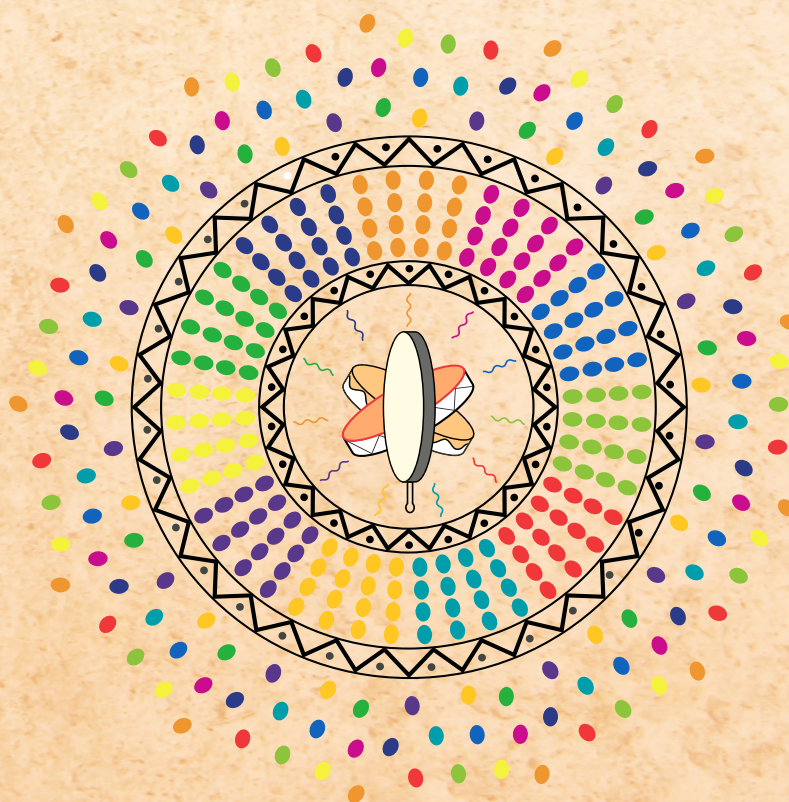


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AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
FOR FIRST PEOPLES**

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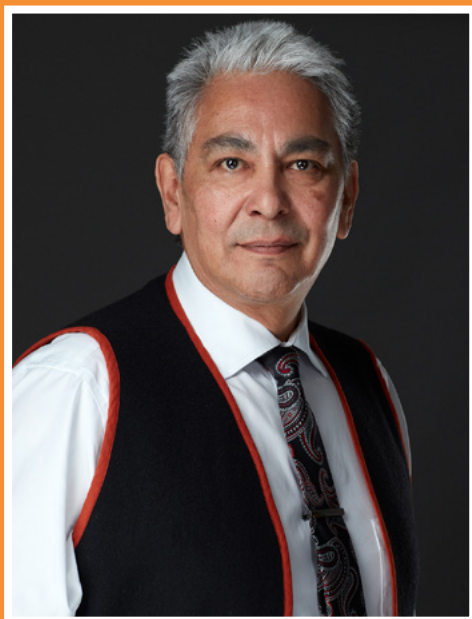
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FOREWORD



Marco Bacon

Director of the UQAM Office of First Peoples Relations, founder of the PRSP Conference, and head of the 6th edition

It is with great pleasure that we present the sixth edition of the Conference Journal on Perseverance and Academic Success among Indigenous Peoples, which once again highlights the vitality and richness of the conversations surrounding Indigenous education. This edition also marks the tenth anniversary of the journal, now recognized as a valuable space for sharing the work, experiences, and reflections of the many researchers, practitioners, and community members dedicated to promoting a pedagogy that honors Indigenous traditional knowledge, languages, and cultures.

Through the various contributions gathered, this edition illustrates the ongoing efforts to address current educational challenges, with a focus on reconciliation, cultural safety and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. The varied themes discussed demonstrate how essential it is to co-construct educational paths that integrate the diverse perspectives of First Peoples, while fostering dialogue and sharing between generations and communities.

I warmly thank all the participants who contributed to this edition, and invite readers to draw on the proposed avenues for their own reflection and action. May this journal be a source of renewed commitment and fruitful collaboration for us all.

A WORD OF JOSÉPHINE BACON



Joséphine Bacon

CONFIDENCE

Today, I would like to share how much pride there is when we look at you. I know that you must have encountered discouragement at times, but you went on your way and got back on your feet when you fell. It's not always easy to keep hoping, the courage to keep going, but you knew you shouldn't back down, because you wanted to get to where the end of portaging is.

We come from the finest role models: our parents, our grandparents. They never forgot that after so much effort, they would find their hunting grounds despite fatigue, distance, and bad weather. They stood up for all of us, to bring us to the place where life is good.

Today, our way of life is different. We no longer travel to the territory to meet our needs, but when we reflect on their lives, we look the same, since we must have the same hope, the same courage and the same will to succeed to achieve our dreams.

The satisfaction will be great, because you will have believed in yourself and you will not have given in to discouragement. You persevered.

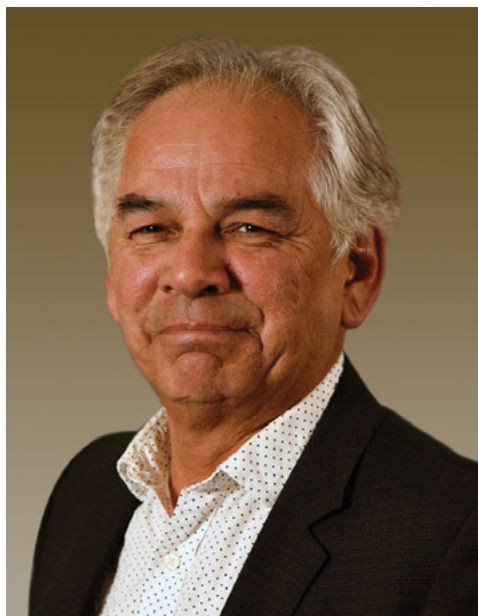
Now you are faced with your success. BRAVO.

TAPUETATISHUN

Kashikat tshui uitamatinau eshpish misha ashineun e tshitapamakuiek^u, nitshisseniten takuanikupan nanikutini patshitenimun muk^u peikuan kau tshipashikushtinitishutau, shaputue nikan tshitaitapitau. Animan tapue shutshitenitamun muk^u peikuan tshitshissenitenau ishinakuan tshetshi eka ashateieku anite tshe ui peshutishiek^u.

Tshitshizssituatauat tshikanishanuat, tshimushuminuat, tshukuminat, tshissinuapamatauat uinuau eka nita ka unitat utshutshishiunuau anite kaui peshutishutau at pitshanit anite tshe ituteht. Aieshkushitau aiapit pakushenitamupanit tshetshi peshutishutau anite kaui takushiniht, mitshetuaupatshishinipanit muku kau pashikupanit tshetshi uapatahk anite katshinueshkahk utassiuau kie tshinuau eukuan tsheui tatameku tshikau peshutishunau anite ua ititueieku. Tapan ishinakuan tshitinniunuau, anutshish apu kushpinanut, apu pimishkanut, apu pakatakan muku e minu-tshitapatakan peikushu ushkuin, shutshiteienitamun, pakushenitamun, ui peshutishunau anite tshe minuat takushinan. Minuenitamun tshika mishau uesh ma upime ashtakanipan eka ka tapuetatishunanut mak upime ashtakanipan patshitenitamun. Kashikat tshipikuienau.

A WORD FROM THE HONORARY PRESIDENT



Ghislain Picard

Former Regional Chief of the
Assembly of First Nations
Quebec-Labrador and Associate
Professor at HEC Montréal

Our youth needs an environment that will support and encourage them. You, as educators, and we, as parents, play a vital role in this process that aims to develop their full potential. I believe that you will persist in motivating our young peoples to advance in their studies, explore their passions, and convert obstacles into

opportunities. Together, we can instill a culture of success, where everyone can achieve their dreams. Perseverance and education are the keys that will open many doors, and I'm convinced that, together, we can achieve great things.

Thank you to each of you for your commitment and attendance at the convention. Together, let's continue to cultivate perseverance and academic success. This is how we will build a better future for our children and those of the next seven generations.



Credit : David Himbert



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR RELATIONS WITH THE FIRST NATIONS AND THE INUIT

In all populations, youth is considered a strength for the future. Young people are the leaders of tomorrow in their communities. Among the First Nations and the Inuit, 50% of members are young people.

However, student retention is a major issue that deserves our full attention. Unfortunately, Indigenous communities are not immune to the trend of increasing youth dropout rates. Our government is therefore determined to work alongside the First Nations and the Inuit to support and improve the retention and academic success of their students.

It is with this in mind that we have invested substantial sums in the success and retention of Indigenous students. This has allowed us to implement measures regarding direct support for students, the improvement of teaching materials, and the revision of programs. These measures are in line with the recommendations of the Viens Commission as well as the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. These concrete changes will bring positive results for the academic success and retention of Indigenous students.

I emphasize the importance of giving due consideration to Indigenous history and realities in programs of study by offering these concepts as early as possible in the academic careers of the Indigenous leaders of tomorrow. This is a great step forward for the recognition and reconciliation of our peoples.

I wish to mention the essential role played by the 6th edition of the Colloque sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples: this was an ideal framework for discussing current issues and challenges in Indigenous education.

I hope that, together, we will succeed in overcoming the challenge of improving academic success and retention among First Nations and Inuit youth and thereby allow them to achieve their dreams.

Ian Lafrenière

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MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD TO FIND YOUR WAY

In recent years, a major transformation has taken place in Indigenous education throughout Quebec and Canada, motivated by the intention to uphold the self-determination, governance, and cultural identity of First Peoples. Indeed, in the face of the challenges encountered in the field of education, both by First Nations and Inuit, it has become essential for our societies to offer a space allowing the expression of these peoples and the recognition of their cultures, as diverse as may be, and in all their aspects: languages, talents, interests, challenges, and world views likely to enrich life and learning journeys. The Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement of First Peoples is part of this movement, highlighting the successes, needs, and aspirations of Indigenous learners. The event is part of a decade of consultation and engagement driven by a holistic vision of First Peoples' perseverance and achievement in school, going beyond simple academic performance indicators.

With this in mind, the Convention aims to:

- give voice to a diversity of Indigenous voices to foster authentic expression of experiences and educational practices specific to their communities,
- promote dialogue, collaboration, and sharing among practitioners, teachers, students, administrators and researchers, to enrich the entire educational system,
- Recognize and explore the idea that success is not limited to graduation, but encompasses values such as happiness, self-confidence, pride and cultural identity,
- support the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge and language, as well as educational approaches that honour truth, reconciliation, and cultural safety in all educational settings.

It is in this spirit and around these motives that the Convention aspires to be a true forum for dialogue and innovation, where every voice can help shape the future of Indigenous education.

The sixth edition of the Convention was held from November 6 to 8, 2024, at the Palais des congrès de Montréal, and focused on the theme "Making your voice heard to find your way", to promote the diversity and authenticity of Indigenous voices in the context of First Peoples' educational perseverance and success. A total of 428 people took part, from several cities and First Nations communities across Canada, as well as from different sectors of activity.

The common thread of the event was dialogue and sharing of First Nations and Inuit experiences, knowledge and educational aspirations. Far from a homogenous vision of Indigenous peoples, the Convention highlighted, on the contrary, the plurality of their trajectories, languages, talents, challenges, and world views. The main intention was to give a voice to people from all age groups, as well as practitioners, teachers and allies, to explore with them the multiple paths leading to success in the broadest sense going well beyond academic performance.

More specifically, the objectives of the sixth Convention were to:

- Explore perseverance and academic success holistically by looking beyond graduation to the concepts of trust, identity and cultural pride,
- Foster dialogue between research and intervention communities around educational practices that are responsive to Indigenous realities,
- highlight intergenerational transmission, the resurgence of Indigenous languages and knowledge, reconciliation, and the development of pedagogy and tools to promote cultural safety.

These challenges stem from the need to think about Indigenous education from a broad vision of success, including well-being, self-determination, educational governance, recognition of individual and collective journeys, and the integration of reconciliatory practices across educational pedagogy and services.

The Convention's target audience is broad and collaborative: it includes teachers, professionals, managers, students and researchers from Indigenous backgrounds, as well as anyone working with First Peoples youth or interested in their success, in urban areas or communities. Through its organization, workshops and activities, the Convention strengthens ties between people working in the field of Indigenous education and provides a platform for disseminating and promoting innovative practices and research in territories here and abroad.

The Convention Journal is a continuation of this collective effort to promote Indigenous educational success. In reporting on the proposed papers, it emphasizes the uniqueness of Indigenous voices, the multiplicity of perspectives, and a focus on treating student retention and achievement more holistically than before.

The sixth edition of the Journal continues this commitment to the educational, cultural and social issues of First Peoples. Once again this year, the works on display stand out for their richness and diversity. In fact, the articles offer a vibrant panorama of research, innovative practices and critical thinking by practitioners from the Indigenous, academic, community and educational sectors.

This edition highlights the many facets of an education in transformation, centred on reconciliation, cultural safety and self-determination. It addresses, among other themes, the integration of Indigenous knowledge in school and university environments through targeted interventions, innovative collaborative projects that build bridges between youth, elders, communities and institutions, and educational approaches that respect Indigenous languages, memoirs and territorial realities.

The articles also focus on mobilizing Indigenous knowledge networks, supporting the professional development of educators struggling with the complexity of cultural issues, and valuing often-marginalized voices and perspectives. Finally, intergenerational transmission, community involvement practices and educational success stories are added to the subjects covered in this publication, which helps to rethink and sustainably enrich education systems.

In this way, the Journal of Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples touch on the lively questions posed in the contemporary context, on the subject of Indigenous education, between challenges and hopes, and creates a space for dialogue and sharing that transcends disciplinary and geographical boundaries. May this sixth edition inspire and enlighten all those working to build meaningful and just learning paths for First Peoples!



Credit : David Himbert



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6th edition

REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCES

OPENING LECTURE - LAURIE ROUSSEAU-NEPTON : FOLLOWING YOUR STAR

Laurie Rousseau-Nepton, an assistant professor at Université Laval, is the first Indigenous woman to receive a PhD in astrophysics. Prior to this position, she was a resident astronomer at the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope (CFHT) for nearly 7 years.

Her speech focused on the importance of knowing her origins in order to move forward into the future, through her own eyes and knowledge of the universe. She speaks openly about her Innu identity and the influence of her culture on her way of seeing the world and practicing science. Her journey begins in the Ashuapmushuan wildlife reserve and in Wendake, highlighting her roots and the link between her cultural heritage and her passion for science. By revealing to us her love of nature and her ability to popularize science, Laurie was able to blend the human aspect with the scientific explanations, highlighting her role as a leader, a communicator, and a determined woman in a traditionally male domain.



Credit : David Himbert

CONFERENCE - CHRISTIAN BOIVIN : TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT DRUGS: IS THERE A MIRACLE RECIPE? MY ANSWER IS NO!!!

The conference focused on his personal testimony following the death of his son Mathis, who died of an accidental overdose at the age of 15.

Christian Boivin shared the stark and painful reality of the dangers of highly potent synthetic drugs, including isotonitazene, an opioid five times stronger than fentanyl, which killed his son. He insisted on the importance of communicating with young people without moralizing or repressing them excessively, in order to make them truly aware of the risks. He deconstructed the idea of a «miracle recipe» for talking to young people, stressing instead the need to be honest, vulnerable, and open to dialogue.

The conference combined moving testimony, alarming statistics and concrete recommendations for better prevention of avoidable deaths.

The main goal was to educate young people, parents, and educators by sharing their experiences so that other families would not experience the same tragedy.



Credit : David Himbert

THEMATIC SECTIONS



**LEARNING IS A PROCESS
PRESENT IN ALL SPHERES OF LIFE**

1



APIKATEU — “SOMETHING BRAIDED” OR “HE’S BRAIDING SOMETHING”

When People and Learnings Weave Together to Provide Interdisciplinary, Culturally Relevant Education in an Innu Educational Setting.

As you read, you will encounter QR codes that will give you the opportunity to learn more about our approach, in music, photos and videos.



To tell the story of Apikateu is firstly to evoke one's roots. As a picture is worth a thousand words, we invite you to take the time to observe the illustration created by Lyne Maikan Washish, a member of the Innu community of Pessamit: the braid, the slice of a tree, the trails, the directions, the characters, their connection...



Joëlle Drouin-Poudrier (IT), Audrey Julien (CDSP), Shipiss Michel-Mckenzie (IT), Manouchka Otis (IT) Vanessa Ratté (IT)



Figure 1 : Apikateu visual identity, 2023.
Lyne Maikan Washish, Member of the Innu community of Pessamit.

THE INTERWEAVING OF OUR IDEAS AND INTENTIONS

Institut Tshakapesh (IT), in partnership with the Centre de démonstration en sciences physiques (CDSP), offers a culturally relevant teaching sequence rooted in Innu knowledge and perspectives. Like a braid, where each strand intertwines with the others to form a strong, coherent whole, the Apikateu project balances the needs of students, the aspirations of Elders and community members, and the professional well-being of school teams. Its goal is to foster the educational and identity success of Innu youth (Blanchet-Cohen et al. 2021).

Apikateu is also an interdisciplinary teaching sequence rooted in winter. It is intended for third-level elementary groups in Innu schools. Its development and implementation process have always been conceived in a spirit of co-creation between our two organizations and the member schools. Our intention is inspired by the symbolism of braiding, which expresses the strength of unity and cooperation. The idea is to mobilize approaches that promote both autonomy and interdependence among those involved in sequencing education, with a view to improving the transmission of Indigenous cultures, values, realities, knowledge, and perspectives. (Campeau, 2021) The skilful interweaving of these elements is relevant to student learning and skills development. So, naturally, this project is in line with the aims of the Quebec school curriculum (MEQ, 2006).

We are aware that this article presents our approach without offering a «recipe.» With Apikateu, we deliberately move away from traditional and colonial approaches such as workbooks, structured teaching guides, sequential learning stages, linear processes, and fixed models. Guided by the wealth of our experiences, our pedagogical intuition, and a deep respect for the cultural dynamics specific to each community, we are building a vibrant, holistic, constantly improving, and meaningful approach. The goal is to offer educational environments a flexible and open framework that can be harmonized according to their needs and pace.

Just as the strands of a braid uphold and reinforce one another, this communication serves as our means to share our collaborative methodology with the hope of inspiring other communities and, in exchange, gaining insights from the experiences of others. This article allows you to understand how our team goes about braiding this project.

Nimamitunenitenan - Nuauapamananat - Nitatuainan - Nitaitapinan

Throughout the weaving of the Apikateusequence, we want to keep in touch with the teaching teams. Certainly, we wish to root ourselves in Indigenous pedagogy (Campeau, 2021, and Campeau, Ouellet, and Wylde, 2024) while maintaining a clear and understanding perspective on the effects that a change in perspectives and practices could have on the teaching staff (Colerette, Lauzier, and Schneider, 2021 and Girard, 2021).

Therefore, to maintain the link with teaching teams, it is essential to identify and consider their concerns. We must accompany them in the implementation of the teaching sequence and throughout its evolution (Bareil, 2004). Our aim is to provide them with the tools they need, while recognizing their need for autonomy. Teachers must be able to adapt to the proposed planning and have creative space in relation to it. These are requests that they have legitimately expressed and that we want to consider (Guay and Gagnon, 2020).

With goodwill, our team seeks to engage and motivate school teams in the Apikateu project (LeBortef, 2015). To establish this trust, we present the qualities of the proposed approaches—their roots in Innu culture and language, their feasibility, and their fit with the Quebec school program. We insist on this last point, knowing that the Innu schools refer to the Quebec system to ensure the passage of students into other education systems. Although the Apikateu teaching differs from conventional teaching, we want to reassure the teaching staff that it allows for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills in compliance with the official education system of the province. This is therefore an intercultural education approach (Battiste, 2013).



Nitakashikueiapatenan - Patshuianitshuapit

Under the tent, everyone is invited, everyone can enter, everyone is equal and can find their place there, without asking (Michel-Mckenzie, 2021). It is with this in mind that we propose to rethink the school framework. We rely on collaboration between the school team, students, their families, and the community, to forge links and develop a holistic education with truth, accuracy, and honesty (Battiste, 2013).



Figure 2 : *When Two Rivers Merge into One*, 2020. Source: Illustration by Alexandra Uniam, Naskapi artist (Huron-Wendat Training and Workforce Development Centre [CDFM], First Nations Education Council [CEFN] and Tshakapesh Institute, 2020).

Like the illustration of Competence 15, *Valuing and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge, Worldview, Culture, and History* (CDFM, CEPN, and Institut Tshakapesh, 2020), we encourage teaching teams to be like the two rivers and combine their waters. To bring together knowledge, perspectives, ways of thinking and approaches in education, we would like to connect all members of the school team—non-Indigenous and Indigenous teachers, Innu culture and language teachers, and class aids (Battiste, 2013).

While we encourage teaching teams to embrace the values of Competence 15, we warn them against adopting the posture of expert, master, or mistress in the transmission of culture, language, and identity to students. In this way, they will remain true to the principle of decolonizing education, and cultural appropriation will be transformed into cultural appreciation (Battiste, 2013). In short, it is about getting into a learning situation by surrounding oneself with people who have knowledge and by talking to students. Our team observed that this type of relationship had the effect of nurturing Indigenous students' sense of pride, which can only be beneficial to their development and lifelong learning. Identity pride is indeed for us an important determinant of the educational success of young Innu people (Blanchet-Cohen et al. 2021).



