish will be profoundly affected by this project if it goes ahead. The history of what happened to the Mushuau Innu when they were moved to Davis Inlet (including the cultural impacts, health and economic impacts, substandard housing and community infrastructure the governments provided us with, and physical and sexual abuse of our children in the school in Davis inlet and other schools like Mount Cashel where we were sent) is part of what needs to be understood in order to assess the socio-economic impacts of this proposed project. This history has been described in some detail in official reports provided to the federal and provincial governments, including reports from the Canadian Human Rights Commission and from the Innu people ourself including <i>Gathering Voices</i> and other reports.</p>	<p>and economic conditions of Mushuau Innu First Nation (whose members comprise part of the membership of Innu Nation) including on the Indian reserve at Natuashish, recognizing the interconnections between these aspects and land/resource use. The Guidelines must explicitly state that all baseline studies will incorporate Indigenous participation at the discretion of impacted Indigenous groups.</p> <p>The sentence <i>"Baseline surveys should be conducted in accordance with guidance provided by the jurisdictional authority(ies)"</i></p> <p>should be updated to:</p> <p><i>"Baseline surveys should be conducted in accordance with guidance provided by the jurisdictional authority(ies), including affected Indigenous groups."</i></p>
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	<p>Our communities are very different than the Inuit communities in Labrador, so it is important to ensure that the IA distinctly deals with the impacts and potential mitigation measures for Innu Nation, including the members of Innu Nation living in Natuashish who are also members of Mushuau Innu First Nation.</p> <p>In addition, the Guidelines do not explicitly call for the integration of Indigenous Knowledge in the baseline studies, which risks overlooking essential insights that are not captured through conventional scientific methods. Indigenous Knowledge offers a holistic understanding of the environment, health, and socio-cultural relationships to the land, which should be incorporated into every stage of assessment. Without this, the Project risks not fully assessing how changes to the environment might affect cultural practices, community health, and economic livelihoods. Indigenous knowledge should only be provided by indigenous rights holders as stated in comment #1.</p>
5.	<p>Section 5 outlines public participation, focusing on engagement with local communities and stakeholders, while Section 6 addresses Indigenous participation. However, the Guidelines fail to clearly differentiate between these two forms of participation, potentially leading to a misunderstanding that Indigenous groups are simply another group of stakeholders. Innu Nation are not stakeholders but rights holders, with constitutionally protected rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.</p> <p>Treating Indigenous participation as an extension of public consultation diminishes the legal obligations owed to Indigenous peoples. Innu Nation possess inherent rights to their lands, culture, and resources, and any project that affects these rights must engage them in a distinct, meaningful, and legally recognized process that goes beyond public engagement. Indigenous consultation, rooted in the Duty to Consult and Accommodate and the United Nations Declaration on the</p> <p>Section 6.1 should be amended to start with the following statement:</p> <p><i>"Indigenous groups are recognized as rights holders under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This distinguishes them from stakeholders, as their participation in the Project is grounded in legal rights to land, resources, and cultural practices. The Proponent and relevant authorities must engage Indigenous groups through distinct consultation processes, ensuring their rights are fully respected and upheld in accordance with the Duty to Consult and Accommodate, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)."</i></p>

	Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), requires a different approach to ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is obtained.	
6.	<p>Innu Nation is concerned about the human, cultural and social components of the JISG, which in general are vague and leave the Proponent much more room to exclude the assessment of potential impacts to Innu Nation's rights and interests.</p> <p>Section 14.1 of the JISG (Extent to which the Project contributes to sustainability) is a clear example of this, as the Proponent is required to "include any description of sustainability as defined by Indigenous communities" but is left substantial room to do so at their discretion.</p>	<p>a. Innu Nation requests that the IAAC include the following additional language in Section 14 of the JISG:</p> <p><i>"The Proponent must present an analysis of the description of sustainability as provided by Indigenous groups. This analysis must describe how the assessment of the sustainability of the Project, as based on the definition of sustainability provided by Indigenous Nations, differs from the general analysis of sustainability, and how they have addressed any differences in the definitions anywhere appropriate in the Impact Statement."</i></p> <p>b. Innu Nation may wish to keep our Nation-specific definition of sustainability confidential, and thus may wish for the Nation-specific assessment of sustainability in the Impact Statement to be kept confidential if we choose. To accommodate this, the Agency should include the following language in Section 14 of the JISG:</p> <p><i>"Any descriptions of sustainability as defined by an Indigenous Nation may be confidential to the Indigenous Nation, and as such the analysis of the Nation's definition of sustainability in the Impact Statement would be confidential to the Nation in question if requested."</i></p>
7.	<p>Section 7.6.1 states,</p> <p><i>"VCs identified as being of particular concern in the context of cumulative effects by the public and by Indigenous groups"</i></p> <p>This statement fails to differentiate between Indigenous groups, who are rights holders under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the general public, who are stakeholders. This conflation diminishes the distinct legal and constitutional responsibilities owed to Indigenous peoples.</p>	Revise the language to clearly distinguish how VC's will be weighed and considered differently for Indigenous rights holders and public stakeholders. The section should acknowledge that Indigenous groups, such as the Innu Nation, have legal rights that necessitate separate and more thorough engagement regarding cumulative effects. This will ensure that Indigenous concerns are prioritized in a manner consistent with their status as rights holders under section 35 and UNDRIP.
8.	Innu Nation is concerned that the current draft Guidelines lack sufficient detail and clarity on how the health and safety of our	Section 8.14.1.3 of the draft JISG should be amended to include the following