AT A PARTRIDGE PACE

The braiding of the *Apikateu* sequence began in spring 2023 and continues today, making it a living and constantly evolving project. We are a regional organization, and we work for self-determined schools. We want to offer a comprehensive, well-thought-out, turnkey teaching sequence that is also open and flexible so that each community can add their own colour to it. Adapt it to its educational and cultural realities and enrich it with its own imagination. When we meet with schools to assess and improve the program, we reaffirm our priority of balancing the needs of students, the voices of Elders and the well-being of school teams. It's the convergence of several rivers that inspires us, or the braiding of several ropes. Indeed, along the way, we are regularly reminded of the deeper meaning of the word *Apikateu*. In the longer term, our aim is to continue interweaving our ideas with those of the schools, in a process of balanced co-construction, to build a sustainable, decolonized educational model. We want to join forces and knowledge to create a culturally relevant educational environment where each student finds the keys to their success (Toulouse, 2016). Collaboration is the key to academic success, and by working together and putting learners at the heart of our commitment and mission, we are committed to building a better future for Indigenous youth.

Naushunek^u auen tshe uitshi-atussemek^u. Tshinuau an tshitshissenitenau kie tshinuau an tshitshissenitamunuau tshe kanuenitamek^u



PERSPECTIVES

Mobilizing Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education goes far beyond simply passing on knowledge; it is based on valuing the skills and competencies that are essential to the cultural security and development of students. (Aurousseau and al2025). It is about empowering Indigenous youth to take pride in their culture, build a strong identity and live in a respectful and inclusive educational environment (Blanchet-Cohen and al., 2021). This approach of providing students with meaningful learning that prepares them for the future while honouring their history, worldviews, traditions and cultural practices certainly contributes to the decolonization of educational practices (Sioui, 1989). As for braiding, it symbolizes, more than any other image, the harmonization of reflections and actions at the heart of the *Apikateu* project, fostering a respectful and rewarding learning environment for all involved.

Reading our article may raise questions and awaken a desire to take action. We hope to inspire other communities by illustrating that *Apikateu* was born from the desire to co-construct a holistic teaching sequence, rooted in Innu knowledge, traditions, values, perspectives, and realities, while fully respecting the desire for self-determination of communities and school teams.

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KWE L'UNIVERSITÉ!: PREPARING, PERSEVERING AND SUCCEEDING TOGETHER



Isabelle Savard

BACKGROUND

Following a meeting organized by the *Table de travail sur les réalités autochtones* (TTRA) of the Université du Québec network, Isabelle Savard (Université TÉLUQ) and Marco Bacon (then Director of the *Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite*, UQAC) explored the idea of developing a distance propaedeutic program to assist Indigenous people who wish to pursue university education in preparing for it without leaving their environment. Soon, Hugo Asselin (Director of *École d'études autochtones* of UQAT) joined the team. This was the beginning of a productive and constructive partnership between TÉLUQ, UQAC and UQAT.



Mylène Girard

As part of an analysis of the needs, characteristics, and realities of Indigenous students, persistent challenges related to the colonial legacy of the education system were highlighted or confirmed, such as the need to leave one's community to go to university (Savard, Campeau, Bolduc and Asselin, 2021). It therefore seemed essential to offer a **distance** propaedeutic. It was also intended to address "pressing needs and calls for action from the most recent commissions of inquiry" (pp. 18–19). These needs go beyond the scope of a simple propaedeutic, the Kwe l'Université! portal was created.

When we arrive at university without the CEGEP experience, which applies to numerous Indigenous students, we are not sufficiently prepared. The propaedeutic program precisely helps to develop the skills of being a student, and it allows this to be done before starting our courses and developing disciplinary skills, because acquiring both at the same time is more difficult.

– Mylène Girard, Advisor, UQAC
Member of the Portal Management team



Brigitte Belzile

The result of five years in the making, the *Kwe l'Université!* portal was launched at the 6th Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievements for First Peoples in Montréal in November 2024. The purpose of this article is to introduce the portal and its many resources for Indigenous people pursuing or considering university education, as well as the committed team that contributed to its development.

1- PORTAL PRESENTATION

The portal's main objective is to promote access for Indigenous people to higher education, and to help these students persevere and succeed throughout their university career. More specifically, it is about supporting Indigenous people before and during their university education by providing them with a space of support and resources that meet their needs.

The *Kwe l'Université!* portal is, foremost, a safe space, with particular attention been paid to its consistency with Indigenous cultures. The idea behind *Kwe l'Université!* is to create a sense of community between Indigenous people who attend or want to go to university, and between them and the actors in the field.



Marie-Ève Cleary



Gilles Ross

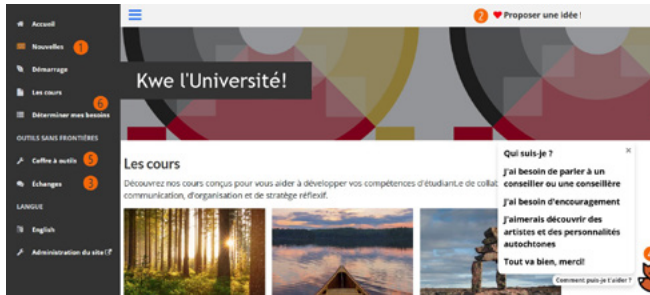
The portal will enable us to build a learning community where support is felt, even when not physically present. In our communities, when help is needed, we turn to someone. It is the same in university: you should not hesitate to seek support.

– Natacha Savard
Member of the Huron-Wendat Nation and Member of the Kwe l'Université! Portal Development team




Hugo Asselin

Any Indigenous person pursuing or planning to pursue a university education is welcome to join the portal and can register at no cost. It has an intuitive interface that is easy to navigate.



2- A PLACE FOR DISCUSSION, SHARING AND MUTUAL HELP

One of the portal's vocations is to be an information hub, hence the creation of a "Nouvelles" (News) section¹. This allows users to be aware of procedures, scholarships, and grants for Indigenous people, the success of members of the *Kwe University! Community*, as well as other important and relevant news.

The "*Proposer une idée*" tool², for its part, provides a platform for learning and learning support community members to share their needs. Proposed ideas can be supported through a voting system in the form of hearts  and can also be enriched by additions and suggestions. This tool helps the portal team to prioritize future developments—such as new courses—and to meet expectations and needs.

"*Échanges*" section³ is a discussion forum where members can share tips and tricks, share experiences and help each other.

You need those around you, support, but also people who are experiencing the same realities as you.

– **Gilles Ross, Advisor, UQAT**
Member of the Portal Management team

Finally, the "*Petit-Renard*" (Little Fox)⁴ feature provides individuals who visit the portal with access to encouragement messages recorded by artists or members of various Indigenous communities in Quebec. The team would like to extend its warmest thanks to all these people for their inspiring and motivating testimonies!

3- TOOLS AND PERSONALIZED SUPPORT

In the "*Coffre à outils*" (Tool Box) section⁵, students can find resources relevant to their studies, such as stress management tools and micro-modules for perfecting French (language of instruction).

Additional tools can also be available for those filling out the form in the "*Déterminer mes besoins*" (Determine my Needs) section⁶. Indeed, this form helps to understand the requesters' specific needs and aspirations, making it then possible to recommend relevant accompanying resources, to offer support services to facilitate their university career, and guide them to courses that match their goals.

These forms are analyzed by our team of three advisors to the Indigenous student community: Marie-Ève Cleary (TELUQ), Gilles Ross (UQAT) and Mylène Girard (UQAC). Their role in the portal is to provide personalized support to anyone who needs it—regardless of their home university—answer questions, guide, support and listen.

University can often seem like an insurmountable challenge. Do not hesitate to contact us, we are here to make your task as simple as possible.

– **Marie-Ève Cleary**
Advisor, TELUQ, and Member of the Kwe l'Université! Management team

Ask a question and things will get better. No matter who you ask, it's sure to get you going!

– **Gilles Ross**
Counsellor, UQAT, and Member of the Portal Management team

Real people will answer your questions, not a robot or an anonymous system. In addition, it's really our expertise to support Indigenous university students—we do this every day.

– **Mylène Girard**
Counsellor, UQAC, and Member of the Portal Management team



To view the presentations by each of these three resource individuals, please visit the Kwe l'Université! portal home page.

4- CULTURALLY RELEVANT COURSES

Kwe l'Université! portal courses are intended to help Indigenous people prepare for university while remaining in their community. They also allow them to develop or update essential skills at a distance to succeed in university.

CEGEP is not included in the portal, but we can assist students in cultivating the skills they would have honed at the CEGEP level.

- **Gilles Ross**
Counsellor, UQAT, and Member of the Portal Management team

The skills profile for students, upon which the portal and its courses are designed, is modelled after the **Medicine Wheel**, a symbol representing the worldview of various First Nations communities (Loiselle & McKenzie, 2009). Like the medicine wheel, of the Kwe l'Université! portal's wheel, designed in its initial version by Natacha Savard, structures learning according to four dimensions: mental, emotional, spiritual and physical.

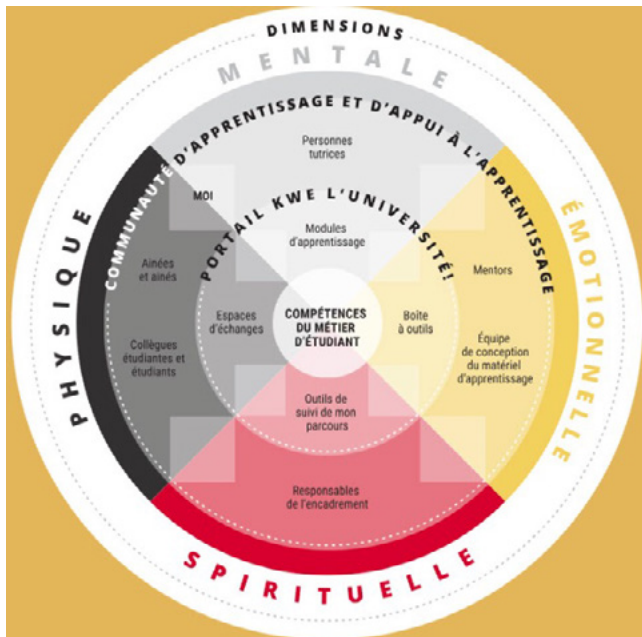


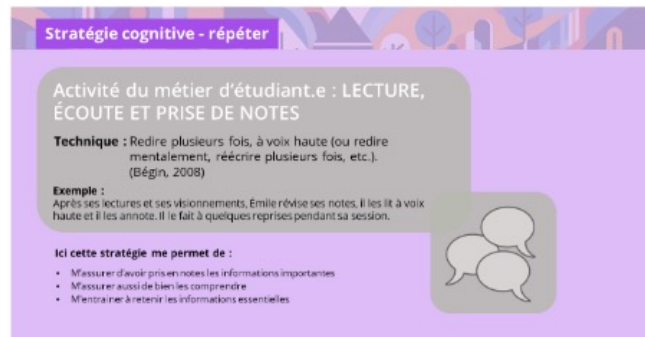
Figure 1 : Kwe l'Université! portal wheel

The student skills profile, developed by the portal team, highlights key roles such as collaboration, communication, organization and reflexive strategy.

All courses contribute to the development of the competency profile and provide evidence of competency levels achieved. This evidence is integrated into a portfolio that allows students to better plan their courses, and the partner institutions to have an accurate record of the skills developed.

Three courses are offered, but more will be added in the coming months. **En harmonie avec mon temps d'étude** (In Tune with my Study Time) and **À la pêche à l'essentiel** (Fishing for Essentials) are already accessible courses while **Mieux me connaître pour garder mon équilibre** (Getting to Know Myself Better to Keep my Balance) is currently in production. These courses offer concrete strategies and tools to support Indigenous people, both in their preparation for university and throughout their study journey.

Rooted in Indigenous values, the courses propose a variety of practical strategies and resources, such as time management tools, a card game on learning strategies (reading, listening, communication, note taking), work habits that promote balance of body, heart, head and mind, solutions to avoid procrastination and effectively organize one's session, tips for managing the unexpected, etc.



These strategies and tools, sometimes accompanied by testimonials from other First Nations students, are intended to help members progress peacefully in their studies, regardless of their academic institution. The first courses are now available through TELUQ and more will soon be offered by partner universities. Courses can be delivered asynchronously, with the key distinction being their "boxed" format, which enables access without an internet connection. This way, individuals interested can become familiar with university studies without having to leave their living environment.

Everything is in place to assist us; it feels inviting, and what we learn is extremely practical.

- **Dave**
Course Student, En harmonie avec mon temps d'étude

5- KWE L'UNIVERSITÉ! TEAM

Isabelle Savard, Professor at TELUQ University, is the general manager of the project. She is supported by Brigitte Belzile, Educational Development Coordinator. She, in turn, is responsible for supervising the work of students from different programs (Educational Technology, Distance Learning, IT) engaged in creating the material for the portal's learning community.

It is important to mention that most of the portal development team consists of members from the three First Nations communities involved in the initial stages of the project: Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, Kitchisakik, and Mashteuiatsh. Several other collaborators have joined this team, including Nicolas Boulet-Lavoie, an IT analyst. The entire team is presented on the portal home page.

We are three institutions and a whole community within the portal; we are stronger to help. Together, we are stronger.

– **Isabelle Savard**
Professor, Université TELUQ, General Manager of the project.

CONCLUSION

The *Kwe l'Université!* portal aims to broaden its offerings shortly by incorporating synchronous webinars and launching a Facebook page that includes the "Messenger" tool for easier interaction. These initiatives will create interactive and motivating learning spaces and strengthen connections between Indigenous communities and academic institutions.

Because *Kwe l'Université!* is built on the strength of Indigenous communities and committed inter-university collaboration, we invite you to take part in this project that brings knowledge, sharing, and success!

No matter how old you are, it's never too late to learn. I am 41 years old and proud to continue studying [...] We need trained people who will come back to their community and bring their knowledge home.

– **Natacha Savard**
Member of the Huron-Wendat Nation and Member of the *Kwe l'Université!* Portal Development team!

*It's now up to us to come alive within *Kwe l'Université!**

– **Dave**
Course Student, En harmonie avec mon temps d'étude

The *Kwe l'Université!* portal is an initiative supported by: FODED (Fonds d'aide au développement de l'enseignement à distance), Université du Québec and Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (Programme soutien aux membres des communautés autochtones).

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ACCOMPANIMENT TO SUCCESS

SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Jérémie Paradis

INTRODUCTION

Fluency in the language of instruction is a determining factor for university success. For Indigenous students, in particular, difficulties related to the language of instruction can be a significant barrier to their academic journey (Loiselle and Legault, 2010; Sarmiento, 2017, cited in Savard et al., 2021, p. 14). To address these challenges, we offer a microlearning course on identifying the grammatical gender of nouns in French aimed at Indigenous students pursuing university training programs in French.

This introductory micromodule offered in the Portail Kwe toolbox is aimed at students needing temporary language support, for instance, to resolve uncertainty over a grammatical rule that impedes the writing of an assignment. By following a micromodule, the student can clarify a specific point and continue writing more confidently.

SPECIFIC LANGUAGE CHALLENGES IN AN INDIGENOUS ACADEMIC CONTEXT.

French, not being a native language and more of a language of instruction, can represent a fundamental challenge that affects the four essential language skills: written and oral expression, and written and oral comprehension. In the context of academia, problems arise in various forms: a constrained understanding of scholarly vocabulary, recurring errors in oral expression (including issues with grammatical gender, tense consistency, prepositions, and connectors), and unique difficulties in understanding written text, particularly in distinguishing the “é” and “è” sounds that affect the comprehension of tense in verbs.

This is all the more complex given that Indigenous cultures have traditionally emphasized oral communication in the transmission of knowledge (Demers, 2016; Maheux et al., 2020; Loiselle and Legault, 2010; Sarmiento, 2017, found in Savard et al., 2021). Student hypermobility also creates frequent transitions, potentially compromising essential learning. In this context, approaches such as micro-learning and adapted tools offer relevant solutions to the specific needs of Indigenous learners. (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2021).

The Pedagogical Approach

Our approach is based on form-centred teaching (Lee and Lyster, 2023). This research shows that 80% of grammatical genres in French can be predicted by the morphological ending of words, providing an accelerated learning opportunity by targeting the most frequent and reliable endings (Tucker et al. in Edmonds et al., 2020, p. 737).

This approach is part of microlearning, characterized by three essential elements:

- Intentional content fragmentation (Parisot, 2021; Alias et al., 2023; Allela et al., 2020; Choudhary et al., 2023)
- Just-in-time learning that meets immediate needs (Parisot, 2021),
- Personalization according to learners' individual goals (Choudhary et al., 2023)

Microlearning goes beyond a simple cut-out of courses; it is active teaching enhanced by digital tools, where learning objectives are presented in short sessions (Sankaranarayanan et al. 2022, p. 260).

THE KWE L'UNIVERSITÉ PORTAL: AN ADAPTED PLATFORM

The Kwe l'Université! portal offers learning modules and a toolbox designed to support the academic success of Indigenous students. This asynchronous, remotely accessible and online learning platform is supported by several institutions in Universités du Québec network, including TÉLUQ, UQAT and UQAC.

Among other things, the portal's toolbox will offer short courses, including the first micromodule of help in French on grammatical gender instruction. This solution addresses the constraints of limited Internet in some communities and the lack of adequate resources in French as a language of instruction, while offering an alternative to digital versions requiring a constant and fast Internet connection.

A SYSTEM FOR AUTOMATIC GENERATION OF QUESTIONS

The main innovation of the micromodule is its automatic question creation system.

This system is based on two key elements:

First, a table contains all the information to generate grammatical gender identification questions. Then the questions are generated and offer detailed feedback that places each word in three different contexts:

- The academic context, showing how the word is used in academic circles
- The literary context, illustrating its use in fiction
- The daily context, presenting its use in everyday situations.

FLEXIBLE AND AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

One of the educational intentions of our project is to provide lifelong learning: before, during and even after university. Using microlearning and an asynchronous learning method, students learn according to their needs.

It is learning that adapts to the pedagogical needs and interests of learners. These exercises are ungraded and focus on learning per se, fostering a non-punitive and encouraging approach.

CONCLUSION

The development of the grammatical gender identification micromodule represents a concrete and innovative response to the specific challenges faced by Indigenous students in their university careers. This initiative addresses one of the fundamental language obstacles while respecting the technological, temporal and cultural constraints of learners.

Eventually, the toolbox will be enriched with new modules addressing other aspects of the French language and academic skills. It represents an important step towards higher education that is more inclusive and respectful of Indigenous realities. By facilitating access to educational resources that are culturally appropriate for learners and meet their immediate needs, the Kwe l'Université Portal contributes significantly to the goal of reconciliation through education and self-determination for Indigenous peoples in the academic setting.

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USING RESEARCH TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BY AND FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



**Héroïse Pelletier
Gagnon**



Audrey Pinsonnault



Sarah Fraser

BACKGROUND

Quebec Native Friendship Centres promote the academic perseverance of young people while fostering mutually beneficial collaboration with educational actors. In 2022, after conducting an internal review process, the Native Friendship Centre Movement adopted a provincial education strategy (CIRAQ, 2022b), emphasizing the promotion of Indigenous languages and cultures alongside lifelong learning (RCAAQ, 2016; Savard, 2023). In this vein, and based on research results, the RCAAQ created and published in 2022 the *Guide to Welcoming and Including Indigenous Students in Quebec Elementary and Secondary Schools* (RCAAQ, 2022a). This tool aims to ensure the mobilization of relevant and up-to-date knowledge on the realities and needs of Indigenous students in urban areas.

Intended for Quebec schools, this guide was developed based on the challenges observed in the field by teams from centres that work with First Peoples youth and their families in several cities. It aims to better equip school workers on a variety of topics, including school transitions and systemic barriers faced by Indigenous students attending elementary and secondary schools in urban areas. We know, for example, that the family, cultural and social realities of Indigenous students are often overlooked and ignored in schools. This results in discontinuous educational pathways and low graduation rates (RCAAQ, 2020).

The use of this guide in schools is now the subject of collaborative research, which are discussed in this article.



RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE AND COLLABORATIONS

The RCAAQ, through the *Observatoire des réalités autochtones urbaines*, advocates an action-oriented research method, to respond concretely and rapidly to the needs and aspirations of Native Friendship Centres. While research may be conducted independently by the RCAAQ team, it is also sometimes achieved in collaboration with centres and with other research teams respecting the *Research Framework by and for Urban Indigenous in Quebec* (RCAAQ, 2021). This framework is the result of a collective effort. It describes the principles that should guide the research: acknowledgement, reciprocity, agency, and relevance. The RCAAQ's approach is rooted in the desire to place research at the service of the centres' mission, while giving pride of place to Indigenous knowledge and expertise.



Research collaborations are based on mutually beneficial relationships of trust. It is in this spirit that the relationship between the RCAAQ and the Université de Montréal's MYRIAGONE-McConnell Research Chair has been built over time. Centred around the mobilization of youth knowledge and partnership research, the MYRIAGONE Chair focuses on social inequalities affecting young people at the intersection of health, education, work, and well-being. As part of an ongoing research project, MYRIAGONE is seeking to identify promising practices for the well-being of First Peoples students in schools. The follow-up committee is made up of several First Nations organizations, including the RCAAQ. The research is structured to answer questions from these organizations. Those of the RCAAQ concern the *Guide to Welcoming and Including Indigenous Students*, published in 2022. Is it used and appreciated in schools? How is it used? Does it facilitate collaboration?

METHODS

As part of this research project, several methods were deployed, including one-on-one interviews (10) and group interviews (3) with key school actors (principals, teachers, liaison officers and First Nations and Inuit respondents). After sending recruitment emails to over 500 schools, interviews were conducted virtually from September to December 2024. First Nations youth had their say at two youth knowledge mobilization events. Analysis of past partnership projects was also conducted to highlight what is already being done on the ground and to hear from Indigenous youth without over-soliciting them. Many of the RCAAQ's research, evaluation, and co-construction efforts were effectively utilized.

LEARNING

For the purposes of this publication, we will focus on learnings from the guide created by the RCAAQ, as well as the learnings from research collaborations.

Improving and transforming school practices

Firstly, it is interesting to note that several participants know and appreciate the tool created by the RCAAQ. Participants explained that the guide raises awareness and educates school staff to the realities of First Peoples, in addition to providing links to complementary educational tools. Feedback from the participants indicated that the guide represents a significant asset in their context, especially when initiating conversations on the approaches and strategies to be adopted to more effectively fulfill the needs of First Peoples students.

It is good that you mention the Guide, because we are thinking about a second phase for our School Service Centre, and it is something that would be worth opening again. For sure, I will go back to it for the transition issues, how we can better support them. Reading this tool again will be relevant. (p. 10)

It's a great opportunity for reflection. Before, we would welcome students whenever. Now we welcome them on Wednesdays. Our FNI Officer (First Nations and Inuit) is available, and the schedule is lightened. This comes from the Welcome and Inclusion Guide. (p. 7)

Far from being trivial, this transformation in the practices of some schools has led to a more personalized welcome and better support for First Peoples students who change schools during the year. Participants working in areas that are further removed from major urban centres also mentioned using the Guide, adjusting it to the reality of their community.

It was also noted that FNI liaison and responder staff play a key role in engaging other school actors (teachers, principals, etc.) and using the RCAAQ Welcome and Inclusion Guide. Initially, they introduce the tool to those involved in the educational setting, then guide them to sections that can address the expressed needs and tackle the challenges faced. This approach also helps to address the frequent issue of time scarcity that is highlighted concerning the utilization of tools by educational professionals.

When I send it to people, I refer pages directly to them. I use it mainly when there is the Medicine Wheel and everything related to learning, difficulties. Sometimes, people working in schools see the tip of the iceberg; they see that the student is having trouble, but they don't see the "why". They're pounding on the top of the iceberg, but it's useless because you have everything else underneath. (p. 3)

The Guide is therefore a tool that accompanies some FNI officers and workers in their practices of supporting teaching staff. In fact, several participants noted that one-on-one and personalized contact with school actors is necessary to ensure the proper use of available tools, thereby improving the cultural safety of school environments.

Building strengths together to better mobilize knowledge

One of the main findings of this research is the power of collaboration: by weaving our expertise together, through a knowledge mobilization approach, we are broadening our respective fields of action. This web of relationships allows us to work on different fronts, but in a complementary way. Indeed, the RCAAQ has taken action, by creating the Welcome and Inclusion Guide, which is now being taken a step further with MYRIAGONE, since the Chair is interested in the use of the Guide in schools and is pursuing research in this direction. This research project helps to bring the Guide to life and support its use. Moreover, it is by discussing the Guide during the interviews that we were able to highlight existing knowledge and meet certain needs of the participants, including the need to have access to tools that are consistent with the values and cultures of the First Peoples and recognized by Indigenous communities and organizations.

As such, this research partnership between RCAAQ and MYRIAGONE enables both organizations to advocate on behalf of Indigenous students where their voices are most meaningful. In so doing, reflections and debates are engaged and pursued, supporting social transformations that could improve the well-being of First Peoples students in Quebec schools.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between the RCAAQ and MYRIAGONE is based on concrete ways to practise reciprocity in research. RCAAQ provided its expertise to the ongoing research, which in turn served the interests of the follow-up committee of which RCAAQ was a member. In addition, during the interviews, the research team sought to reward participants by providing them with tools that could help them meet their specific needs, including the CIRAQ Guide (when it was not known).

The findings of our interviews lead us to want to continue this work together. First, participants emphasized the importance of relationships and reciprocity in their day-to-day work with school teams, but also with Indigenous organizations, families, and students. This relational need appears central in this approach. It calls on us to dismantle barriers within educational environments, integrate First Nations cultures into schools, and offer services that are culturally relevant and safe. *"A connection with organizations and network of relations is to be done before having more concrete tools"* (p. 2). As highlighted in the study carried out by Blanchet-Cohen in collaboration with the RCAAQ (2021), it is important to establish new foundations in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in order to allow active participation of Indigenous people and real inclusion of their cultural references in school environments, which sometimes requires structural adjustments.

The interviews also highlighted the dedication and outstanding work of several actors working in school settings to support the well-being of First Peoples students. However, these resource persons frequently lead efforts for Indigenous students by themselves, since these initiatives are scarcely part of the structure. To prevent those involved from losing motivation, it is crucial to establish opportunities for sharing and outreach.

Finally, the interviews highlighted the need for all actors in the school environment to take responsibility for the education and support necessary for the well-being of First Peoples students in Quebec schools. *"We had to get started; it's a responsibility we have. We can no longer say: I am not talking about Indigenous realities because I am not comfortable"* (p. 8). Greater ease necessarily requires the development of cultural sensitivity and competence among school staff (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2022). This type of effort is worthwhile, because implementing measures to improve the educational experience of Indigenous students generally brings benefits for all students, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous (Battiste, 2013).

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KISKINOHAMATASOWIN, TEACHING ROOTED IN THE LAND

Education, Pride, and Perseverance for Young Atikamekw from Manawan.



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The research projects we have developed in recent years (Jérôme et al., 2020, 2021, and 2024) in partnership with the people of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok—actors of knowledge transfer processes in the cultural and educational settings of the Atikamekw community of Manawan (Lanaudière, Quebec)—made it possible to highlight the importance of the Atikamekw concept of *Kiskinohamatasowin*, which means “land-based education”. By *Kiskinohamatasowin*, it is necessary to understand the tools and strategies that parents or grandparents use to convey lessons based on experience and direct observation of the land (Simpson, 2016). This concept must be distinguished from that of education (*Kiskinohamatasowin*), which is considered more as a formal and compulsory process of structured learning within the school framework and curricula. But what precisely are the values, principles and normative orders associated with *Kiskinohamatasowin*? What are the tools, strategies, know-how, interpersonal skills—in short, the specific knowledge (Barth, 1995) associated with this concept? How can it enlighten and inspire teaching practices that respect Atikamekw conceptions of knowledge transmission, and, therefore, promote success and retention in school? In this article, we propose to review different aspects of the *Matakan Project. Forest schools*. We will show how a community-university partnership research project can enhance the voices of Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok youth while creating a space for solidarity, commitment, perseverance and success, aiming at social change, whether through the governance structure, the development of activities or the achievements and creations of young people.

MATAKAN PROJECT: TEACHINGS IN THE TERRITORY OR PATHS OF TRANSMISSION

The Matakan Project. École de la forêt. Forest at School was created in 2016 from a relationship of trust between Laurent Jérôme, current Co-Director of the project with Sakay Ottawa, and Patrick Moar, Coordinator of Tourisme Manawan from 2016 to 2022. For the eight consecutive year in 2025, this partnership between the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan, Otapi Secondary School, Tourisme Manawan, and a team of researchers and students from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) allowed the organization of two-week transmission camps in the territory with and for high school youth. These camps take place on the Matakan site, located on Lake Kempt (Opockoteiak sakihikanik), a site that has mainly been used to welcome tourists since 2009. The teams from Tourisme Manawan and Otapi Secondary School wanted to enable members of the community of Manawan, especially young people, to visit this site in order to strengthen its ancestral vocation as camping, meetings and transmission place. Other Atikamekw knowledge teaching activities were organized in winter (ice fishing) and fall (hunting, trapping), hence promoting Atikamekw knowledge related to the six seasons (Poirier, 2014; Jérôme et al. 2021; Jérôme et al. 2024). The project facilitates the transmission of Atikamekw knowledge by implementing and documenting these activities within the territory (Forest at School), as well as by evaluating their incorporation into the school system (Forest at School), to enhance the cultural aspects of curricula (Cornthassel and Hardbarger, 2019).

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE TO FOSTER SUCCESS

The Matakan project is managed by a governance structure that draws on the expertise of the various partners. Since 2016, Sakay Ottawa, Principal of Otapi Secondary School and Laurent Jérôme, Anthropologist and Professor at UQAM, have co-led the project. An interdisciplinary and intergenerational steering committee has been formed. It is composed of a representative from the Direction des services éducation de Manawan (Annette Dubé-Vollant) from the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan (Sipi Flamand, current Chief of the community), from the coordinator of Tourisme Manawan (Patrick Moar then Debby Flamand), from the cultural officer at Otapi Secondary School (Matna Ottawa-Dubé), and from UQAM research assistants. (Étienne Levac, Alma Marin, Camille Ouellet). This governance structure is notably responsible for ensuring that the activities planned in the summer and during the year, whether on the territory or at school, are in line with the values and principles conveyed by *Kiskinohamakewin*.

The various transmission spaces created as part of the project increase the pride of young people and contribute to strengthening their sense of belonging to school (Jérôme, Levac and Quitich-Dubé, 2024; Goulet, 2005). The project enables young people to meet, enhance their understanding of each other, and forge connections with numerous experts, cultural mediators, leaders, and Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok Elders involved in the activities. Here, the role of the cultural agent, Matna Ottawa-Dubé, is decisive. As a young Atikamekw working in high school, Matna Ottawa-Dubé was taught by her grandfather's brother, Joseph Ottawa, an Elder and senior member of the community, who attends the summer transmission camps each year. Matna Ottawa-Dubé therefore plays, in turn, the role of cultural mediator within the school and the Matakan project (Boucher, 2005; Lavoie, 1999; Goulet and Trigoso, 2005; CNA, 2020), promoting success among students.

PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Over the years, community and Atikamekw Nation members have engaged in the Matakan Project. The Elder and craftsman Benoît Ottawa, who died in 2022, left a lasting legacy that continues to influence the young people and teams of the project today. He spent each of the weeks teaching young people the skills associated with birch bark (making baskets, canoes and calls) and tanning moose skin, among others. Elder Joseph Ottawa, a senior member of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, reinforces the contents of the teachings by sharing stories and songs. He also conducts mapping workshops with young people, transmitting to them the toponymy of the territory and the stories surrounding certain places while highlighting the intimate links of the oral tradition with the territory.

The coordination of Tourisme Manawan (Patrick Moar, 2016–2022; Debby Flamand, 2022-in progress) also plays a decisive role. For example, Patrick Moar shared his knowledge related to the history of the site, economic development or links with other nations. Debby Flamand

shared lessons related to ceremonies as well as the role of women and grandmothers in the community (Basile, 2017). An active member of the *Cercle des femmes de Manawan* (Manawan Women's Circle) and several community healing initiatives, her presence on the team is essential to community mobilization around the Matakan project. The project also relies on the school's teachers, such as Marie-Claude Nequado, a multidisciplinary Atikamekw artist and art teacher at the Otapi school. Through creative workshops, she allows young people to become familiar with craft techniques, while expressing their artistic identities. Thanks to the commitment of these Elders, experts, and cultural mediators, young people are able each year to improve their skills and understanding, as well as increase their self-esteem by engaging in handicraft and art projects.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVE IN CHOOSING THEMES

The summer transmission camps are deployed each year around a different theme, generally chosen by the students of the school following a consultation proposed by the teachers. At the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, the theme of the year 2020 was particularly evocative of the importance of maintaining transmission camps in the territory: "The Forest and Laughter as Deconfinement". Reflecting on diverse issues surrounding the preservation of Atikamekw knowledge was made possible by the themes of 2021, Notcimik otinetan mackowisiwin—Draw our Strength from the Forest, and 2023, Ni kicteriten kiapatt e nehirowimoian—I am Proud to Still Speak my Language. In 2024, the project honoured women's knowledge, particularly that of kokoms (grandmothers), through the example of Kokom Cotit. Judith (Cotit) Kawiasiketc was a territorial chief, a healer who mastered traditional medicine and ceremonial knowledge, but also a renowned craftsman in snowshoe weaving techniques.

Tracing the thread of activities

The daily life in the Matakan camps consists of both workshops for transmitting and teaching Atikamekw knowledge, free periods, and excursions into the territory (site interpretations, fishing, etc.). The program includes hands-on activities (embroidery, bark work), workshops (stories, cartography), conferences (legal traditions, Atikamekw perspective on history) and games (canoe races). With the recurrent participation of some young people over the years, workshops are adapted in various formats to experiment and learn about multiple facets of Atikamekw culture. The participation of Uhu Labos Nomades (Stéphane Nepton), an Indigenous organization with expertise in digital content, or the Nitaskinan coop (Tapiskwan art Atikamekw project on Atikamekw visual heritage, Karine Awashish) enabled young people to familiarize themselves with 3D digitization, photogrammetry and macro photography, highlighting the territory as well as Atikamekw visual and material heritage. In general, creation (objects, arts, paintings, embroidery, etc.) reinforces the participants' sense of success and perseverance, values that they then transpose once at school.

Atikamekw research assistants

The organization and operation of the Matakan camps require a team with multiple expertise. Logistical coordination is provided by a UQAM student and a post-secondary student from Manawan. One or two other post-secondary Atikamekw students serve as research assistants each summer (Charest, 2006). Each of them develops and conducts a research project according to their personal interests and the theme of the camps. These assistants participate in the documentation and enhancement of Atikamekw knowledge, while becoming familiar with methods of data collection and analysis from an Indigenous perspective (Blanchet-Cohen, Drouin-Gagné, Dufour, E. and Picard, 2021). The Matakan project therefore serves as a place of learning at different levels for these young people, both in terms of research practices and through the meeting with Elders, experts and cultural mediators from their community.

CONCLUSION

The voices, presence, and perspectives of young people flow through the entire project, whether in the governance structure, achievements and activities, creations or programming, but also in the assigned roles and responsibilities within the team. Several young people are involved as researchers or cultural mediators, guides or mentors, hence reinforcing the pride of being Atikamekw Nehirowisiw. The principle of solidarity and commitment is a central aspect of an approach that is in line with the concerns of the educational services and the secondary school of Manawan. According to several actors, young people experiencing in these camps also learn the values of perseverance that they then try to apply in school. Many young people want to return year after year. Many started or developed their graduate projects after participating as research assistants.

In May 2025, a gathering of nearly 50 partners gathered in Manawan to share past achievements, future projects and the relevance of bringing together skills, knowledge, and ideas around this territory teaching theme. All invited partners expressed the desire to continue and develop this approach. This development will expand into different locations, focusing on the other two Atikamekw communities of Wemotaci and Opitciwan, along with the Innu communities (Basse Côte Nord, Quebec), parts of Western Canada, and Brazil. In the meantime, the project team and the youth of Manawan offered to pay tribute to Elder and senior community member, Joseph Ottawa, through the 2025 theme of the camps: *Ni ka mirawok kaskina ka ki mirikowian kiskeritamowin. I will pass on to them the teachings I have received.*

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**LEARNING IS A WHOLE
THAT IS MORE THAN
THE SUM OF ITS PARTS**

2



FLIGHT OF THE GOOSE: THE STORY OF INDIGENIZATION AT THE CSSRDS

This article is developed by members of the *Indigenization Pilot Project team* at Centre des services scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay.



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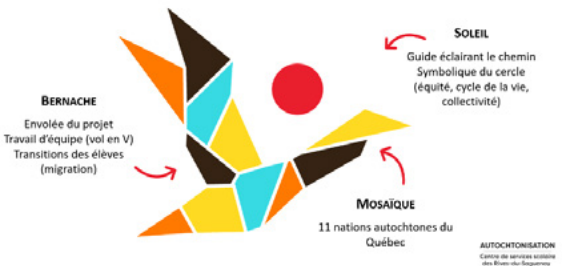
This article is a sharing of practices.

The Centre de services scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay (CSSRDS) implemented an innovative Indigenization pilot project in 2022. Since then, each school year, the goose, the project's identity image, takes flight.

The goose analogy symbolizes team spirit, which with dedication and commitment, implements initiatives to support the educational success of First Nations and Inuit (FNI) students, in addition to showcasing the teaching of Indigenous cultures and languages in its schools.

It is therefore with humility that these few lines are written to tell the story of this unique project in Quebec.

Logo Autochtonisation



BACKGROUND

Since 2005, the *Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec* (MEQ) has recognized the existence of a significant achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students in the Quebec school system (VGQ, 2024). This finding is reinforced by recent data indicating that Quebec has the highest rate of Indigenous people without a degree or certificate among all Canadian provinces, with an average improvement of only 19% in twenty years, compared to 34% in the other provinces. This worrying situation prompted the Centre de services scolaire des Rives-du-Saguenay (CSSRDS) to undertake targeted initiatives to meet the educational needs of Indigenous students.

In 2007, the CSSRDS submitted to the MEQ the project *Solidarité avec les Autochtones* (Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples) to counter the high dropout rate among adults in general education (AGE) learners. This project initiated a reflection on the specific needs of Indigenous students. In 2014, as a result of efforts, the "Mamu" project became a reality. It aims to promote the educational success of Indigenous students by offering education adapted to their needs, developing a sense of belonging and promoting Indigenous cultures.

The following year, in 2014–2015, with the collaboration of partners such as the *Centre d'amitié autochtone du Saguenay*, *Université du Québec à Chicoutimi*, the MEQ, etc., another project was launched, "Petapan". Based on a multitude of innovative practices that respect the concerns and peculiarities associated with Indigenous cultures, the project aims to support the success of Indigenous elementary students in urban areas (CTREQ, 2021).

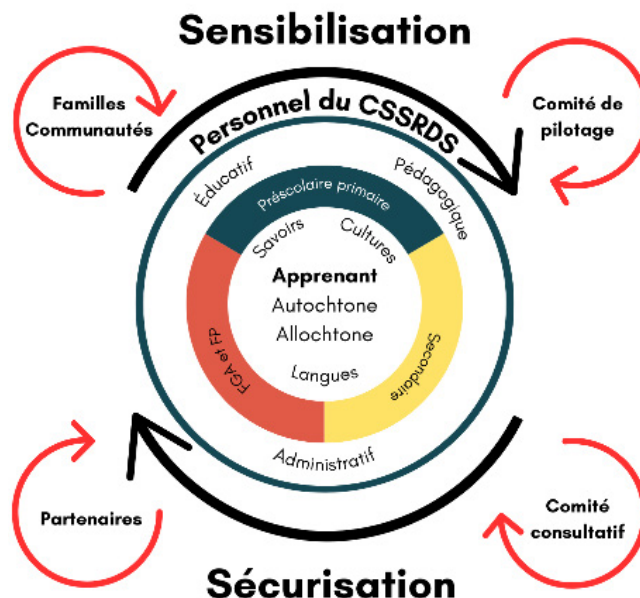
In parallel, other initiatives have been developed, including the adaptation of the *Protection et exploitation du territoire faunique* (Protection and Exploitation of Wildlife Territory) program in vocational training (FP) with the collaboration of UQAC. Based on ancestral knowledge, the training offered directly in the community addressed to specific needs identified by the communities of Pessamit and Uashat mak Mani-Utenam.

The evolution of CSSRDS initiatives to support Indigenous students with the Mamu and Petapan projects has aroused the interest of the ministère de l'Éducation. Faced with the promising results of these actions, a representative of the MEQ asked the management of the Service Centre if it was possible to include Indigenous perspectives in all its institutions. If so, how? These questions gave rise to an innovative Indigenization pilot project within the CSSRDS.

PROJECT PRESENTATION

Indigenizing education is a significant challenge in Quebec, where moving beyond colonial practices is crucial to creating educational settings that honour Indigenous cultures. Aware of this reality, rather than reproducing colonial patterns by leaving discussions on Indigenization to non-Indigenous people, the Indigenization pilot project relied on a collaborative and equitable approach.

To do this, CSSRDS hired Indigenous employees from various employment bodies to work on the project and established an advisory committee composed of Atikamekw and Innu members living in the community. Like a V-Goose formation, where each member maximizes the collective effort, this committee offers a comprehensive and enriching perspective that enables us to move together towards a common goal: building an inclusive and respectful educational environment that values Indigenous knowledge and languages while promoting educational success.



PROJECT DIRECTIONS

The Indigenization pilot project inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (2015) and the results of the Petapan project (Couture et al., 2021) is structured around four axes.

Axis 1: Support and accompaniment of students, their families, and school teams

The multidisciplinary project team has developed a service offering organized using the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. This proposal outlines the various expertise areas available to enhance the educational achievement of FNI students, including special education, speech-language pathology, social services, and linguistic assistance to improve access to documents and foster cultural exchanges.

"My involvement as an Atikamekw interpreter has been very rewarding for me. I was able to observe the bond of trust quickly established between me and the student. Indeed, introducing myself in Atikamekw was beneficial, because it is a language that is familiar to him. In addition, the parents felt safe in my presence, as they could express themselves freely in their mother tongue."

– Atikamekw Interpreter

The multidisciplinary team's interventions are carried out with the collaboration and participation of the school team. Services are offered directly to students and schools or indirectly as a consulting service. The project aims to ensure that evidence-based practices are subsequently perpetuated in settings by existing staff.

"The team is super proactive. A huge thank you for the good work of your social worker, who supports us on a file that was referred to your service. That made all the difference."

– Vice-Principal—
Secondary School (CSSRDS)

As part of Axis 1, culturally adapted teaching and support tools have been developed. These include pictograms designed for First Peoples children, a teaching guide based on the book "Kukum", "Petits mocassins" kits to support children's transition to preschool, as well as an online resource bank and turnkey cultural activities for teachers.

Culturally significant environments have also been created in two secondary schools. These sites provide educational and social support provided by trained workers who are aware of Indigenous realities and issues. They also foster exchanges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, creating opportunities to meet each other through activities based on their shared interests.

"At Mitshuapiss, I love everything!"

– Indigenous high school student (CSSRDS)

The end of the school year culminates in a gala celebrating the perseverance of Indigenous students. The students' nominations are complemented by school actors, recognizing their determination and commitment to their educational journey. This gala is particularly important because it includes the students' families, strengthening the link between the school and the Indigenous community. This group celebration highlights not only the individual contributions of students, but also the vital support from their community in achieving educational success.

Focus 2: Raising cultural awareness among students and employees

The second axis of the Indigenous project focuses on cultural awareness, promoting a better understanding of First Nations cultures and realities.

For students, many activities are offered, covering levels of education from pre-school to general adult and vocational training. These activities include workshops on Atikamekw language awareness, talking stick and medicine bag making, Indigenous stories and legends, collective frescoes with Native artists, community outings, conferences and more.

For CSSRDS staff, a wide range of training is offered, ranging from general awareness to specific approaches by job categories. These courses are designed to equip all staff, whatever their role within the Service Centre, to better understand and meet the needs of Indigenous students.

To strengthen its commitment to honouring Indigenous cultures, the CSSRDS has added the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (September 30) and National Indigenous Peoples' Day (June 21) to its school calendar. On September 30, 2024, nearly 1,000 students marched in the rain with the Grand Chief of the Atikamekw Nation Council, Constant Awashish, to commemorate residential school survivors.