	<p>people will be protected from exposure to what has been termed “naturally occurring radioactive materials” (NORM) from the Project. Given the reliance of Innu communities on the land for traditional activities, it is critical that the Guidelines include specific, enforceable measures to monitor, mitigate, and prevent radiation risks. Without our involvement in the development of dose mitigation strategies, clear exposure limits, and contingency plans for radiation exceedances, our people face unacceptable risks to their health and way of life.</p>	<p>a. The Proponent must ensure the full involvement of the Innu Nation in the development and implementation of all mitigation strategies related to naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM). This includes consultations with Innu Nation at all stages of the project, to ensure that radiation mitigation measures are culturally appropriate and address the unique environmental and health needs of the Innu people.</p> <p>b. The Proponent must establish clear exposure limits, aligned with CNSC guidelines, and adapted to account for the Innu Nation’s land-based activities and reliance on traditional resources. Radiation monitoring must be conducted regularly, with real-time monitoring stations established in areas of importance to the Innu Nation. The results must be reported transparently and communicated promptly to the Innu Nation.</p> <p>c. A robust contingency plan must be developed, in consultation with the Innu Nation, to address any exceedances of radiation exposure limits. This plan must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate notification to the Innu Nation in the event of radiation exceedances. • Emergency response measures, including potential evacuation or relocation of affected Innu communities and workers. • Medical follow-up protocols for those exposed to radiation, with culturally appropriate health care services. • Public disclosure of the contingency plan to the Innu Nation prior to project commencement, ensuring transparency and preparedness.
9.	<p>The draft JISG makes reference to the term “naturally occurring radioactive materials”(NORM) but does not provide a definition of what level of radiation a material must have to be considered NORM. The Innu Nation notes that many household objects have some level of naturally occurring radioactivity, however it</p>	<p>Innu Nation requests that the Proponent and the Agency commit to work with our Nation to collaboratively develop Project-specific thresholds and criteria of what constitutes “NORM”, informed by Health Canada Guidelines. Innu Nation requests that this commitment be reflected as an explicit requirement in the JISG.</p>

	<p>is the magnitude of the radioactivity that makes it concerning from an Indigenous and public health perspective. The Proponent and the Agency have included “NORM” in the Guidelines because the ore, waste rock and concentrate all have naturally <i>elevated</i> concentrations of radioactivity that must be assessed to determine whether or not the radioactivity is elevated enough to cause health impacts to impacted Indigenous groups and members of the public from exposure.</p>	
10.	<p>Section 6.2 states,</p> <p><i>“NL is committed to consulting Indigenous Governments and Organizations when NL contemplates making land and resource development decisions that have the potential to adversely impact settled or asserted Aboriginal rights.”</i></p> <p>The statement suggests that consultation with Indigenous groups, such as the Innu Nation, will only occur when land and resource decisions are already being contemplated, limiting meaningful early engagement. This approach fails to align with the Innu Nation’s rights as recognized under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) under UNDRIP.</p>	<p>Section 6.2 should be amended to:</p> <p><i>“NL is committed to proactively consulting Indigenous Governments and Organizations at the earliest stages of land and resource development discussions, ensuring that their rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) are fully respected and integrated into decision-making processes.”</i></p>
11.	<p>In Section 8.10.2.2 of the Guidelines, which outlines the federal requirements for assessing the potential effects of the Project on terrestrial wildlife species of importance to Indigenous Peoples, there is no mention of how the construction of an access road may impact Innu Nation lands by increasing the presence of potential land users, such as those engaging in recreational or tourism activities. The creation of such infrastructure can lead to greater access to previously remote areas, introducing new pressures on wildlife habitats, cultural sites, and traditional land use areas. Increased recreational and tourism activity may result in land degradation, disturbances to wildlife, and competition for natural resources, all of which could negatively affect Innu Nation’s ability to exercise traditional practices on our lands.</p>	<p>Section 8.10.2.2. of the JISG should be amended to include the following:</p> <p><i>“Potential impacts of increased recreation, tourism, and access to Indigenous traditional lands due to the construction of access roads, and the associated impacts on wildlife species and their habitats”</i></p>