"I believe that the impact of this day on their self-esteem, confidence, and identity building is not measurable. Thanks a million for this!"

– Teacher of an Indigenous student participating in the walk



Area 3: Collaboration and partnership

From the outset of the project, the priority of the *Centre de services scolaires des Rives-du-Saguenay* was to take proactive steps to make its orientations known to families, First Peoples communities and essential partners such as the Mamik Centre, as well as university researchers. These steps have led to important collaborations to ensure that the initiatives undertaken meet the specific needs of urban Indigenous learners.

Axis 4: Integration and retention of Indigenous professional staff

As part of this initiative, the Service Centre has hired several Indigenous professionals to join its multidisciplinary team. These employees occupy a variety of essential positions, such as social liaison officers, interpreters, translator, recreation technicians, social work technicians and secretary.

UQAT professor and researcher, Émilie Deschênes, has worked with human resources to provide support for the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers. Furthermore, the CSSRDS has noted an increase in Indigenous applications to work within its institutions.

CONCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

This overview of the path taken by the goose highlights certain observations:

- The self-identification of FNI students is a complex challenge, but crucial to optimizing services.
- Resistance from the community can sometimes hinder certain initiatives. Raising staff awareness is therefore essential to creating culturally safe environments.
- The stability of team members and the recruitment of FNI employees are essential to ensure a continuum of services.
- Integrating Indigenous perspectives into educational practices remains a challenge but is essential if schools are to be inclusive environments.

For the second phase, the project aims to:

- Establish a point of service to facilitate school transitions for Indigenous students and families moving to urban areas or returning to the community.
- Share effective practices with other school service centres.
- Continue to implement the Advisory Committee's recommendations: encourage cultural exchanges, promote First Nations languages and increase awareness of Indigenous realities.

The main limitation of the project remains its financing, initially planned for three years. Despite the uncertainty of new financial support from the MEQ, the *Centre de services scolaires des Rives-du-Saguenay* is committed to pursuing its Indigenous process.

Note :

This project was made possible thanks to the collaboration of the Mamik Centre, the support of the ministère de l'Éducation, and the trust of the advisory committee composed of Indigenous members of Atikamekw and Innu communities.

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DISCOVERING INSPIRING PRACTICES FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Concerted action in cultural security — Studies of practices in cultural security developed on Côte-Nord to support school perseverance and the educational success of Innu learners.



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BACKGROUND

In a collective commitment to support the perseverance and academic success of First Peoples, concerted action (Couture et al. 2024) was conducted and helped document cultural safety practices inspired by the experience of people working daily with youth and adults in Innu communities of Côte-Nord. A model proposal emerged from the analysis of these practice examples, as well as transfer tools and avenues for action. This article provides an overview of these achievements and the results of research conducted on the subject, drawing from the culture and experience of individuals involved in education services from early childhood to university in both Innu and provincial contexts. Testimonials from participants can be found at <https://securisationculturelle.ca/>. Research reports and transfer tools are also available on this site.

REALIZATION

The research was conducted with the support of La Boîte Rouge VIF, Institut Tshakapesh and Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite of UQAC, in a spirit of acknowledgment and valorization of experiential and cultural knowledge. A total of 81 participants from the Côte-Nord region, including 41 Innu, were interviewed between March 2021 and June 2022. This series of 50 meetings served as a venue for exchanges and discussions, shedding light on examples of practices that could support the perseverance and success of First Peoples youth and adults. The purpose of the meetings was to identify successes and challenges, recognize and showcase what is being done in the Côte-Nord educational community, and validate the most culturally relevant practices. To do so, the presence of the Innu co-researcher, Julie Rock Katshishkutamatshesht, who is completing at UQTR her doctoral thesis on cultural safety practices in vocational training, was indispensable.

PROPOSAL OF A MODEL

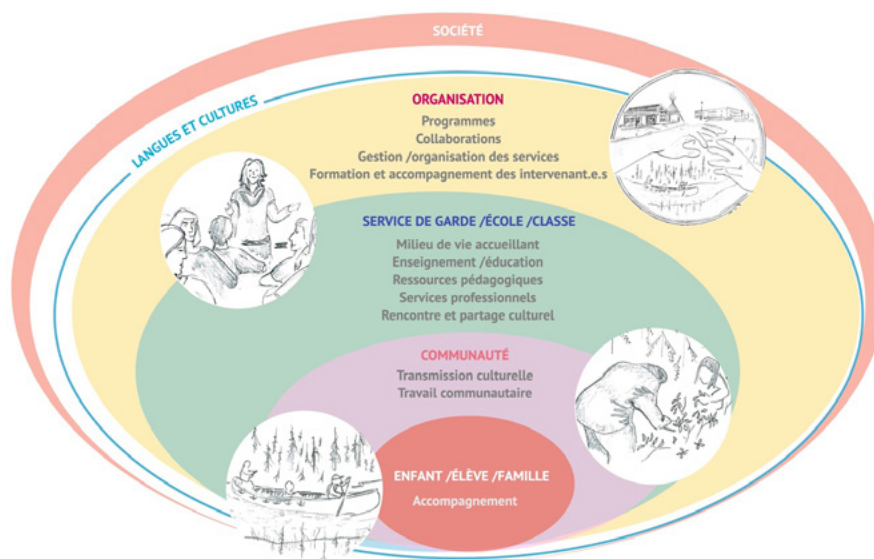
In the course of the project, 44 examples of practices were identified and grouped into 12 fields of intervention (categories). These areas of intervention, taken up in the model that emerges from this collaborative work, help us understand the importance of collective work to support the perseverance and success of First Peoples. Inspired by Bronfenbrenner (1996; referenced by Loiselle, 2011; Manningham et al., 2011), the model shows the importance of connecting the classroom, school, community, and family to work towards the well-being and success of First Peoples youth and adults. These Indigenous people need a safe, stimulating environment in which to assert their identity with pride. The fields of intervention evoked in the discussions are multiple and interrelated: support for children, students and families, community work, cultural transmission, activities for encounters and cultural sharing between non-natives and natives, professional services, pedagogical resources, education and teaching, the community environment, staff training, management, interprofessional and intercultural collaboration, and programs. All these dimensions must be considered in a cultural safety approach aimed at supporting perseverance and success. The challenge is to coordinate them, through collective work and a social project, to ensure the sustainability of the changes implemented and the benefits for learners.

Figure 1 : Cultural safety model to support the perseverance and success of First Peoples learners.

The examples of practices, shared by the participants and listed in each of the fields of intervention, are described in greater detail in the research report published at the following Web address: <https://bit.ly/Rapport-ACPSC>.

Video vignettes were produced with the consent of the participants featured in them. They can be viewed at this Web address: <https://securisationculturelle.ca/pratique/>.

Intervention principles have been drawn from these videos and can be consulted under this hyperlink: <https://securisationculturelle.ca/principes-d'intervention/>. These principles include listening, mutual aid, welcome (e minu-utinitunanut), respect (ishpetenitamun) and benevolence (minuteieun).



Success is first and foremost a personal and social accomplishment. It does not necessarily correspond to the criteria of perseverance and success in the academic or professional sense (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2021; Mansour, Maltais and Cook, 2019 and 2021; CSÉ, 2017; OECD, 2018). In this regard, participants used these terms to evoke criteria for success—language, culture, pride, interest, curiosity, laughter, smiling, helping others, social integration, purpose in life, etc. For them, every achievement counts, and graduation is far from the only criterion for success. There's even talk of "identity success". Respectful and caring support from liaison officers, intervention workers, educational aides, advisors, consultants, teachers, and directors, sensitive to the realities of young people and adults of First Peoples, emerges as a central element to support school perseverance and educational success. Collaboration between practitioners is essential to support learners and their families in achieving a successful outcome. The main challenges to be met are closely linked to the language of instruction, assessment, school materials, curricula, and the links to be established between non-Indigenous and Indigenous, which calls for a collective commitment. Our work is also continuing in a new project to mobilize indigenous perspectives in training (MEES, 2024-2025) in light of the avenues of action to be retained.

COURSES OF ACTION

The results of our research suggest the following courses of action:

1. Create and maintain a relationship of trust through respectful and caring support for young people, adults, and families,
2. Engage all school staff in a process of cultural reassurance,
3. Enhance the value of cultural roots in teaching,
4. Consider the plurilingual context of learners,
5. Adjust assessment tools and criteria,
6. Review the curricula of several school disciplines to integrate Indigenous knowledge, realities, and perspectives,
7. Develop culturally meaningful resources and materials for learners,
8. Fully acknowledge Competency 15 and explicitly integrate it into the reference framework of professional teaching skills,
9. Mobilize Indigenous knowledge, realities, and perspectives in the training of all teachers and school staff,
10. Support intercultural and interprofessional collaboration and networking,
11. Promote intercultural encounters.

CONCLUSION

NUITSHIMAKAN, let us be co-walkers, let us learn to navigate together, as equals, to meet the great collective challenge of cultural security. This is the message we wish to convey, in conclusion, of this concerted action project, which was conveyed to us by Lucien St-Onge of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam, from the circle of Elders of the UNESCO Chaire en transmission culturelle comme dynamique de mieux-être et d'empowerment of UQAC.

We want to extend a heartfelt remembrance to the late Elisabeth Kaine, who was by our side throughout this project. We would also like to thank Jean St-Onge, from the UNESCO Cercle des sages de la Chaire UNESCO, for his invaluable help, and Marco Bacon, who supported our initiative.

We also extend our gratitude to our research collaborators: the ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES), the Société du Plan Nord (SPN), the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (SAA) and the Fonds de recherche du Québec — Société et culture (FRQSC).

And to all the participants who generously agreed to share their cultural knowledge and experience, tshinashkumitinau!

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MENTORSHIP IN THE DIPLOMA OF COLLEGE STUDIES (AEC) IN INDIGENOUS POLICING TECHNIQUES: AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR ALIGNING CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH FIRST PEOPLES.



Cédric Girard



Continuing
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BACKGROUND

For 25 years, Service de la formation continue of Collège d'Alma has been training Indigenous police officers through the AEC program in *Techniques policières autochtones* (Indigenous Policing Techniques—IPT). To date, several hundred students have benefited from this training, which is closely linked to the empowerment of Indigenous communities in Quebec and their reclamation of certain powers. In the 1990s, to ensure safe management adapted to the realities of First Nations communities, the need for Indigenous police officers became apparent. With this in mind, Collège d'Alma is committed to developing a specific program, aimed not only at vocational training, but also at implementing a humanist approach to the right to education.

Today, the Techniques policières autochtones (IPT) program continues to evolve in response to the challenges faced by First Peoples students. After reading the findings of the Comité de recherche sur les transitions aux études supérieures des étudiants et étudiantes autochtones (Research Committee on Indigenous Students' Transitions to Higher Education, 2023) and observing students for several years, lead us to realize that the need for cultural safety is growing and becoming more urgent.

Managing the isolation and uprootedness felt by students in a demanding academic environment is paramount. To foster student retention and success, we believe it is essential to stimulate the motivation of students by strengthening their support network with peer-to-peer individuals.

Moreover, in its 2022–2027 strategic plan, Collège d'Alma has given itself the mandate to be a strong ally of First Nations communities by supporting and consolidating cultural safety efforts in college institutions. The institution initially implemented this principle within its nursing program.

OBJECTIVES

Mentoring is a proven approach in many educational settings for improving motivation and academic achievement. In their article on support for professional integration, Stéphane Martineau and Joséphine Mukamurera (2012) note that mentorship can take many forms, such as tutoring, sponsorship, coaching or twinning, and is widely used in higher education institutions. In the United States, more than 71% of leading universities provide mentoring services, recognizing its numerous benefits for student integration and development. Inspired by these models, the project presented here is designed to create a mentoring approach tailored to the realities of First Nations communities, ensuring support that is both culturally secure and beneficial for Indigenous students.

Establishing a mentoring program is an essential step in ensuring comprehensive training for the Indigenous police officers of tomorrow and promoting their success. The aim of this program is to match people currently in the IPT program with graduates of the same program who are now working as police officers. The idea is to strengthen the support network of students and offer them personalized guidance through exchanges with mentors who have had similar experiences. Student motivation can also be increased by identifying with success stories, which reduces the sense of imposter syndrome. Sharing experience in the mentoring relationship is the cornerstone of this model. By integrating Indigenous values and culture into police training, this initiative is helping to make the program more inclusive and responsive to community realities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE STORY

Collège d'Alma's Mamo Meskanaw Native Centre (Espace France Robertson) plays a central role in structuring exchanges between mentors and mentorees. Individual and collective meetings are organized under their supervision. Rigorous monitoring is ensured by the project coordinator and the learning assistant (APA) from the Continuing Education Department. She oversees the implementation and evaluation of the program to ensure its effectiveness. Note that this project is part of a broader approach of indigenization or "harmonization of cultural relations" (a term we prefer) for college training. In fact, by adapting the pedagogical approach, it increases the graduation rate of Indigenous police officers and promotes the reclamation of Indigenous identity within communities. It also helps reduce the cultural uprooting felt by Indigenous students when they arrive in an urban setting, at Alma, and pursue studies in a non-Indigenous setting. Ultimately, this initiative responds to the growing recruitment needs in Indigenous police forces.

Mentoring is both structured and flexible. It must maintain an informal dimension and allow for flexibility in interventions and relationships, so that the schedules of mentors and mentorees are not too overloaded. The project is also based on a collaborative approach involving faculty, students, graduates, and Indigenous partners. It is divided into several stages, including the identification of mentors and mentorees through the recruitment of former student volunteers and the selection of the current student population interested in benefiting from the program. Training is offered to mentorees to make them aware of the specific issues of the Indigenous student population and good mentoring practices. A structured framework defines the objectives, exchange procedures and monitoring tools needed to ensure the program's success.

A Mentoring Guide was designed by Cédric Girard with the help of the Humanities Department of Collège d'Alma and the Diversité Artistique Montréal centre (M.A.P. project), where Jérôme Pruneau worked for several years.

The number of meetings, their duration, and location are left to the discretion of the mentor/mentoree pairs. Subsequently, regular individual and group meetings are organized to encourage the sharing of experiences and mutual support. Finally, ongoing program evaluation is conducted throughout the process, including a survey, to adjust interventions and optimize results.

COHORT ASSESSMENT

The winter 2024 pilot cohort included eight pairings. Following this positive experience, the project has been renewed with a second cohort, in fall 2024. All but one of the students expressed an interest in pairing. Now that these matches have been formed, students use their mentoring relationship as needed. A meeting will be organized between now and the end of the winter session to gather their views on this relationship. At the end of their journey, a survey will be sent to them.

For the first cohort, several testimonials were collected.

The survey question focused on the benefits of the mentoring relationship. **Here are some answers:**

"The fact of communicating without fear of being judged, of confiding and speaking to each other in our mother tongue."

"When I have questions about the police, I know where to turn."

"We talked about my situation in Alma and the difficulties I'm facing."

To support and ensure effective follow-up of mentors and mentorees, numerous tools, guides, and surveys have been developed in collaboration with local players.

Among these tools, an online form has been developed to describe the role of a mentor and solicit the involvement of those who can perform this function. We began by talking to graduates from the last five years about the project. These people work as police officers in communities, but also in urban centres. A second form was also created to gather the mentorees' expectations and better understand their specific needs in relation to the match. These registration forms enable the coordinator to optimize matches according to several criteria, such as language spoken, home community and future aspirations. The success of the duos depends, in fact, mainly on taking into account the expectations of both participants. However, success is not always guaranteed, even when mutual expectations are respected. That's why follow-up is essential. It can be used to realign the participants, or, in the rare case of incompatibility, to modify the duo.

This type of analysis is facilitated by the heterogeneity of the team of mentorees, who come from different communities, speak different Indigenous languages and work in both community and urban settings. Thanks to the wealth of profiles contained in the identity cards, the coordinator can make appropriate matches.

Communication channels also play a key role in the implementation and smooth running of the project. To this end, a *Messenger* discussion group has been created specifically for the team of mentors, enabling them to communicate effectively with their mentorees. We were able to see that this method of direct contact facilitated exchanges and was the best way to ensure sustained support.

When a mentor is accepted into the program, we provide them with a mentoring guide. This document helps them clearly understand their role, responsibilities, and the limits of their involvement.

In addition, various strategies are in place to foster and stimulate the participation of the Indigenous students in the cohort. One of the best times to talk to them about the project is just before the midterm exam week, during their first semester. During this period, stress and lack of motivation often start to be felt. The need for support naturally arises from this.

The way in which the project is presented to students is essential. We invite them to lunch (the meal is on us) during which a mentor shares their experience and desire to help. This informal strategy proves crucial in arousing the interest of those concerned and encouraging them to register.

When the students express their interest by completing the registration form and the consent form, it is then time for the pairing. The coordinator conducts an in-depth analysis of the identity cards to create natural, relevant matches.

Finally, we encourage mentorees to contact their mentor early in the match. To support them in this initial interaction, we propose topics for discussion and questions that facilitate contact and build trust. After that, the places, times, and topics of discussion belong to them. The duos set their own schedule of meetings and exchanges.

CONCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

The college mentorship initiative is already receiving strong support from students as well as graduates, who attest to the relevance of the project for the success and integration of the Indigenous student population. The introduction of a mentoring program as part of Collège d'Alma's Indigenous Policing Techniques program is also part of a long-term vision to support and enhance Indigenous student careers. By supporting the academic and professional success of this student population, we believe that this project actively contributes to the overall improvement of learning conditions.

In future, the initiative may be extended. The network of mentors should include more actors from Indigenous police forces, and pedagogical approaches will continue to be adapted to better meet the needs of students.

As part of a continuous improvement approach, surveys have been implemented via the *Forms* application. They are used to assess the level of satisfaction of mentors and mentorees. These surveys include questions on the process and quality of the mentoring relationship. They allow both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected notably through testimonials that emphasize the essential aspect of these encounters.

The official launch of the program, at a 5–7 event held at Collège d'Alma, was an opportunity to have this program recognized while showcasing real-life experiences and giving a voice to people less often heard in the public arena. It is precisely the goal of Collège d'Alma to make these voices heard and to position itself as an ally of Indigenous communities.

In so doing, the Collège is reaffirming its commitment to the success of First Nations students and its willingness to support the development of policing skills within Quebec's Indigenous communities.

Could this type of program be integrated into your training?

A toolbox has been designed, bringing together all the surveys, follow-up material and theoretical underpinnings needed to deploy this mentoring program. A simple adaptation to your context, and you are ready to implement it!

Think about it!

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WHEN YOUTH SPEAKS UP: A PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING INITIATIVE TO AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF FIRST NATIONS YOUTH



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BACKGROUND

The voice of First Nations youth in Quebec is under-represented in decision-making bodies concerning them, such as at school and in their community (CRJ and RJPNQL, 2021). A report compiling the perspectives of some 200 young people from Quebec's 10 First Nations notes that, despite the opportunities for youth expression that exist within these environments, young people feel that their voices are given little consideration in decision-making (CRJ and RJPNQL, 2021). This suggests that their interests are not adequately reflected in the resources available to them. And yet, in 2021, around 32% of the Indigenous population was aged between 15 and 34 (Ministry of Education, 2024). This low participation is neither the result of disinterest nor a lack of skills, as research points out that young people have great potential and interest in social decision-making, especially around complex social issues such as climate change, technological evolution and the resurgence of Indigenous cultures (CRJ and RJPNQL, 2021; Fraser et al., 2021). Rather, it would be the effects of colonialism that impede the social participation of Indigenous youth, including tensions between Western and traditional knowledge, intergenerational trauma affecting their trust and engagement with others, and rigid, less-inclusive decision-making structures that prioritize adult perspectives (Finlay and Akbar, 2016; Vromen and Collin, 2010).

Participation can foster the development of skills (e.g., leadership, autonomy, project management), improve well-being and enrich youth resources (Fonda, 2009). Owing to these benefits, it is also capable of fostering perseverance and academic achievement (Bartlett and Schugurensky, 2024), an important issue given that in 2014–2015, 37.9% of First Nations adults in Quebec had dropped out of high school, despite having a strong aspiration for post-secondary education (FNQLHSSC, 2017).

DÉCIDACTION: PROMOTING DECISION-MAKING AMONG FIRST NATIONS YOUTH

To better represent the voices of First Nations youth in Quebec, the Lab on Social Innovation in Indigenization of New Pathways Foundation (NPF), a First Nations organization in Quebec that works for the well-being of its youth, has launched Décidaction. Décidaction is inspired by participatory budgeting: an initiative that promotes civic and social engagement through decision-making on the funding of citizen projects to improve community well-being (Bartlett and Schugurensky, 2024), with increasing use in Quebec municipalities and schools (Élections Québec, 2022). By providing a democratic process for youth from an Indigenous community to decide on funding for youth projects, Décidaction aims to (1) support the development of projects by and for First Nations youth, 2) to promote decision-making authority and 3) to strengthen leadership and autonomy.

Documenting Décidaction

In collaboration with Myriagone McConnell-Université de Montréal Youth Partnership Chair, the purpose of the *Décidaction* documentation was to identify evidence of its implementation and impacts, as well as learning about ways to support decision-making by First Nations youth. Participatory documentation methods allowed Myriagone to support the team in the field and build trusting relationships with youth and community leaders to understand contextual factors that influence their participation. Community perspectives were reported to the Décidaction team to adjust support practices in real time. In this way, young people were not only consulted but actively involved in improving Décidaction. In addition, Myriagone's involvement enabled the team to follow and participate in the documentation process and contribute to learning.

Décidaction milestones

Three communities were selected by random draw following a global call for interest: Kiuna College, Wendake and Gespeg. Each community had a budget of \$40,000 and followed the project stages with a project manager:

1. **Training of the steering committee:** recruit young people responsible for implementing Décidaction in their community.
2. **Call for projects:** launch and promote a call for projects among local youth.
3. **Project analysis:** evaluate proposals and provide feedback to improve them.
4. **Youth vote:** organize a vote where young people from the community select the projects to be funded.
5. **Support for selected projects:** support the implementation of selected projects.

OUTCOMES AND LEARNINGS

Outcomes

Developing relationships of trust and security is a key element in the success of Décidaction. In particular, the project managers took the time to get to know the young people informally and to be accessible outside meeting hours. Moreover, some young people emphasized that the structure of *Décidaction*, with pre-established steps, allowed them to trust the process and support. These relationships were instrumental in maintaining their commitment, motivating them to submit a project, and consequently helping them to acquire new project management skills, such as collective decision-making, leadership, negotiation and budget management, which were also useful for their studies. Furthermore, their involvement in the project enhanced their feeling of community belonging, facilitated new friendships, and even led to the formation of a Wendat youth committee.

The projects submitted by the young people testify to the importance they attach to their culture and community. Among them: a trip to Kamloops to commemorate the children of residential schools, intergenerational craft workshops, a Wendat music album, or even a traditional knife making workshop. Developing these projects inspired not only other young people in the community, but also the community itself, by reviving cultural practices and traditional know-how threatened by colonialism.

Learning: reaching young people

Apart from Kiuna, mobilizing young people to form a steering committee proved a challenge. The main method deployed was to promote the opportunity on social networks, notably Facebook, but this generated little commitment. Direct contact and word-of-mouth were the main ways of reaching young people. Kiuna, on the other hand, represents a captive space where many young people regularly meet, which

multiplied direct interactions and consequently fostered project promotion and youth interest.

Encouraging project submissions was also a challenge. In all, only three projects were submitted to the Wendake and Gespeg committees, compared with eight in Kiuna, a captive environment that encouraged their involvement. Like the training of the steering committee, promoting the project on social media did not successfully engage young people. Exploring other channels, such as community radio or other digital platforms more popular with youth, could improve the reach of communications. Moreover, we find that spaces regularly frequented by young people, such as schools, should be prioritized to reach young people and encourage them to participate in youth opportunities like Décidaction.

The idea of designing and implementing a project may have seemed daunting, which probably contributed to the low number of submissions in Wendake and Gespeg. Indeed, many of the Kiuna youths mentioned that this was their first experience of developing a project and they expressed apprehension about the logistical and budgetary aspects. Despite the support provided, it would be appropriate to provide more structured support (e.g., a project development workshop) as well as more accessible project filing options, including group work or submission of project ideas, rather than a complete project, to encourage their participation.

Learning: Keeping Youth Involved

The commitment requirements and complexity of Décidaction also posed challenges to maintaining youth participation. Although the project structure offered a reassuring framework, it could also discourage young people due to its formality and the time investment required, competing with studies, work, and family responsibilities. Conversely, when the project manager's coaching approach was aimed at giving them more autonomy to take ownership of the project, the lack of supervision could lead them to feel lost and disengaged. A balanced coaching approach, combining guidance (e.g., clear steps to follow), flexibility and informality, is essential to maximize youth engagement (Fonda, 2009). Furthermore, offering different participation modalities, either ad hoc or targeted to a specific task, would enable Décidaction to better adapt to the rhythms and responsibilities of young people, thereby avoiding disengagement among those who could benefit from its spin-offs (Gaulin et al., 2022).

The multiple stages of Décidaction and the role of the steering committee were complicated to grasp quickly for young people. There are some who saw Décidaction as a means of developing youth projects, without realizing the role the steering committee played in its organization. In fact, many participants stressed that Décidaction must be experienced firsthand to fully understand how it works, which requires a certain amount of trust and perseverance that many young people did not have to give at the beginning of the process.

CONCLUSION

Décidaction is a unique participatory budgeting initiative that focuses on developing young people's skills, increasing their voice, and engaging them in their communities. This reinforces their sense of belonging, interpersonal relationships, cultural identity and self-esteem—important factors for student retention and success, particularly in an Indigenous context. (Bartlett and Schugurensky 2024; Lillemyr et al., 2010). In fact, thanks to Décidaction, we witnessed the participants' development, both through their direct contribution to the well-being of their community and through the application of the skills acquired in their studies. These observations are consistent with findings highlighted by research, namely the benefits of participatory budgets on youth development and academic success (Bartlett & Schugurensky, 2024).

We hope that the learnings from the project will not only improve Décidaction, but also inspire other initiatives aimed at amplifying the voice of Indigenous youth. Providing a climate of trust and security, encouraging connections between young people, valuing their strengths, enabling them to learn at their own pace, and evolving in a stimulating and pleasant environment are key elements in supporting their engagement. The time required to participate in Décidaction remains an important limit, as does the balance between supervision and support. As a result of the learning generated, the adjustments made to the new iterations of Décidaction reinforce the benefits that First Nations youth can gain from their participation.

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AN INTERACTIVE RESOURCE KIT: PROMOTING THE VOICES AND KNOWLEDGE OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN QUEBEC



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INTRODUCTION

More than half of Quebec's Indigenous population is made up of young people. These young people are committed to their communities and seek to make their voices heard in various fields, including research. In many ways, these young Indigenous people are at the forefront of innovative and creative initiatives. They share their vision of the future with us, bringing us new and powerful ideas, inspired by their experiences and reflecting the diversity of their backgrounds (Blanchet-Cohen et Picard, 2024). Since 2019, influenced by the activism of this generation, and driven by a desire to address their concerns, the *Chaire-réseau de recherche sur la jeunesse du Québec* (CRJ)—part of the *Politique québécoise de la jeunesse 2030*—has mobilized and forged links between Indigenous youth, researchers, and organizations. The idea was to involve Indigenous youths in the development of a range of resources² dedicated to their concerns.

GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A VOICE IN THE POPULARIZATION OF RESEARCH

The Indigenous component of CRJ strives to present and popularize knowledge in a relevant way. With this in mind, it has prioritized the involvement of young people in research projects, whether in identifying research priorities or deciding how to present and share results (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2021). The members of the CRJ have always been concerned to promote access to, and the use and re-appropriation of, research. To undo the colonial discourse that has long dominated the way Indigenous youths are portrayed, the method of multiplying the means of expression to share narratives and realities is increasingly being used (Okpalauwaekwe and al., 2022). When the interactive resource kit was launched in the fall of 2024, Véronique Picard, Coordinator of the Indigenous component, described this project in these terms:

Something crucial for us at the Chair was to emulate the youth by sharing the results uniquely and to [not] focus exclusively on scientific articles or reports [...], [to offer] a different way of expressing a reality.

To guide initiatives under the Indigenous component, a youth committee was created. It is composed of eight to twelve young people from various Indigenous nations of Quebec. During annual retreats, these young people from different backgrounds have the opportunity to meet and work on collective projects that guide the actions of the component. In their own words, they are safe spaces for reflection and co-creation where tools of expression and popularization can be devised and developed in relation to their experiences and realities. Eve, a committee member since 2022, recounts her experience at these retreats: "When we do our creation processes, there is always a place for everyone to contribute their point and then there is no judgment". Sabryna, meanwhile, "[...] finds these creative processes so much *fun*, because it's a *safe space* all the time".

Postcards are among the tools developed to reflect the visions, voices, and concerns of committee members. In addition, researchers, collaborators, and members of the CRJ have created a multitude of resources and launched promising research that helps to raise the voices of young people, document their diverse realities and advance scientific knowledge.

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² See <https://www.chairejeunesse.ca/jeunes-autochtones/>

At the end of five years, the committee decided to bring together these different resources and productions for other organizations to use and share³. The work of the youth advisory committee, co-investigators, co-researchers and partners was then gathered on an interactive platform. This web-based platform presents all the productions produced and recounts the five main themes discussed at the CRJ over the years.

THE CO-CREATION PROCESS

The idea of creating a kit came from a young committee member who wanted to have postcards and other resources brought together in one place to make them more accessible and easier to use, especially in educational and community settings. The process of assembling the kit was subsequently conducted during two retreats: the first retreat focused on ideation, held in a natural setting, aimed at conceptualizing and structuring the kit using a visual prototype, followed by a validation retreat in Montreal, where the committee enhanced the kit's structure and content.

During the first retreat, the committee chose to link the existing postcards through a narrative framework. Using the features of comic-strip characters, the young people introduce each theme. The committee coordinator recounts how this creative process unfolded:

Initially, we had drawn [...] a large tree in which we wanted to represent the five postcards. Then we thought, "Well, how do we connect them? What do we want to say?" And then we thought, well, let's make each of these little drawings of ourselves, and then embed them all over the place to show that we've been part of this process for a long time, and then ... show the relationships.

Finally, visual representations of these young people help navigate the kit. They provide an overview of the postcard interpretation and associated resource type.

Young people in creation

Thanks to the technical support of *Boîte Rouge VIF*, we have organized the platform so that navigation is fluid and highlights the various contents:

- Podcasts with actors around different themes (p. ex., Indigenous language podcast, Anishnabe Inakonagewin panel discussion)
- Voice recordings on several subjects (e.g., what is, Indian Time, conversation on imposter syndrome)
- Online webinars (e.g., *Transformative Art, Celebrating Indigenous Expertise in Sustainability*)
- Artistic creations (e.g., cultural safety quilt, *Confluences storyboard, Mamo Pimatisiwin: Nature and Culture of Cooperation*)
- Research reports (e.g., *Let's Talk: Portrait of the Voice of First Nations Youth*)
- Scientific articles on research projects (e.g., Support for Collective Entrepreneurship of Indigenous Youth: a "Reconciliation" Experience, *Moving Towards Cultural Safety in Schools for the Innu*)

Each postcard gives access to a dozen tools, which represents a total of fifty resources. These can be viewed by browsing the various charts, which illuminate when the cursor hovers over a word or an evocative drawing⁴.

POSTCARDS AND THEIR MEANING

The resource kit is composed of five postcards, each focusing on a theme related to youth concerns. The Web address of the kit is: <https://chairejeunesse.ca/trousse-de-ressources/>

³ See <https://chairejeunesse.ca/trousse-de-ressources/>

⁴ See <https://chairejeunesse.ca/trousse-de-ressources-tableau/>

Kit home page

Below is an overview of the intentions and resources associated with each postcard.

Decolonization (2020)

"Decolonized research requires a genuine commitment to creating spaces for young people to develop their thoughts and make their voices heard."

The first postcard, co-created in 2020 with Emmanuelle Dufour (who imaged the first three cards), aims to highlight youth perspectives on caring research processes. The accompanying resources explore Indigenous and decolonized research methodologies, recognizing young people as experts in their own realities.

Native Youth (2021)

"This card contains several symbols related to our cultures, experiences and knowledge, and then highlights our determination to find balance."

The second card was designed online, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing with the first card, it takes up the key question, "What is youth?" and it promotes pride in identity and culture, while celebrating the diversity of Indigenous youth. The purple shade of the card symbolizes healing and pays tribute to the young Atikamekw woman, Joyce Echaquan, a victim of racism that tragically died in a Quebec hospital shortly before this tool was created. It brings together resources related to Indigenous cultures, identity anchoring, pride, and the richness and diversity of youth voices and expression.

Community care (2022)

"Community care is at the heart of our concerns, and in the Indigenous world, the personal and the collective complement each other."

The third card was created during a working session on valuing intervention methods. Young people quickly expressed a desire to address community care, placing at the centre of their reflections the relationship between individual well-being and collective support. The resources associated with it are initiatives rooted in a holistic vision where building trust and community are essential. They are inspired by Indigenous approaches rooted in the relational element (Wilson, 2008).

Youth Commitment (2023)

"Commitment begins in the heart and is demonstrated by the influence of our languages, the protection of our territories and the realization of our dreams!"

Youth involvement is a transversal theme for CRJ. The fourth card, created in collaboration with Carole Bérubé-Therrien (who participated in creating the last two cards), explores the multiple manifestations of Indigenous youth engagement, focusing on its different forms and associated challenges (Ibarra-Lemay et al. 2024). The "strength of the group" and the cyclical nature of commitment are central to the Indigenous vision. The resources accompanying this postcard are associated with various actions taken by, for or with young people.

Portage Circle (2024)

"The youth committee is like a portage! We find our voice by sharing our different perspectives."

The final artistic creation included in the kit concerns the influence and reach of youth committees and spaces. It represents the different roles that young people can play. The card also evokes the resilience of Indigenous young people and how, despite their unique backgrounds, they come together to find their bearings and create a collective voice. The resources dedicated to this card address youths' expression and empowerment, different approaches to consulting youth, and the ecosystem of youth organizations in Quebec.

DISTRIBUTION AND SCOPE

Reflecting the diversity of realities and promising themes for today's Indigenous youth, the toolkit is an important tool for inspiring and nurturing a variety of settings, be they community-based, academic or political. As Ève Custeau-Wiscutie explained when presenting the kit at the Convention:

For researchers, access to this kit enables them to understand young people, how they get involved, and how to take care of them. Similarly, the toolkit allows us, as young people, to better understand research and how to get involved.

For teachers, this resource can also be a very interesting pedagogical tool. In fact, it aims to contribute to the advancement of decolonizing school environments and encourage the articulation of Native voices. "I often use it in my classes, and it's great!" says co-researcher Jèrène Rham.

The presentation and visual promotion of these different resources, classified under distinct themes, are of general interest and contribute, through the stories and powerful voices of young people, to highlighting a decolonial vision of knowledge mobilization.

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INDIGENOUS ORAL LITERATURE AS SCHOOL RESOURCES IN KANAKY-NEW CALEDONIA

Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples



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ABSTRACT

As part of this action-training research, we focused on the integration of Kanak Indigenous oral literature in kindergartens and primary schools in Kanaky, New Caledonia. The purpose of this study was to observe the inclusion of oral stories in school settings and the strategies used during "storytelling" activities (reading stories to children). This study addresses the question: How is Indigenous oral literature used in schools? Methodologically, we developed a questionnaire for teachers and conducted interviews with resource people from the education sector and Kanak storytellers. These methods allowed us to collect their opinions and establish a parallel between the social and school environments. According to these interviews and surveys, a wide variety of Indigenous stories are being used in the targeted school environment, as well as practices that counter epistemic injustices.

PART 1: CONTEXT

Indigenous storytelling perspective

There are some thirty Indigenous languages and dialects in New Caledonia, and therefore different terms reflecting their visions of Indigenous *kanak*¹ literary genres. Each of these terms represent distinctive visions of literary genres. Rather than employing a categorization outside the Kanak culture, Michel Aufray proposes an ethnolinguistic approach that emphasizes the particulars of literary genres in accordance with the classifications and terminologies used by Indigenous peoples themselves (Aufray, 2012). Studying the etymology of the terms used to categorize the genres reveals the very essence of what they bring to Indigenous people.

Two examples are particularly explicit in Kanak languages: *Drehu* (language of the island of Lifou) and *Nengone* (language of Maree Island). With these two agglutinating languages, one can readily recognize and distinguish lexemes in some words and form associations of meaning. Most often, the signified is connected to the function or use of the object evoked. In the *drehu* language, the term "ifejicate" is the literary genre of the tale. It is formed from three terms: the reflexive morpheme "i-," which indicates an action performed on oneself; the lexeme "fejer," meaning "to tear or pull with force"; and "catre," meaning "force or power." We can understand the function of this literary genre for the islanders: to draw strength and power through storytelling.

The *Nengone* language points to two elements in the word "toatit" to refer to the tale: "toa," which means "a pole," and "tit(i)," which means "a rock." This term may evoke the placing of the rock on a pedestal symbolizing this literary repertoire for Indigenous peoples. By listening to these tales, the child draws strength from the rock to "become" a rock himself. This image can also be associated with genealogical orations performed on poles, common on the main island of New Caledonia, known as Grande Terre (for example, the vivaa of the Houailou region in Grande Terre, Kanaky-New Caledonia)².

We consider storytelling to be one of the most effective ways of anchoring learning. It has been recognized in many civilizations as an essential method of communication and teaching for thousands of years. Stories not only convey how to survive and care for the land; they also convey individual and community values (Iseke & Brennus, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Hare, 2011).

¹ Kanak is the name given to the Indigenous people of Kanaky-New Caledonia.

² Thanks to Suzie Bearune and Eddie Wadrawane for their explanations of the term nengone.

Presentation of New Caledonia

Kanaky-New Caledonia has been a sui generis French collectivity in the Pacific since 1853. It is one of the last settlements in that part of the world. A penal colony was quickly created, where thousands of convicts were sent to serve their sentences and then settled to form the community of free settlers. This was a major upheaval for the Natives, who saw their population decrease dangerously (to around 20,000 in 1920).

A total of thirty Indigenous languages survive despite this situation. Over time, other languages have been added as a result of Christianization (1830), colonization (1853), and economic development (1960). Kanaky-New Caledonia is a multilingual territory today. French, however, is the only official language in the country. The minority status of other languages in the territory, particularly Indigenous Kanak languages, creates a diglossic and sometimes even multi-diglossic situation (Colombel-Teuira&Fillol, 2021).

Kanak Languages and Culture in New Caledonian Public Schools

The fruit of a long struggle against assimilation, the Indigenous Kanak people have long demanded full recognition of their languages and elements of their culture within the territory's public education system (Sam, 2022). The Matignon-Oudinot Accord of 1988 was the first piece of legislation to officially recognize the Kanak languages. As a result of the Noumea Accord, ten years later, Kanak languages were recognized as "languages of education and culture" (Art.1.3.3). Teachers with Kanak language skills and specialization are trained at the Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Éducation (INSPE) and Institut de Formation des Maîtres de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (IFMNC)³ (Pradeau, 2024) each year to implement these laws.

Indigenous literature in teacher training

Each of the institutions mentioned above lacks training on Indigenous tales in teaching. The Kanak oral literature does not constitute a discipline in the Caledonian curriculum in and of itself, although young teachers are becoming increasingly interested in Caledonian children's literature that integrates Kanak culture, such as lullabies and other children's books. (Rabault & al., 2023). The illustrated storybooks—some of which are bilingual (Kanak/French)—are the first resources and references to address the lack of Kanak-language literature identified several years ago by teachers. In recent years, these Indigenous storybooks have been published mostly by non-Indigenous private publishers (Kara & al., 2024).

PART 2: OBJECTIVES

The objective of prospective study is to examine the level of inclusion of Indigenous tales in New Caledonian classrooms and how they are told. The first group of Kanak teachers we wanted to interview was those in kindergartens and primary schools, since we logically consider them to be its primary users.

Our research question is: What do Indigenous oral stories and legends represent for teachers? How are they used in the classroom?

PART 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Epistemological foundations

Despite long-established strategies of including Indigenous stories in schools, they remain largely undocumented. It is worthwhile to acknowledge the contributions of Canadians (Campeau, 2021; Côté, 2019; Kara & al., 2024) in this field, since they raise questions about the pedagogical value of this type of support in the process of decolonizing the educational space and reestablishing an epistemological balance between academic knowledge and Indigenous cultural knowledge. Consequently, our work will primarily be based on this research. Especially significant to New Caledonia, it has been part of the emancipation process from the French education system for forty years. This is to bring Indigenous students, whose cultural fundamentals are undervalued, into the "legitimate culture" of the school.

To date, research has mainly focused on the anthropological and ethnological aspects of Oceanian oral literature (Aufray [2000], Ihage [1992], Illouz [2000] without specifically addressing its use in formal education. There is therefore little literature mentioning the incorporation of Indigenous tales into Caledonian schools. In this Pacific territory, research focuses more broadly on the didactic transposition of Indigenous knowledge [Wadrawane, 2022, 2024] and primarily addresses the conceptualization of mathematics from a cultural perspective [Waminya, 2011]. As for stories, only Lavigne mentions them in his doctoral thesis, particularly for the purpose of mathematical diversion [2012]. The link between these stories and academic success remains to be determined, which is the focus of the present work.

³ The Government of New Caledonia offers positions for school professors and teachers every year.

A presence in teaching programs

The primary school curriculum in New Caledonia⁴ also mentions Indigenous tales as a valuable resource for addressing Indigenous Kanak languages. Stories such as “La leçon du bénitier” [The Lesson of the Holy Water Font] and “Adrapo et Wanimoc” [Adrapo and Wanimoc] are available online, along with activities for teachers on the New Caledonia government website.

The integration of Indigenous knowledge has been a reality since the signing of the Nouméa political agreements [1998]. Consequently, teacher training in this trajectory of emancipation has been established within these two main training institutes: INSPE [*Institut National Supérieur du Professorat et de l'Éducation*] of Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (see Rabault & Wacalie (2021) and Wadrawane (2024)) and IFMNC [*Institut de Formation des Maîtres of Nouvelle-Calédonie*] (see Colombel & Fillol (2021)).

PART 4: STUDY DESCRIPTION

Target audience

The study primarily concerns primary school teachers of Kanak languages in New Caledonia. The people we interviewed were mainly from the Northern Province⁵. They were interviewed during a teachers’ reunion by the *Direction de l'Enseignement de la Formation et de l'Insertion des Jeunes* (DEFIJ).

In addition, we focused our attention on Kanak storytellers and their practices. We sought to compare the actual (traditional) practice of storytelling with the methods used by teachers in the classroom. To what extent do teachers adapt or rework stories in order to share them at school?

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with two Indigenous Kanak storytellers and a pedagogical advisor. Using the work of Eddie Wayuone Wadrawane as inspiration, these interviews put into perspective the didactic transposition of environmental practices into classroom practices (Wadrawane, 2024).

Methodology

Our team collected 26 paper questionnaires completed by teachers. Question topics included:

- people with the legitimacy to convey Indigenous oral literature
- The interactions during story reading.
- the means used
- notions and disciplines taught with stories/legends
- assessment procedures.

Presentation and analysis of preliminary results

The first data in our studies show that the teachers we interviewed unanimously acknowledge the importance of storytelling and legends in their speeches, because they consider it above all a duty to transmit: In their view, reading stories is important as it fulfills, above all, a duty of transmission:

“As a Kanak, I believe that passing on tales and legends is important, since many such tales and legends are based on true stories.”

They see it as a way of transmitting the family heritage of populations:

“They [tales and legends] are very important for knowing the origins of places and families.”

Stories also provide teachers interviewed with an opportunity to consolidate identity acquisitions of their students:

“It’s important to preserve it for the identity of the child and the country.”

These initial results reveal the value that teachers assign to this repertoire in the transmission of identity components, cultural teachings, and language proficiency to their students.