<p>12.</p>	<p>Section 7.7.2 of the Guidelines, which outlines the Newfoundland and Labrador requirements for evaluating the significance of residual effects, is missing two critical components. First, it does not explicitly consider the potential residual effects on Indigenous rights, traditional land use, and cultural practices. Given the importance of these elements, the IS should assess how the Project may affect Indigenous activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and the use of cultural sites, including any disruptions to traditional ecological knowledge.</p> <p>Second, the section lacks a requirement to evaluate cumulative effects. Considering the broader regional context including the Voisey's Bay mine and the port facilities at Anaktalak Bay, it is essential that the IS assess how the combined impacts of the Project, along with other existing or planned developments, may affect wildlife, ecosystems, and Indigenous lands over time. Including these considerations would ensure a more comprehensive assessment of the Project's long-term effects on both the environment and Indigenous groups.</p>	<p>Section 7.7.2 should be expanded to include criteria addressing the potential residual effects AND cumulative effects on Indigenous traditional practices and rights, and an evaluation of cumulative effects from the Project and other regional developments on wildlife and fish, biodiversity, and Indigenous lands and waters and their use.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Section 4.1.4 of the Guidelines describes alternative means for carrying out the Project. Understanding the alternatives for various aspects of the Project is crucial to ensure that all reasonable options are considered, and the least impactful options are selected.</p> <p>With regard to the access road, the Guidelines state that alternative means should address:</p> <p><i>"route or corridor options for the access road between the mine site and the Labrador coast, locations of water crossings and fueling stations if applicable. Alternatives must include all options considered technically and economically feasible in previous iterations of the Project, such as the use of airships"</i></p> <p>The design, construction, and management of the access road are of high concern to the Innu Nation.</p>	<p>The Guidelines should be more specific about how the alternatives for access roads should be assessed. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossing types (i.e. culverts, bridges, snow bridges) • Road management and access controls • Alternatives that minimize effects on fish habitat, wetlands, and/or caribou • Alternatives to mitigate sociocultural impacts, including effects on existing Innu trails • Seasonal (e.g. winter roads) vs all-season road • Potential future uses of the road (e.g. future mining projects) • Closure options

Table 2: Comments and Recommendations on the draft Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan

Comment #	Comment	Recommendation
14.	<p>The Innu Nation requests information on the development of Nation-specific consultation plans in collaboration with IAAC and the Proponent. These plans should reflect our unique objectives for consultation, considering the distinct cultural, social, and environmental context of our Nation. In accordance with community protocols, the Proponent must engage with the Innu Nation throughout the impact assessment process.</p>	<p>Innu Nation is interested in meeting with the Agency to discuss the possibility of co-developing an Innu Nation-specific consultation plan for the Project.</p> <p>In addition to including Innu Nation's expectations for meaningful consultation from the Crown, Innu Nation has similar expectations of the Proponent and as such, Innu Nation expects the Crown to outline certain consultation expectations of the Proponent that are aligned with the express wishes of Innu Nation.</p>
15.	<p>The Innu Nation wishes to confirm with the Agency and the Proponent that we will have an interest in both participating in and potentially leading studies to support the Impact Statement for the Project.</p>	<p>Innu Nation requests that the Agency acknowledge Innu Nations interest in additional studies to support the IA, and requests that discussions on potential studies to be conducted be included as a commitment in the potential Innu Nation-specific consultation plan for this Project. These discussions should follow community consultation with our membership where we assess data gaps.</p>
16.	<p>The Innu Nation wishes to confirm with the Agency and the Proponent that we will have a list of VCs, including holistic VCs, which will be essential for accurately assessing impacts of the Project to Innu Nation Treaty and Aboriginal rights and interests.</p>	<p>Innu Nation requests that the Agency acknowledge that the inclusion of holistic VCs requested by Innu Nation will be essential in the assessment of this project, and request that the Agency facilitate a discussion of suitable holistic VCs with Innu Nation representatives at a future meeting between the Agency and Innu Nation. The details of this discussion should be the subject of the Innu Nation-specific consultation plan. The Agency should also include the following additional bullet to the list of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada's objectives in Section 3 of the IEPP:</p> <p><i>"The Agency will work in partnership with Indigenous Nations to identify holistic Valued Components (VCs) to be included in Impact Statement and will encourage the Proponent to adopt holistic VCs recommended by Indigenous Nations."</i></p>