However, although teachers emphasize the importance of the Kanak story repertoire, most of them admit to rarely or never passing these tales on within their own households. The following figure shows this paradox:

2. Au sein de ma famille, ce type de littérature orale est encore transmise :

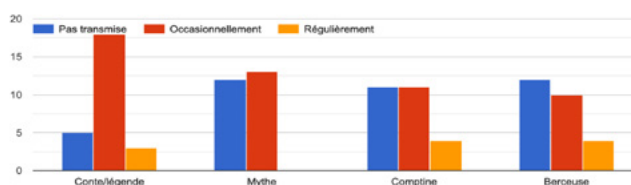


Figure 1: Level of transmission of Indigenous oral literature at home

⁴ New Caledonia gained responsibility for primary education in 2001 as part of the Noumea Agreement, known as the “decolonization” agreement.

⁵ New Caledonia is divided into three administrative provinces: the South Province, the North Province and the Islands Province. Each of them adapts its school programs to its own cultural and linguistic specificities. The North and Islands provinces are predominantly pro-independence, while the South Province, home to 75% of New Caledonia’s population, is predominantly non-independence.

When asked who has the greatest ability and legitimacy to tell stories and legends, teachers believe that the work of storytelling should be shared by everyone.

7. Qui sont la/les personnes qui devrai(ent) raconter la littérature orale kanak à l'école ? * Ne pas remplir, si vous n'utilisez pas ces littératures orales kanak en classe.



Figure 2: Legitimate storytellers of Indigenous oral literature at school

As for the means used to tell stories/legends, they consider that the books are the preferred means used in addition to their body and voice:

9. Les moyens que j'utilise pour raconter les contes/légendes, mythes kanak : *à compléter seulement si vous utilisez les contes/légendes autochtones en classe

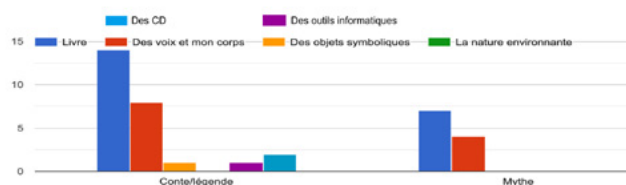


Figure 3: Means used for transmission of Indigenous oral literature at school

PART 5: CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

With its preliminary results, the research on Indigenous tales and legends in schools shows that teachers recognize the value of this repertoire and its importance in the transmission of knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills in the Kanak environment. It appears, however, that teachers rarely incorporate the reading of these stories into their professional practice. Due to a lack of practical training, we sense a certain amount of frustration in them, because they don't feel authorized to do so or confident in their capabilities.

The stories are told in the Western way, that is, with a book and without any tools or accessories. Furthermore, the way of teaching does not at all integrate the Indigenous provisions of traditional storytelling (formulas for beginning and ending, arrangement of space, posture of children, materials, etc.).

A consultation process is ongoing with educational resource personnel, Indigenous storytellers, and teachers in the Southern Province and the Loyalty Islands Province.

Our study attempts to observe the inclusive practices of Kanak legends and tales in different contexts. In addition, we began surveying Canadian teachers to compare approaches between continents.

Considering the data collected, we consider it important to initiate a reflection on the methods used in schools to transmit oral literature.

Indigenous people should also be asked what stories and legends they would like to be used as educational resources.

The sociopolitical context affects progress and setbacks regarding the inclusion and legitimization of Indigenous oral literature in schools. In Kanaky-New Caledonia, the inclusion of Indigenous languages and cultural elements is still a sensitive issue and still encounters resistance. Moreover, as teacher trainers in New Caledonia and Canada, it seems important to us to continue to include storytelling in initial and continuing education.

⁶ We recognize that the French term "contes/légendes" does not pay tribute to Indigenous epistemology. Despite being reductive, these terms were chosen for clarity, so that participants and researchers who only speak French can communicate effectively.

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KNOWLEDGE NETWORK: THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL¹



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INTRODUCTION

This article will explore the experiences of Indigenous Brazilians in two public policies that are now major poles of ethnic, cultural, identity and linguistic strengthening—the Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education Program the South of the Atlantic Forest; a diploma in the form of an intercultural bachelor degree program reserved for Indigenous peoples; and Indigenous Knowledge in Schools Program 2; and, an ongoing training for Indigenous teachers to become teachers in their own communities.

For my doctoral studies, I chose to explore an innovative process underway at that time: the Indigenous presence at the Federal University of Santa Catarina/Brazil, through a pilot group in the Indigenous Intercultural Bachelor degree³. My thesis focuses on the Indigenous presence in higher education from the experience of Guarani students, perceiving the importance attributed to higher education, and shamanism—and all its constitutive complexity. Last year (2024), I did a postdoctoral placement at Université de Montréal with the research entitled Knowledge Network: The Experience of Indigenous University Students in Southern Brazil in Public Policies of Indigenous Education, with the objective of disclosing higher education policies for Indigenous peoples in Brazil and contextualizing the reality of Indigenous peoples in this country.

BACKGROUND

In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution is a major legislative breakthrough. Section 210 states that Indigenous peoples have a legal guarantee of the use of mother tongues and respect for their own learning processes. Similarly, Sections 231 and 232 recognize that they have the right to live according to their ethnic and socio-cultural diversity, to use their traditional languages, to live in their traditional territories, and to have access to education with respect for their identities and cultures. It is important to mention that this legal guarantee stems from the intense struggles of the Brazilian Indigenous movement. Since the 1990s, legislative benchmarks have been established in the field of Indigenous school education, triggering numerous initiatives through local projects and partnerships with universities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. In this context, intercultural diplomas are very important.

However, Brazil still lacks a consolidated comprehensive national language policy to encourage, value and preserve Indigenous languages. Fortunately, there is the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, with the Indigenous minister Sônia Guajajara (MPI), and among the next actions articulated during the dialogue between the MPI and UNESCO, is support for initiatives to disseminate Indigenous languages, the publication of teaching materials, the creation of training and research spaces dedicated to Amerindian languages, as well as cooperation with other South American countries.

It is important to mention the contribution of the national level debates on Indigenous Higher Education started in the 2000s that have integrated the government agenda, contributing to reflecting on strategies to strengthen Indigenous rights, culture and languages. Higher education complements the struggle for the demarcation of Indigenous lands and land management, a central tool for gaining access to their rights and knowledge from hegemonic society in an attempt at intercultural dialogue.

¹ [Licenciatura Intercultural Indígena do Sul da Mata Atlântica](#)

² [ASIE / Núcleo SC](#)

³ <https://repositorio.ufsc.br/xmlui/handle/123456789/129551>

The Indigenous Higher Education and Licensing Support Program—PROLIND, is an initiative of the Ministry of Education (MEC) in response to its responsibilities to formulate and develop specific programs to support the training of Indigenous teachers at the higher level. It has existed since 2008. In 2024, 26 higher education institutions are involved in this training, including 15 federal and 11 provincial.

In Brazil, we have some extremely innovative initiatives, but they still present obstacles to be overcome. However, the debate about Indigenous methodologies and a decolonial relationship in institutions and ways of doing research is something that is currently in full evidence. Ethnographic experiments with the Guarani, Kaingang, and Laklãnõ Xokleng groups at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) reveal that indigenous learning processes differ greatly from the modes of knowledge present at the university. However, despite all these differences in knowledge patterns, higher education is currently valued by most Indigenous groups. Intercultural licensing experiences in different universities appear to be a mechanism for access and transit between distinct realities, valuing Indigenous knowledge and languages.

THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS IN THE INTERCULTURAL INDIGENOUS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM TO SOUTHERN BRAZIL

Receives three different groups: GUARANI, LAKLÃNÕ XOKLENG E KAINGANG, who live in the Atlântica forest biome.

The profile of the students in this first class of LII—UFSC can be found in my doctoral thesis. It has been observed that most students are Indigenous teachers. Large differences between the Guarani, Kaingang and Laklãnõ—Xokleng student groups were found. For many of them, working from home as part of the university routine was unfamiliar, especially for Guarani students, who have more recent academic backgrounds and fewer students with other degrees. Among the Laklãnõ-Xokleng and Kaingang, several had already obtained other degrees and were more accustomed to routine and university discipline.

Looking at the three groups, we noticed that the students from Kaingang and Laklãnõ-Xokleng came from educated generations: their parents went to school. Some even had grandparents who had gone through the school process. Guarani students, on the other hand, were the first generation to attend school, an aspect that causes differences in the ease/difficulty of coping with “university rhythms”.

Another key aspect is the ability of groups from different backgrounds to coexist. Linguistic relations have enabled non-speakers to start a process of linguistic reappropriation. These students have started numerous initiatives in their communities to promote and stimulate the use of their mother tongues¹.

A fundamental element for the success of these students. A point often stressed by these students is that “being among one’s own”, “being among the Natives” is what makes them stronger. Unlike individual entry through quotas² (affirmative actions), intercultural Bachelor’s degree programs favour a collective of Indigenous people who support each other along the way³.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM—ASIA

Most graduates of the Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education Program will participate in the ACTION INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM. In partnership with Higher Education Institutions (ESIs), State Education Secretariats and municipalities, this initiative aims to promote the ongoing training of teachers in Indigenous school education.

The project, conducted in the State of Santa Catarina, is linked to the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and is working directly with the Indigenous teachers of the three ethnic groups presented previously.

During the experience with these three groups, it is important to emphasize that before the implementation of the project, it was difficult to find pedagogical and didactic resources in the Indigenous schools of Santa Catarina, the majority of these resources being from non-Indigenous productions, which did not reflect their context and educational conceptions.

¹ Some Indigenous students, who did not speak the language, were inspired to revitalize their own language as a fundamental aspect of the group’s ethnic identity after observing their “Indigenous parents” communicating with each other in their mother tongue. Consequently, many devoted themselves to studying their Native language.

² The 2012 Quota Law established racial and social quotas in federal public universities and technical institutes. This policy reserves a percentage of places for black, mixed race, indigenous, and public-school students, based on income criteria. Beginning in 2024, the law requires that at least half of the places be reserved for students from public schools, with a portion of these places allocated to black, mixed race, and indigenous students, based on the proportion of these populations in each state. In 2014, a law was passed reserving 20% of places in federal civil service examinations for Black people, which is an example of quotas in the civil service. (Reference 2).

³ Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education Program is exclusively for Indigenous peoples and is composed mainly of Indigenous teachers living in Indigenous territories. Throughout the program, Indigenous students share time and learning experiences with their parents, which plays an important role in helping them stay in the program and complete their studies.

It was therefore imperative for the team at the Federal University of Santa Catarina to pay special attention to the Elders of the different communities. The holding of “Grandes Rencontres” (Great Encounters)—bringing together several Indigenous communities from different localities—was a central objective, aimed at putting forward the word of the Ancients. They were the ones who indicated the need to consider “new” directions for Indigenous school education⁴.

My direct involvement in this public policy for four years, from the outset, was important for understanding its impact on Indigenous communities. Above all, it has helped to improve teaching and learning by respecting their world view and honouring Elders, who are bearers of this ancient wisdom.

From my research background, I undertook an exercise of systematizing the reflections developed during the years of ethnographic research and fieldwork in the Guaraní lands, as well as in the Kaingang and Laklanô lands and at the university (accompanying Indigenous students for four years in higher education). Drawing on ethnographic experiences in communities in southern Brazil, I emphasize the importance of intercultural education and Indigenous knowledge initiatives as policies for higher education and continuing education for teachers, respectively. They are mechanisms of ethnic reinforcement, allied in the fight for Indigenous rights related to Indigenous Territory, health, education, and languages. Both promote ethnic and cultural affirmation.

The Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education Program, as a national public policy, promotes an intercultural relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, with the aim of expanding the dialogue and increasing the participation of Indigenous knowledge in Brazilian universities, challenging, in many contexts, the assumptions anchored in academic knowledge.

Action Saberes, as a continuing education policy, allows and strengthens the mediation between the knowledge acquired at university and the realities, by valuing their own learning processes. In addition to promoting this mediation, Action Saberes has made it possible to develop didactic and educational materials created by Indigenous teachers themselves, according to their linguistic realities and contexts.

In Brazil, public policies related to higher education for Indigenous peoples, through Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education Programs, go beyond inclusion, as is the case, for example, with affirmative action policies for Indigenous peoples.

The Intercultural Indigenous Teacher Education program establishes a movement to recognize and value Indigenous peoples, opening a space for reflection and dialogue between distinct knowledge and teaching-learning modes. The term intercultural here refers to an approach based on encounter, mutual respect and exchange between different world views, in the logic of reciprocity. Not only do they strengthen Indigenous cultural identities, but they also build bridges between traditional knowledge and academic knowledge, in a perspective of decolonization of education and epistemological plurality. In addition, within educational institutions, we have teachers, pedagogical advisors and other Indigenous professionals working in these institutions.

CONCLUSION

Both policies offer concrete opportunities for valuing and strengthening Indigenous ways of teaching and learning. As a source of inspiration for other Indigenous contexts and realities, Indigenous school education and Indigenous higher education could be more open to the inclusion of Indigenous practices, knowledge, languages, and cultures. In schools, it would be a question of transforming them, from Indigenous creativity, into places of practice and enhancement of culture. The Indigenous Knowledge in Schools Program is a project that can be developed in other Indigenous realities and contexts, focusing on the specific needs of each community, through joint work between teachers, children and Indigenous Elders. In universities, it would be essential to open these spaces to the participation of Indigenous teachers and collaborators, including masters of “notorious knowledge”, capable of teaching disciplines related to Indigenous art, language, territory or health, and to play a leading role in them so that interculturality can really be realized.

There is still much to be done for a real decolonization of educational structures and systems, as far as teaching Indigenous peoples is concerned. To that extent, we continue our efforts to share experiences, with the aim of improving existing practices and projects, and inspiring new contexts and realities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

⁴ Each community, with its representatives, chose a theme to explore in its village based on the words of the Elders. The theme was subsequently explored in the classroom setting, with teachers and Indigenous students from the respective communities participating. These themes served as inspiration for the development of lesson plans by Indigenous teachers. The plans were based on their own reality and the specific needs of each community. This made learning more accessible and rooted in the Indigenous context.

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**LEARNING IS A PROCESS
OF RECONCILIATION
AND RESURGENCE**

3



MATINAMAGEWIN—A JOURNEY TO VALUING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION



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*"All my relations' means all. When a speaker makes this statement, it's meant as recognition of the principles of harmony, unity and equality. It's a way of saying that you recognize your place in the universe and that you recognize the place of others and of other things in the realm of the real and the living. In that it is a powerful evocation of truth. Because when you say those words you mean everything that you are kin to. Not just those people who look like you, talk like you, act like you, sing, dance, celebrate, worship or pray like you. Everyone. You also mean everything that relies on air, water, sunlight and the power of the Earth and the universe itself for sustenance and perpetuation. It's recognition of the fact that we are all one body moving through time and space together."*¹

– Richard Wagamese, 2013

These words by Ojibwe author Richard Wagamese reflect the importance of the notion of relationship in the philosophies and visions of the First Peoples. Whether it concerns the relationship between humans, with the territory, or between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, this theme has emerged repeatedly during the discussions and presentations of the sixth edition of the Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples. The principle of relationship also seemed to influence the daily work of the different groups and individuals who participated in the convention.

It is this same concept of relationship that guides our team at the *Service de la formation continue à l'UQAT* (FC-UQAT) in its efforts to develop and share knowledge. With this in mind, and to ensure an up to date and relevant training offering, we have revitalized and updated the Matinamagewin training course, in collaboration with an advisory committee composed of members from various organizations, involved in Indigenous education in Quebec. This training course, entitled *Matinamagewin—Le Partage*, has been offered by our department since 2012. It aims to equip teachers in Quebec so that they can integrate Indigenous perspectives into the school environment, and value Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in their curricula, and implement culturally safe practices for Indigenous students.

The relationship with the members of our advisory committee was at the heart of our work. During our meetings and discussions, each member was able to share their visions, opinions and, above all, their expertise on the indigenization of education in all its forms (as presented at CIERA's 20th Annual Convention²), and to promote the knowledge of First Nations and Inuit. These meetings were conducted in accordance with Competency 15³. The involvement of our advisory committee has enabled us to improve the content of the training in a multitude of ways, as well as open our eyes to various issues and realities to consider. The creation of an open and respectful listening space ensured the ongoing participation of committee members.

¹ Wagamese, Richard, 2013, "All my relations' about respect", Kamloops Daily News (11 juin 2013). Source tirée de : <https://watershedsentinel.ca/article/all-my-relations/> (7 novembre 2015).

Voici la citation originale : « 'All my relations' means all. When a speaker makes this statement it's meant as recognition of the principles of harmony, unity and equality. It's a way of saying that you recognize your place in the universe and that you recognize the place of others and of other things in the realm of the real and the living. In that it is a powerful evocation of truth. Because when you say those words you mean everything that you are kin to. Not just those people who look like you, talk like you, act like you, sing, dance, celebrate, worship or pray like you. Everyone. You also mean everything that relies on air, water, sunlight and the power of the Earth and the universe itself for sustenance and perpetuation. It's recognition of the fact that we are all one body moving through time and space together."

² Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones (CIERA), 2022, *Entre autochtonisation et décolonisation : comment penser un monde plus juste?*, p.9.

³ Conseil en Éducation des Premières Nations (CEPN), 2020, Compétence 15 : *Valoriser et promouvoir les savoirs, la vision du monde, la culture et l'histoire des Autochtones*. Référence en ligne : <https://cepn-fnec.ca/competence-15/>.



Photo credit: Julie-Anne Bérubé

This relationship with our advisory committee, combined with the one we develop with those who participate in our training, forms the basis of our work. As project managers and trainers, we continually learn from the advisors, which allows us to enrich the content of our training. It is rooted in the knowledge and perspectives of our Advisory Committee members.

Matinamagewin workshop

In the workshop that we presented during the sixth Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples, we wanted to put this vision based on relationships into practice. We did not simply want to share the lessons from *Matinamagewin* in a masterful way. We wanted to implement these lessons in such a way that “we walk the talk,” by leading an interactive, practical workshop based on the experiences and contributions of each person.

So, we began the workshop by inviting participants to leave the conference room and take their places in different areas of the Palais des Congrès. We then asked them to take a moment to observe their surroundings, anchor themselves in their environment and listen to their sensations. Drawing on Diane Campeau’s approaches to Indigenous pedagogy and place-based pedagogy, we invited the group to experiment with different strategies for rooting and connecting with the place.

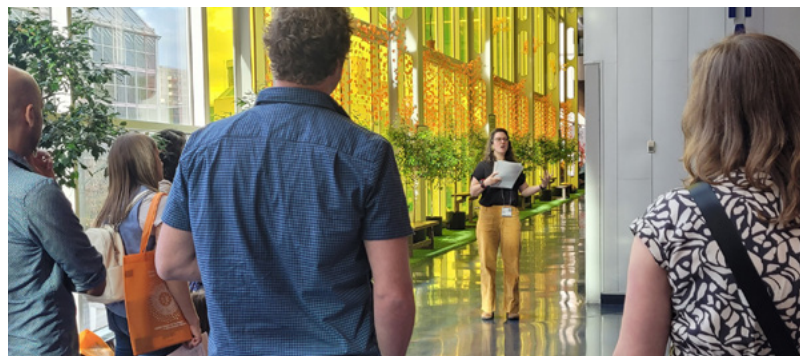


Photo credit: Bérénice Mollen-Dupuis

Then, following the model of the *Parcours vers la sécurisation culturelle* from the Boîte Rouge Vif⁴ (available on the [Perspectives des Premiers Peuples dans l'éducation au Québec](#) platform), we created a path on the ground in which each step represented a level of cultural safety.

According to the World Indigenous Health Organization, “Cultural safety, in an Indigenous context, means that the educator, practitioner, or professional, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, is able to communicate competently with a patient within the patient’s social, political, linguistic, economic, and spiritual context.”⁵ The WHOA adds, “Cultural safety goes beyond the concept of cultural sensitivity by analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization, and colonial relationships as they apply to health care.”⁶

4 Adapté de Lévesque, 2017, CAPRES, 2018, Lavoie, Blanchet-Cohen, Bacon, 2021.

5 National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) (2008). « Cultural competency and safety: A guide for health care administrators, providers and educators ». Ottawa, ON: NAHO, p.4 (traduction libre).

6 *Ibid.*, p.3.



Crédit à venir

Following a discussion on cultural safety in education, participants were invited to place themselves where they felt they were in their personal or professional journey, and then to share their views on their journey. These discussions enabled us to identify the challenges and obstacles encountered on the path to cultural security, and to reflect together on different strategies for overcoming these challenges. Our approach, both interactive and reflective, aimed to engage participants in a continuous learning process, while breaking away from the typical convention setting. The objective was to demonstrate the importance of developing learning activities based on the experiences themselves and thereby highlight one of the pillars of Indigenous pedagogy.

This portion of the workshop was also intended to foster cultural humility throughout the course. Our intention was to lead non-Indigenous participants to reflect on their own culture and to position themselves as learners versus Indigenous people working to implement indigenization practices. Echoing Richard Wagamese's quote, we wanted to emphasize the need to pay particular attention to relationships in a cross-cultural context. This relationship necessarily involves questioning the power dynamics inherent in our society and reflecting on the need to decolonize our institutions.



Photo credit: Bérénice Mollen-Dupuis

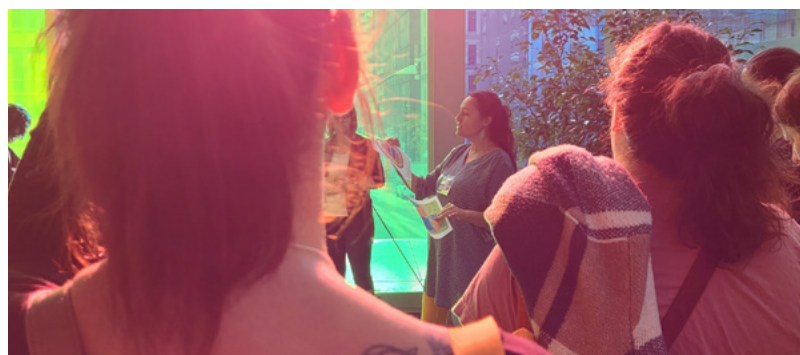


Photo credit: Bérénice Mollen-Dupuis

Finally, to encourage a moment of cultural awakening, we ended the workshop by sharing with participants a kackapitcikan, a typical Anishinabe pocket cake, prepared by Éliane Kistabish, freelance trainer at FC-UQAT. A delicious way to end our workshop!