		<p>Innu Nation requests that the Agency confirm their willingness to facilitate Innu Nation's engagement in the assessment of impacts on holistic VCs identified by Innu Nation at the partnership level on the spectrum of engagement. The details of this discussion should be the subject of the Innu Nation-specific consultation plan.</p>
17.	<p>The current version of the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (IEPP) lacks sufficient clarity on how Innu Nation governance protocols and decision-making structures will be respected and incorporated into the engagement process. While the document acknowledges the importance of consultation with Indigenous communities, it does not specify how the decisions made by our councils, Elders, and community leaders will be formally integrated into the impact assessment process. This omission raises concerns about whether the engagement will be conducted in a manner that respects the autonomy and governance structures of Innu Nation.</p>	<p>Section 3 should be amended to include a section titled "<i>Indigenous Governance</i>". This section should explicitly outline how IAAC will respect and incorporate Indigenous governance protocols, including how decisions made by Indigenous councils, Elders, and other community leaders will be formally recognized and integrated into the consultation and impact assessment process.</p> <p>This section should include the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IAAC should formally recognize the decisions made by Innu governance bodies, including councils, Elders, and community leaders, as part of the decision-making process • IAAC should recognize the decision-making authority of Innu Nation, particularly in matters affecting their rights, land, and resources, will be respected throughout the impact assessment process. • IAAC should recognize that any formal recommendations or decisions from Innu Nation should be incorporated into IAAC's evaluation and decision-making processes, ensuring that Innu governance structures are treated with the same level of authority as other governing bodies involved in the project. <p>Furthermore, Innu Nation holds the inherent right to self-governance as recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This right includes our authority to make decisions related to our traditional lands, resources, and the exercise of our rights. Any failure to recognize the Innu Nation as a decision-making authority on our traditional lands constitutes a direct violation of our constitutional rights under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The IEPP must ensure that Innu Nation's governance structures and decision-making authority are fully</p>

		respected and integrated into all stages of the impact assessment process, including the decision-making process.
18.	<p>The current language in Table 3 under Phase 4: Decision, which states</p> <p><i>"May choose to make their own independent submissions directly to the Minister, to help inform the federal decision-making process."</i></p> <p>lacks sufficient assurance that these independent submissions will be given full consideration and appropriately integrated into the final decision.</p>	<p>We recommend revising the statement in Table 3 to ensure that any independent submissions are given full consideration and integrated into the final decision. The text should be updated as follows (change highlighted in bold):</p> <p><i>"May choose to make their own independent submissions directly to the Minister. Independent submissions will be fully considered and integrated into the final decision."</i></p> <p>This revision ensures that Innu Nation's independent submissions are recognized as an essential part of the decision-making process, with a commitment to full consideration and integration.</p>
19.	<p>The current Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (IEPP) does not mention the formation of a Technical Working Committee(s) to address the complex technical aspects of the project. Given the potential technical challenges and the need for thorough consultation with Innu Nation, it is essential that further discussions be held regarding the establishment of a Technical Working Committee(s) to facilitate more in-depth engagement. It is important that the Innu Nation be fully involved in determining which committees would be relevant and beneficial for our participation, as this will help to ensure that our interests are appropriately addressed in the process.</p>	<p>The IEPP should include a commitment to further discussions around the establishment of Technical Working Committees. Innu Nation should be engaged to decide which Technical Working Committees Innu Nation are interested in participating in. Following this consultation, the IEPP should be updated to include a commitment to the formation of these committees, ensuring that they align with the priorities and concerns of Innu Nation. Potential topics for discussion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caribou protection and monitoring • Fish and fish habitat • Access road development, management, and monitoring • Marine traffic • Socioeconomic effects
20.	<p>The current version of the Indigenous Engagement and Partnership Plan (IEPP) does not adequately address how collaboration between Indigenous groups will be facilitated during the impact assessment process. While the document outlines individual engagement methods, it lacks a clear framework for how Indigenous groups may choose to collaborate or work together, should they find it beneficial.</p>	<p>The IEPP include a section dedicated to collaboration between Indigenous groups. This section should outline the processes and opportunities for Indigenous groups to coordinate and share information if they choose to do so. The IEPP should also specify how IAAC will support such collaboration, ensuring that Indigenous groups have the flexibility to engage with one another in a manner that aligns with their governance structures and priorities. This provision would allow for potential coordination without assuming or requiring it, ensuring that</p>

	each Indigenous group retains full autonomy over how they engage in the impact assessment process.
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