To conclude, we invited participants to contribute to a "tree of inspiring practices". They had to write down, on sticky notes in the shape of leaves, good practices in their environment, related to indigenization and decolonization. This tree remained on display throughout the convention, providing a space for reflection and sharing among all participants.



Photo credit: Éliane Kistabish

This type of activity is in addition to the training and coaching program we offer to educational staff in Quebec. In addition to the *Piwaseha* and *Matinamagewin* training courses, the UQAT Service de la formation continue team, with the support of the Ministère de l'Éducation, offers coaching and advisory services to staff wishing to offer better support to Indigenous students and foster the transformation of practices within the school environment. In this way, UQAT wishes to pursue [its commitment](#) to the indigenization of education and the recognition of Indigenous knowledge.

Here are some of the questions raised at the end of our workshop. We invite you to consider them as a basis for further reflection.

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BLOOMING WORDS®: STIMULATING LANGUAGE OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN

Article written on March 12, 2025, by Marie Vézina (Coordinator, Blooming Words® program at CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale), in collaboration with Hortense Massin (Assistant Director, OBNL API-Enfance) and Mireille De La Sablonnière-Griffin (Ph. D., INRS, Researcher specializing in Indigenous studies).



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BACKGROUND

For nearly three years, the CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale has collaborated closely with the non-profit API-Enfance and multiple Indigenous partners to adapt the **Blooming Words® for Indigenous children**, in a cultural safety approach. This ambitious project is made possible through funding from the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS). But what is this innovation?

In this article, learn more about:

- The Mots d'enfants language stimulation program for Indigenous children
- The cultural safety approach
- The «Indigenous Languages and Cultures» workshop on the importance of stimulating language in Indigenous languages of origin
- Experimental projects carried out in Indigenous settings (in health and social services centers, daycares, schools, and Native Friendship Centers)

WHAT IS BLOOMING WORDS®?

Blooming Words® is a comprehensive language stimulation program, available on a web-based knowledge transfer application for speech therapy. It proposes a “turnkey” approach to training educational staff in schools or daycare, or to equip parents and relatives with the skills of language stimulation in their daily lives. It is suitable for all children between the ages of one and five, i.e., up to kindergarten, and aims to prevent or reduce language difficulties. In this way, Blooming Words® supports children’s educational success and perseverance by preparing them for learning to read and write, the verbal reasoning required for problem-solving, understanding abstract concepts, etc.



Blooming Words® proposes group or tandem interventions with educational staff (in schools or day-care centres) or families. Practical workshops on language stimulation are led by a specialist (i.e., educational consultant, special educator, speech therapist). In these workshops, a range of training videos focused on language stimulation techniques is shown, followed by discussions aimed at delving deeper into their content. Practical activities are then suggested, using books, games or everyday routines.

Watch our **introductory video** to get an overview of the program: <https://api-enfance.ca/mots-denfants/>

ADAPTATIONS IN A CULTURAL SAFETY PERSPECTIVE

Cultural safety is an approach that recognizes the inequities experienced by Indigenous people and seeks to address these gaps through safe practices. It is an ongoing process, requiring non-Indigenous professionals in education, health, social services, and community settings to constantly review their own knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and processes to better meet the needs of Indigenous populations and to consider their linguistic and cultural heritage.

To adapt the Blooming Words program® to the principle of cultural safety, consultation and working committees were established in collaboration with several Indigenous partners: the MAMUK Centre, the Quebec Native Friendship Centre, the UPessamit CPE and Health Centre, and Institut Tshakapesh. Other organizations have joined the team for experimental projects in the communities of Uashat and Unamen Shipu. Language stimulation workshops were often carried out in co-intervention between an Indigenous organization and a partner from the health network (CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale or CISSS de la Côte-Nord) or the school environment (Centre de services scolaire du Fer). The adaptations made were inspired by the testimonies of our Indigenous partners and the Mikinak awareness guide, concerning the learning styles of Indigenous children (First Nations Education Council, 2013).

The Web application Blooming Words® has been fully translated into English, making it accessible to a greater number of First Nations communities. In addition, the Tshakapesh Institute piloted the **translation into Innu-Aimun** of several videos or documents. This made it possible to add oral reading buttons to the web application, and to have the content heard in Innu-aimun, rather than only giving it to read on a screen.

Ten new cultural safety videos have been created, part of the **“Les langues du cœur” video series**. One of them, the video “Ma langue, mes racines” (My language, my roots), stresses the importance of stimulating language mainly in the child’s mother tongue, for better cultural roots and to preserve First Nations languages. Other videos focus on the bilingual or Ide multilingual context faced by most Indigenous children. Several videos present the traditional learning styles of Indigenous children, or the language characteristics that can influence language development. These include observation and imitation learning, eye communication, the importance of silences, and dialect-to-dialect differences in pronunciation.

These new videos were used to create the “Langues et cultures autochtones” “Indigenous Languages and Cultures” workshop, available free of charge to everyone on the Web (click on the link!). This workshop addresses, among other things, the appropriate use of tools for detecting language difficulties in Indigenous children. (e.g., language development grids to identify children with difficulties). These tools are generally designed for monolingual non-native children; they are not valid for indigenous or bilingual children unless you know how to adapt them! Practical language stimulation activities related to indigenous cultures are also offered (e.g., talking sticks, indigenous stories, nursery rhymes in Innu-aimun, etc.).

The intervention approach has also been adapted in line with cultural safety recommendations. The **“En route vers la sécurisation culturelle”** (The Road to Cultural Safety) document has been created for this purpose. It is recommended, for example, that the person conducting the workshops in First Nations settings be an Indigenous person and share the language and culture of the educational team or the families they accompany. This ensures that content is transmitted in a way that respects the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the community. Whenever possible, we encourage work with workers from the community or culture of the area, as well as co-intervention with Indigenous collaborators. In fact, Blooming Words® can now be offered in the form of **parent-child workshops**. This new intervention modality has been specially designed for Native Friendship Centres. It favours co-intervention between a healthcare establishment and a First Nations community organization.





EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS

The Blooming Words® workshops, adapted to the reality of Indigenous children, have been the subject of a program implementation evaluation in various settings:

- Schools (training of educational staff at the Olamen School in Unamen Shipu and at the Centre de services scolaires du Fer)
- Native friendship centres (parent-child workshops offered at Centre MAMUK and CAA de Sept-Îles)
- Daycare services (training for educational staff at the two CAA de Quebec daycare centres, the Pessamit and Uashat daycare centres, and the Centre MAMUK drop-in daycare centre).
- Healthcare institutions (with families enrolled in speech therapy at the Centre de santé de Pessamit, CISSS de la Côte-Nord and CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale).

A program implementation evaluation report conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Scientific Research will be published in the fall of 2025 (De La Sablonnière-Griffin et al., 2025). More than 80 people participated in this implementation evaluation, including those responsible for the initiative (n=6), those who implemented the program in partner settings (n=28), and those who benefited from the program (educational staff and parents; n=53), through interviews or questionnaires. The results are very positive and promising: both stakeholders and families note the children's language progress and appreciate the cultural safety adaptations. Watch testimonials from participants in the first phase of the project: <https://vimeo.com/1026280370/5270c8ad02>

The final presentation of the project to adapt the Mots d'enfants® program using a cultural safety approach will take place on October 1, 2025, in person at the CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale (Quebec), or virtually. Contact us to register or for more information: info@api-enfance.ca

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THANK YOU TO OUR PRECIOUS PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS!



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MOBILIZING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN SCHOOL CURRICULA: THE VOICE OF ENGAGED PARTNERS

Study of cultural safety practices developed on Côte-Nord to support school retention and the educational success of Innu learners



Emmanuelle Aourousseau
UQAC

BACKGROUND

This article, the result of postdoctoral research (Aourousseau et al. 2024), explores the mobilization of Indigenous perspectives in the educational practices of Côte-Nord partners who have participated in concerted action on cultural safety (Couture et al. 2024). It offers a reflection on school curricula to explore avenues for engagement that can foster the perseverance and success of First Peoples learners.



Christine Couture
UQAC

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this article are, essentially, to share ideas and challenges raised by participants who commented on school curricula, to identify inspiring initiatives and the obstacles that remain, and to present transfer tools developed in postdoctoral research.

The foundation lies in a study of Canadian school programs, which underscores principles for valuing the languages, cultures, and wisdom of First Peoples, and whose summaries can be found on a website <https://securisationculturelle.ca/perspectives-autochtones/>.



Julie Rock
UQTR

INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY AND LEARNING PREFERENCES

Indigenous pedagogy is based on a holistic and relational approach, seeking to balance intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical dimensions to enable the harmonious development of the person (Ottmann & Pritchard, 2009; Toulouse, 2016) <https://securisationculturelle.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/PENSEE-HOLISTIQUE-ET-APPROCHE-CIRCULAIRE.pdf>. This educational perspective, linked to the circle of life model, is symbolized by the Medicine Wheel. Learning is rooted in the territory, perceived as a place of learning and identity (Grammond & Guay, 2016). The approaches favour relational, collective and experiential methods (Toulouse, 2016). Links with the world are also strongly present: with communities, with families and Elders, with ancestors and the spiritual world, with future generations (Toulouse, 2016). Spirituality is embodied in these interconnected relationships and goes beyond organized symbolic or religious practices. It is central to the development of the individual and to Indigenous pedagogy. It embodies personal and relational strength, reinforcing self-esteem, community belonging and connection to the natural and cosmic world (Blackstock, 2011; Cross, 2007; Meyer, 2017). More than a belief, it reflects a holistic vision of the world, integrating connection with oneself, others and the environment, where knowledge becomes a living, meaningful act (Boelen, 2021, 2023).



Jean-François Vachon
BRV

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED BY PARTICIPANTS

While advocating a holistic approach, research participants emphasize the importance of teaching Innu languages and cultures, which is often not yet sufficiently valued. They share various initiatives already in place in Innu and provincial schools:

- In science and technology: the Innuat Mak Shipua ("Innu and the Rivers") project combines science and culture in relation to the rivers of Nitassinan.
- In the social world, communities are developing educational materials focused on their history and culture to address the lack of perspectives of First Peoples. Young people are involved in collective writing projects on the history of their community.
- Languages and cultures: Innu language and culture courses are offered in many communities, although some stop at Secondary 3.
- Traditional land-based learning and activities: traditional activities such as hare snares setting, trapping and beading are used to reinforce language and culture, and enable young people to explore and understand their cultural heritage.

Participants also raised obstacles to the mobilization of Indigenous perspectives, such as:

- Programs that address these perspectives to a limited extent,
- A lack of cultural diversity in teaching materials,
- A lack of resources for teaching Innu-Aimun,
- Inadequate training for teachers on Indigenous realities.

In addition, they share proposals for better mobilizing Indigenous perspectives to create an inclusive and respectful school environment, including by:

- A better welcome for First Peoples' students,
- Integrating Indigenous literary works,
- Recognition of the territory as a learning vector,
- Adapting programs to significantly enhance the value of Indigenous cultures.

Competency 15 (2021, FNEC, Institut Tshakapesh, CDFM Huron-Wendat), which advocates for the enhancement of Indigenous cultures, is also seen as a key component of teacher training to be fully recognized. Different actions could be taken simultaneously to ensure a genuine cultural safety of First Peoples' students and the enhancement of languages and cultures.

CONCLUSION AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

Shared practices among participants, a literature review and an analysis of different Canadian programs led to the development of this tool which provides avenues for the mobilization of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education across disciplines.



Ways of mobilizing Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education

This tool, which can be enhanced by anyone's own experiences, is a source of inspiration for anyone wishing to mobilize Indigenous perspectives in their teaching. The purpose of this mobilization is first to give meaning to the learning of First People's youth, but also to make Indigenous realities and perspectives known to all learners. With this tool, we hope to open opportunities to consider unifying developments that will contribute to better living together. For more information, visit <https://www.securisationculturelle.ca>.

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IMPLEMENTING CULTURALLY MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES TO VALUE THE PERSPECTIVES OF FIRST PEOPLES IN EDUCATION



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GENESIS AND CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

For many years now, *La Boîte Rouge VIF* (BRV), an organization dedicated to implementing collaborative methodologies for sharing the cultural heritage of First Nations, has been receiving numerous requests to use its productions in educational settings. The school community greatly needs to present a culturally relevant and respectful portrait of Indigenous perspectives. Consequently, these productions, which carry the voices of First Peoples with authenticity and a contemporaneity, are the perfect vehicle. Although almost all the productions are freely available online, the school environment requires assistance to ensure the didactic transposition, and to link these cultural transmission devices to the training programs of the Quebec school.

To meet the need for authentic teaching resources to address First Nations cultures in the classroom, La Boîte Rouge VIF has been developing and expanding an educational component since 2020. A first project was funded by the *ministère de l'Éducation and the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones*, now renamed the *Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit*, to bring together First Peoples artists and students from Alma's Saint-Joseph elementary school. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these meetings were interrupted. As access to schools became very limited and the concerns of teachers changed, co-creation was no longer an option. The development of a collection of educational sheets then emerged as an alternative solution.

THE PEDAGOGICAL HANDBOOK

It is important for the BRV team that the activities developed meet the demands of both young people and the teachers who lead them. Our project emerged directly from the need for continuous feedback and the need to improve our tools in this regard. The handbook created with this in mind is entitled *À la rencontre des Premiers Peuples* (Encounter with First Peoples). It features nine educational fact sheets based on the productions of six Indigenous artists from various nations. Through the testimonies of artists exploring their identity and artistic approach, schoolchildren are led to look inward at their own identity and culture.

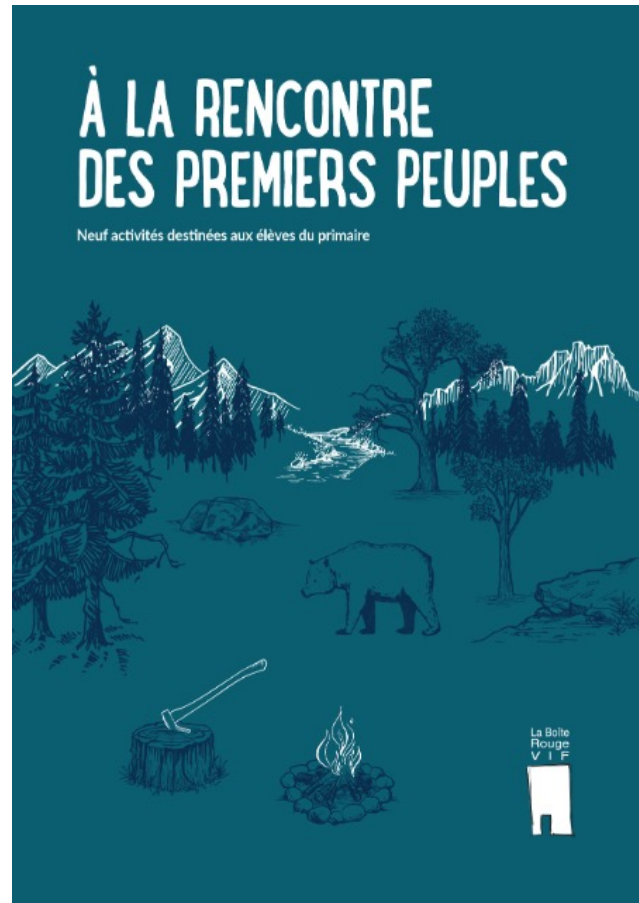
The tool was released to the public in 2022, and several classroom experiments have been conducted since then, including one reported in this contribution to the 6th edition of the Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement of First Peoples. This is an experiment carried out at the initiative of our colleagues Valérie Hervieux, Innu Teacher from Pessamit and Pedagogical Counsellor at Institute Tshakapesh Institute, and Patricia-Anne Blanchet, Indigenous Pedagogical Counsellor at the University of Sherbrooke. They also participated in the development of the handbook as education consultants for BRV. For this experiment, they asked several teachers and trainees with whom they usually work to organize classroom activities from the handbook. The objective was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these workshops to adjust them subsequently. Two trials are presented here, highlighting the challenges encountered and the lessons learned.

TEACHING SHEETS IN-CLASS TRIALS

Céliah's Project

In the fall of 2024, Céliah—a student at the Université de Sherbrooke—completed her terminal elementary education placement at École Teueikan, in the Ekuanitshit Innu community. Teaching first-cycle students, she agreed to Patricia-Anne's request and chose to try an activity in her classroom. She chose the activity entitled *Se connaître pour partager* (*Knowing Each Other to Share*)¹, inspired by the testimony of Innu-Wendat multidisciplinary artist Akienda Lainé. In this activity, students are encouraged to question their identity, the elements that make up their culture and traditions, and to share their thoughts through drawing. Céliah adapted the activity to bring it to life as part of the *Cultures and Citizenship course*², in the first year of elementary school. Adapting the activity was difficult because of the concepts used and the unsuitable vocabulary:

"I carried out the activity as part of the QCC course over two periods. As the students in the class have a low level of French comprehension and maturity, I simplified the vocabulary and the activity. The students discussed and made four drawings to demonstrate their understanding. I also did short interviews with each student while they were drawing to check their level of understanding."



Excerpts from Céliah's experience report sent to the team:

"This activity had a significant impact on her teaching practice as it enabled her to create an activity that was adapted to the reality of her students and created a sense of community both in class and in the broadest sense. Indeed, the main positive point of using this activity is that it enabled the students to realize that they had several things in common. According to Céliah, it has also increased their sense of belonging, both to the class and to their community and nation. Among the elements to be anticipated, this trial enabled the team to realize that some of these elements would have benefited from being specified in the handbook. Céliah brought to our attention the fact that many students in her class are in foster care or do not do many activities with their parents. This has made it difficult for these young students to find a ritual, celebration, or activity that is practised within the family or with their caregivers. 'Family is a sensitive topic for many students,' according to Céliah, 'one student cried during the activity.' In short, this trainee demonstrated great creativity and adaptability, even though she was initially not comfortable with the activity. She was able to guide the students with kindness and make them realize that the class was a family and that together they had many rituals, celebrations, and activities specific to their group. This experiment has prompted us to think about ways of improving the teaching sheet to make it more accessible and inclusive."

¹ You can consult the activity on page 46.

² In this text, we use the expression "Cultures et citoyennetés" to refer to the "Culture et citoyenneté québécoise" course, out of respect for our collaborators who are members of First Peoples, as many of them have indicated that they do not recognize themselves in the name chosen by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

Valérie's project

For her part, Valérie promoted the handbook's activities to teachers in her network of contacts. The art teacher at Uashkaikan high school in Pessamit drew her inspiration from the activity entitled *Illustre ton territoire*³ (Draw your Territory), based on the testimony of Jacques Newashish. In this activity, students undertake a personal reflection in relation to the territory, a place that is significant to them, and share this awareness through art (the medium is left to the teacher's choice) and speaking out. The teacher had to adapt the activity to the secondary level, as it had been designed for elementary school children. This experiment allowed Valérie to understand the impact that culturally significant activities could have on students, teachers and on herself. Valérie sees the immense potential of this handbook and the source of inspiration it represents for teachers. It foresees adjustments that could be made to enhance Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in school learning. Valérie also sees the usefulness of such a tool in building students' identities. As she said at the Convention, development of pride in one's identity is very important, and can be achieved through activities such as those suggested in the handbook.

At the end of these classroom trials, our main observation is that the activities in our handbook are a reminder of this crucial fact: learning is not limited to the transmission of knowledge, it also relies on relationships of trust and reciprocity with students. And this is where Indigenous perspectives can inspire the creation of new and effective tools that can help us address sensitive realities, foster collective resilience, and create a sense of belonging. Finally, these experiments lead us to believe that it is essential that the training and coaching of teachers engaged in culturally relevant valuing of First Peoples perspectives (through meaningful resources and encounters) emphasize the connection between knowledge and relationships.

³ You can consult the activity on page 12 of the handbook.

The BRV team would like to thank the teachers and trainees who bring to life the workshops and educational activities featured in *À la rencontre des Premiers Peuples rencontre des Premiers Peuples*. (Encounter with First Peoples). We thank them for their constructive feedback. We salute their commitment and efforts to promote First Peoples' cultures in their schools.

BRV's education projects are continuing apace. In fact, we're currently participating in the development of the First Nations Education Council's magnificent educational portal, *Les voix du territoire* (Voices from the Land)!

If you are using the teaching sheets in your classroom, we would love to hear from you. Please send us your comments on the following link: <https://forms.gle/L9H4xYsRHduhbhKd7>.

Projects created during the *Illustre ton territoire* activity.



STORY OF CO-CREATION OF AN AWARENESS-RAISING RESOURCE IN EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

TBESTAWAW8GAN: LISTENING TO INDIGENOUS STUDENT REALITIES TO PREVENT AND COUNTER DISCRIMINATION



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BACKGROUND

In Quebec, as in Canada, a growing number of Indigenous people are entering post-secondary education. However, because of the colonial policies still in place under the 1876 Indian Act and the intergenerational traumas left by residential schools, education remains a symbol of assimilation and oppression. Moreover, the Quebec school system often conflicts with traditional values at the heart of Indigenous pedagogy and does not yet offer a respectful inclusion of the realities, knowledge, and cultures of First Peoples. However, as Article 15.1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to have school education that faithfully reflects the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations". Call to Action 2.1 of the Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec (Viens Commission) calls on the Quebec government to "[p]ursue, in collaboration with Indigenous authorities, the enrichment of the Quebec school curriculum to introduce a fair and representative portrait of the history of the First Nations and Inuit of Quebec".

In this decolonial movement, it becomes imperative to provide culturally safe educational environments for Indigenous people undertaking higher education. They often pursue atypical or discontinuous academic paths and face various systemic discriminatory obstacles (Dufour, 2019; RCAAQ, 2022). In this regard, issues concerning higher education for First Peoples are the subject of studies that seek to reflect the realities experienced by Indigenous students attending post-secondary institutions in Quebec (CAPRES, 2018; Mareschal and Denault, 2021). Although there's still a long way to go, cultural and social security measures are now in place in several CEGEPs and universities in Quebec (Blanchet, 2021).

Since 2021, a team of people committed to the well-being and success of Indigenous students has grouped around the *Pôle régional en enseignement supérieur de l'Estrie* (PRESE) to work together on the decolonization/indigenization of four post-secondary institutions in the region: Université de Sherbrooke, Bishop's University, Champlain-Lennoxville College and Cégep de Sherbrooke. Witnessing the many barriers to success that continually stand in the way of the Indigenous students it works with; the team came up with the idea of developing a tool to raise awareness about discrimination as well as microaggressions—even involuntary ones—that too often result from it. Its purpose was to demystify and deconstruct the prejudices and stereotypes that underlie these discriminations.

THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND AWARENESS-RAISING TOOLS

It is through these concerted initiatives, and with a view to social justice, that the idea of an educational resource proposing avenues for reflection and concrete actions in favour of rapprochement between First Peoples and Quebec society has emerged. This project was made possible thanks to substantial funding from the Secrétariat des relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuits of the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, as part of a measure to counter bullying and cyberbullying of Indigenous students. *TEBESTAWAW8GAN: être à l'écoute des réalités étudiantes autochtones pour prévenir et contrer les discriminations* (*TEBESTAWAW8GAN: listening to the realities of Indigenous students to prevent and counter discrimination*) is an awareness-raising resource based on the experiences of Indigenous students, defining key concepts and bringing to light some of the complex realities that can lead to discrimination. To build relationships based on respect and reciprocity, it offers anyone who wants the tools they need to interact in a culturally relevant way with Indigenous students. By articulating phenomena that frequently remain unacknowledged, this resource enhances cultural awareness for non-Indigenous individuals and offers to Indigenous students strategies to respond to discrimination and protect themselves. In this perspective, the team produced eight audiovisual vignettes that define and exemplify concepts such as instrumentalization, tokenism, essentialization, fetishism, cultural appropriation/appreciation or Indigenous self-identification. To reach all populations—both non-Indigenous and Indigenous—concerned with higher education in Quebec, the bilingual resource is available in open-access digital or paper format. This distribution strategy adapts to the multilingual reality of many indigenous communities, where French and English are second languages.

The *TEBESTAWAW8GAN* awareness-raising resource was unveiled as part of Truth and Reconciliation Week, organized in 2024 by the same team under the aegis of PRESE, and then presented the following November 7, in Montréal, at the 6th Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples. It can be consulted via this [hyperlink](#). The resource's visual signature was developed by the Niaka Indigenous Graphic Design Agency, in the Abenaki community of W8linak. The illustrations were created by Julie-Ann Vollant Whittemore, a student in Psychology and Native Studies at Bishop's University and originally from the Innu nation of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam. A total of more than 25 individuals, professionals and students at one of the four participating higher education institutions, or representatives of Indigenous organizations, participated in the development of the resource. (Abenaki Council of Odanak, W8banaki, Niaka Creative Agency, Kiuna Institution). The full list of people and organizations involved in the project can be found in the introductory pages of the [PDF document](#) containing the content of the audiovisual capsules. Please note that we would have liked to include all these individuals as partners in this contribution and that we are acting on their behalf.

The late Roger Echaquan (1955–2024), the Atikamekw nehirowisiw Elder who returned to the eternal hunting grounds of his ancestors on December 27, 2024, guided the project's opening circle in January 2024 at the Musée des Abénakis in Odanak. We dedicate the *TEBESTAWAW8GAN: Listening to Indigenous Student Realities to prevent and Address Discrimination* to this great medical man whose teachings were aimed at healing First Peoples and wellness for future generations. His work will continue to inspire our steps.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Cette contribution fait état d'une collaboration inédite et exemplaire entre des personnes engagées vers plus de justice sociale, au bénéfice des étudiants et étudiantes autochtones, quel que soit leur établissement d'appartenance. En effet, le souhait de développer une offre conjointe s'est concrétisé au fil des ans par des ateliers culturels, des groupes de partage, des cérémonies traditionnelles et des sorties en territoire. Au-delà de cette programmation riche et diversifiée qui vient nourrir le sentiment d'appartenance de la communauté étudiante autochtone interinstitutionnelle, des relations authentiques et réciproques se sont fortifiées.

La ressource numérique proposée par l'équipe répond à la nécessité d'offrir des environnements éducatifs (physiques ou virtuels) culturellement pertinents, signifiants et sécuritaires pour les personnes étudiantes autochtones qui entreprennent ou poursuivent des études supérieures. Mettant de l'avant les voix autochtones, elle vient assouvir un besoin d'expression exprimé clairement par les personnes issues des Premiers Peuples qui travaillent ou qui étudient dans les divers établissements postsecondaires en Estrie.

Une seconde phase du projet est en cours de développement. Elle consiste à ajouter des concepts et des situations authentiques à la ressource éducative de sensibilisation. La dimension de pédagogie interactive sera également bonifiée, afin de rendre l'expérience d'apprentissage plus immersive. À l'automne 2025, l'équipe dévoilera un guide pédagogique proposant l'expérimentation réelle de certaines situations vécues par les personnes étudiantes autochtones, à la manière du «Théâtre Forum», une approche d'intervention théâtrale développée par Augusto Boal en 1996.

AN INDIGENOUS VOICE

Fumigation of an Indigenous Student

By Vicky Boldo

Every day is a gift. As a student, your days are full of requirements. One thing I've learned is that my best days... are when I wake up and set my intentions... when I take the time to align heart and head and when I give thanks to the Creator for all that sustains us, for all those who have gone before us and for generations to come.

As a student, you are the prayers of your ancestors, past, present, and future. Your words, actions, intentions, and relationships are prayers for those to come. We live in a time of injustice, division, and violence and our Mother Earth work so hard to keep us safe and take care of us. Colonialism, systemic oppression and negative human attitudes and behaviours run counter to Indigenous worldviews and natural law.

I am blessed every day, and it is an honour and privilege to work in a post-secondary environment with such beautiful young Indigenous people.

I strive daily to accompany, support and defend myself to the best of my ability. I believe in you, I trust you, and I am by your side in everything you are!

In your morning practice—whatever it means to you, whether it's purification, meditation, prayers, journaling...

- *Empty your mind to be attentive and cultivate gratitude in all your interactions throughout the day, with the land, the water and all your relationships; do not forget that this also applies to yourself...*
- *cleanse your eyes to see the beauty of all things; and, to see your inner and outer beauty...*
- *Free your ears to actively listen and hear what is being shared and to honour your inner inspirations and intuition...*

- *Clear your throat, your mouth, your tongue, and your lips, for a conscious and healthy breathing... to savour all that is nourishing and to tell the truth honestly with kindness and conviction; and, to speak kindly about yourself and others...*
- *Empty your heart to feel the gift of life and be able to show love, empathy, compassion, and patience in all interactions with all your loved ones and with yourself.*
- *Stretch your legs and feet to walk the right way... with integrity, respect, and humility.*
- *In times of doubt, fear, fatigue, intimidation and adversity, do your best to remind yourself that you are not alone...*
- *Remember that you are deeply rooted and that you draw your origin from ancient knowledge. Intergenerational wisdom, care, and resilience carry us, we are NOT our trauma!*

Working to become the best version of yourself by taking responsibility for your actions and for everything that supports and surrounds you is the best remedy for fighting discrimination, violence of all kinds and exclusion.

*SaSawêyimik Kahkiyaw Nitôtêminânak Mîna
Niwâhkômâkaninânak Kinanâskomitinân*

Bless all our friends and relatives, thank you!

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MAAMUITAAU: TOGETHER FOR CEGEP SUCCESS



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CONTEXT

The Chibougamau College Studies Centre is located in the Nord-du-Québec region in Eeyou Istchee territory. Chibougamau, a municipality of fewer than 7,500 inhabitants, is isolated from major urban centers and is close to several Cree communities, including Oujé-Bougoumou, Mistissini, Waswanipi, and Nemaska. The Cree make up approximately 10% of Chibougamau's urban population, but remain underrepresented in college. The Chibougamau College Studies Centre's objective is to promote access to higher education for Indigenous students in Eeyou Istchee territory, thereby mitigating the uprooting and culture shock associated with pursuing a study project in the southern part of the province. It is with this in mind that in 2019, the Centre d'études collégiales in Chibougamau initiated a "cultural and linguistic transition" project and actively began looking for ways to promote the well-being, perseverance and academic success of Indigenous students using a holistic approach. Drawing on scientific literature and "best practices" in other higher education institutions, we gradually implemented measures for reception, integration, retention and cultural security (Lévesque, Polèse et al. 2015; Ministère de l'éducation, du loisir et du sport 2015; Université du Québec 2022). We felt it was particularly important to encourage the participation of community members in this process. It is in this context and in close collaboration with Cree Elder Solomon Awashish that we created the Maamuitaa in January 2023.



LE MAAMUITAAU

Maamuitaa means "to gather" in the Cree language. At our Centre d'études collégiales, *Maamuitaa* consist of a weekly meeting to which Indigenous students are invited. This is a non-credited activity, but one that is scheduled for all Indigenous students. These meetings are co-hosted by two Cree Elders, Caroline Longchap and Solomon Awashish, and I, Émilie Martin, Anthropologist and Educational Advisor responsible for *Service aux étudiantes et étudiants autochtones*. Each *Maamuitaa* begins with an opening prayer, followed by at least one of the following four activities:

- 1. Sharing Circle:** This activity provides students with an opportunity to share their experiences in their school environment or personal life. Over time, bonds are forged between participants, a sense of belonging to the group develops, and their voices are heard.
- 2. Cultural activities:** these can include bead work or Cree language workshops, or any other activity that contributes to a sense of cultural security. Students are regularly consulted and involved in the organization of culturally relevant activities, such as the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation or the end-of-year party. These activities take place either at the Centre d'études collégiales, in the various neighbouring communities, or in the forest, on the territory. While these cultural activities are primarily aimed at the Indigenous student community, many are open to and shared with non-Indigenous students, with the aim of building bridges and forging links between the two communities.
- 3. Healthy lifestyle workshops:** this type of workshop contributes to the holistic well-being of students. Healthy lifestyle workshops are generally offered by Indigenous organizations, such as the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay and are therefore culturally adapted.
- 4. Workshop on learning and success strategies:** the purpose of this activity is to equip Indigenous students according to the needs they express. These may include workshops on time management, reading strategies or effective note taking.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

These four types of activities complement each other to form a balanced whole, reminiscent of the Medicine Wheel and its physical (healthy lifestyle habits), mental (learning and success strategies), spiritual (cultural activities) and emotional (sharing circles) dimensions. *Maamuitaau*'s holistic approach contributes to the well-being, perseverance and academic success of Indigenous students.

LISTENING TO STUDENTS' VOICES

We created a video in which we ask three students to introduce themselves, define the *Maamuitaau* in their own words, tell us about the activities that take place there and tell us what they like most about the *Maamuitaau* (**online video**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd9VExYm72w>).

We have transcribed the words of these three Indigenous students below:

Presentation

Elsie: My name is Elsie Neeposh. I'm from Mistissini. I'm studying accounting and management.

Alysia: My name is Alysia Gull-Blacksmith. I'm from the Cree Nation of Waswanipi. I'm currently following the Springboard program for First Nations.

Mary Annie: My name is Mary Annie Blackned. I'm from Mistissini. I'm studying accounting and management.

What respondents think about *maamuitaau*

Mary Annie: *Maamuitaau* for me is a time for all of us indigenous students to get together, reconnect and talk about how things are going at school or in our personal lives, share things.

Alysia: *Maamuitaau* is like a class gathering, it's where you can talk about what's going on in your life, in your other classes. It's like, if you don't have anyone to talk to at home, you can talk to someone there, like Caroline or even Solomon or even Emily too.

Elsie: I look forward to every meeting, because I love learning new things and meeting other Cree students.

Mary Annie: Like, last year, for example, sometimes non-Indigenous students would come. They wanted to know about our culture. And I also made bannock.

Elsie: Last time, we did a budget workshop. I really enjoyed it. Preparing our schedules. I didn't know what to do until I went to *Maamuitaau*. It helped me organize my exams.

Mary Annie [about National Day of Truth and Reconciliation]:

And during *Maamuitaau*, we planned it, we made ribbons to hand out to people, and we asked our Elder Solomon to share, because he's a residential school survivor. And this year, we've also organized a new activity. We organized a vigil to commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women. And I was the guest speaker. I shared my story about losing my sister. And it was great to see Indigenous and non-Indigenous together, uniting, supporting and standing for each other.

Alysia: What I like about *Maamuitaau* is that we can be open to the Elders and to you.

Mary Annie: The fact that I reconnect with other indigenous people, reconnect with other Indigenous students, and study together. I love study time when you can do your work and catch up on homework too. That's one of the things I love about it.

Elsie: I think, having the support of the Elders, because I don't have that at home. When I go there, I can listen to them. And it's comforting to know that they're there for us.

Alysia: I think it's a good program for Cree students, because I think, some students who are Indigenous, they feel a little small because of the environment, because it's like a majority of, like, other nationalities or something. And I think it's good to have that, because it makes you feel less alone. *Maamuitaau* should exist in other colleges too, it probably does, but I think it should exist in other colleges too just to help Indigenous students in other colleges.

CONCLUSION ON THE MAAMUITAAU EXPERIENCE

The words of the three Indigenous students in the video reflecting their experience of *Maamuitaa* allow us to make several observations:

- The presence of **Elders** is significant and considered very important from the students' point of view.
- *Maamuitaa* is seen as a much-appreciated opportunity for **Indigenous students** to get together and **reconnect**.

Maamuitaa is perceived as

- a **safe space** to express yourself freely and be heard,
- a **community support**,
- a place where **you can learn** new things (through the various workshops offered).

Indigenous students are touched and moved when *Maamuitaa* activities give them the opportunity to **share their culture**, build bridges and forge ties with non-Indigenous students.

The final word goes to Elders Caroline Longchap and Solomon Awashish, who believe that *Maamuitaa* provides Indigenous students with the pleasant feeling of being at home, even though they are studying away from their community ("a home away from home"). *Maamuitaa* also provides a connection between past and future, between traditional knowledge and modern education.

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES



THE PARTENARIAT SAVOIRS ET ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONES PROJECT: ALLIANCE BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND CHANNELS FOR DECOLONIZATION AND THE PRESERVATION OF TERRITORIES OF LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

The Partenariat Savoirs et éducation autochtones (PSÉA) (Indigenous Knowledge and Education Partnership— IKEP) is an international partnership of seven Indigenous nations (Anicinabek, Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, Mapuche, Maya, Nahua and P'urepecha) from three countries (Canada, Mexico, and Chile). These people are mobilized to produce, promote, share and use Indigenous knowledge through educational activities in their communities. The work of the PSÉA is part of an approach of decolonization in education, and reaffirmation of Indigenous territorial pedagogies. Aligned with Indigenous territorial pedagogies, the knowledge-sharing activities undertaken in the PSÉA project since 2021 emphasize the diversity and harmonious integration of Indigenous experiences and knowledge across various national settings. This approach mainly highlights the relevance of rethinking educational practices and programs based on Indigenous relational epistemologies, that is, methods of acquiring, applying, and transmitting knowledge that are carried out through interaction with the territory and the ecological environment (Johnson 2012, McCoy et al. 2016, Simpson 2014, Styres 2013, Tuck et al. 2014).

Map: The seven Indigenous nations participating in the PSÉA project (credit: Gabriel Marcotte)



Between 2022 and 2024, four international meetings were held: a hybrid (virtual and in-person) meeting held during the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2022 (UQAT, Val-d'Or), an in-person meeting in Mapuche territory (Monkul Lof Mapu, Araucania, Chile) in October 2022, an in-person meeting in Wemotaci, in September 2023, and an in-person meeting in Yucatan, Mexico, in February 2024. These meetings allowed the different communities to share their educational initiatives with a view to decolonizing and indigenizing the curricula in their schools. The meetings also made it possible to identify the issues common to each community, regardless of its specific cultural context, in relation to school education and the transmission of Indigenous knowledge. This article focuses specifically on the exchanges and discussions that took place during the last two years of the project. It complements a first article published in the same journal, in 2023, summarizing the results of the first two years of the project (2021-2022) (Éthier et al.2023).

We wish to promote the plurality of Indigenous voices and channels committed to resistance, decolonization, and affirmation of Indigenous knowledge and land rights. To do this, we pay particular attention to the testimonies of Indigenous actors and actresses from the three Americas. These testimonies and experiences, shared as part of the project, highlight the importance of Indigenous education practises in achieving success and staying in school for Indigenous youth.



Some of the people participating in the Notcimik Pimatisiwin meeting within Masko Cimakanic Aski, the territory of the Coocoo family members (crédit photo: Gabriel Marcotte)

Notcimik Pimatisiwin: inter-nation meeting on territorial pedagogies (Wemotaci, September 1 to 6, 2023)

We (the Indigenous)

We are the angels of the earth

Protectors of nature

Let's talk louder than ever

Because we have the gift of listening with our hearts

We are the angels of the earth

Our forests and animals destroyed by fire

Our rivers poisoned by industries (and more)

But our hearts listen to our rights to live in peace

And in the beauty of our natural resources

- Alice Jérôme

This poem was written by Alice Jérôme, Member of the Abitibi8ini Nation and Member of the PSÉA project. It addresses issues and challenges related to the overexploitation of natural resources within Indigenous traditional territories. Prepared and recited at the Notcimik Pimatisiwin meeting held in September 2023 on the unceded territory of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok (called Nitaskinan, in Wemotaci, Quebec), this poem inspired a series of very profound discussions and exchanges concerning the Indigenous land relations and pedagogies. Groups of students, teachers, and knowledge bearers, as well as Elders, each representing Indigenous nations, were welcomed into Nitaskinan. The aim was to have these people express themselves about the impacts of extractivist practices on the preservation of territories of lives and on the intergenerational transmission of territorial knowledge.

Charles Coocoo on his family territory, surrounded by Notcimik Pimatisiwin participants (photo credit: Gabriel Marcotte)



All participating nations recognize that the territory is at the heart of their culture and identity. The preservation of ancestral territories is therefore essential to maintain the geographical and concrete anchoring of the oral tradition and to fight against its erosion in the face of colonial pressure. Language has also been identified as an essential aspect of territorial pedagogies, as it is inseparable from the territory, in the transmission of traditional knowledge. Two general observations were made during the sharing circles concluding the meeting: on the one hand, Indigenous nations from different countries often face similar challenges despite their unique geopolitical contexts; on the other hand, the spirit of resistance is essential to foster pride in being Indigenous, and this spirit must be passed on to younger generations. The summary report (Archambault et al. 2024) and video recordings of the meeting are available on the PSÉA website (www.educpsea.ca).



Collective work created by a group of Indigenous young people, members of different nations, during the Notcimik Pimatisiwin meeting. The illustration depicts intergenerational relationships and cultural values in three indigenous languages (Nehiromowin, Maya, Mapudungun). This work was reproduced on the cover page of the event summary report.

NISKA INTER-NATIONS MEETING: CONSTRUYENDO TERRITORIOS (FEBRUARY 17 TO 24, 2024)

The *Niska Construyendo Territorios* inter-nation meeting took place in the heart of Yucatàn, Mexico and was jointly organized by members of the Partenariat Savoirs et éducation autochtones (PSÉA), the Universidad de Oriente du México, the Atikamekw Nation Council and the Nikanik Secondary School of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiw Community of Wemotaci. Youth from the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok, Maya, and Mapuche nations participated in activities focused on exchanging and mobilizing knowledge about Indigenous territorial knowledge.

The project brought together some sixty Indigenous participants, including twelve students and three teachers from Nikanik high school in the Atikamekw nehirowisiw community of Wemotaci, twenty Mayan students from the Universidad de Oriente (an Indigenous university), and twenty Mayan students from the Telebachillerato Comunitario Intercultural de Popolá pre-university school.

"Niska" means bastard in Nehiromowin (language of the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok). The Niska project is so named because the students, like the bustards, have taken flight to Mayan communities to discover a new territory and broaden their horizons. The young participants then returned to Nitaskinan, richer in experience. They are now able to stand on their own two feet, just as the Niska did after their first journey, building alliances, developing exchanges and sharing strategies with other young Natives. This project is part of the new Atikamekw nehirowisiw history program, which involves cultural exchanges between Indigenous nations and partners, namely the Sto:lo (Canada), the Maya (Mexico), the Mapuche (Chile) and the Aymara (Bolivia).



Some of the young Mayan and Atikamekw nehirowisiwok participants at the meeting (photo credit: Gabriel Marcotte)

The conferences, workshops, and exchanges have highlighted several local Indigenous initiatives aimed at showcasing Indigenous knowledge and the genealogies of Indigenous places. Issues related to the destruction by mass tourism of key cultural sites, as well as the division and privatization of territories, were raised in the Mayan context. Indigenous researchers at the Universidad de Oriente also mentioned the impact of erroneous and misleading studies conducted in the past—mainly by Europeans and Americans—on the archaeology and history of the Mayan peoples of Yucatán. In such internationalized contexts, how can we ensure the preservation of Indigenous territories and territorial knowledge? How to also emerge from colonial education and research that generates a series of ontological and epistemological violence, particularly in terms of content, interpretations and pedagogical approaches (Battiste 2013, Grosfoguel 2020, Kovach 2023, McCoy et al. 2016, Smith et al. 2019)?

The authority of knowledge belongs first and foremost to its guardians, within the Indigenous communities themselves. It is these guardians of Indigenous knowledge who must decide on the nature of the knowledge and its modes of transmission (what, when and to whom). These modalities must be understood and accepted in schools and more broadly in the world of academic research and in the political world. By supporting Indigenous researchers in sharing territorial knowledge through approaches that resonate with their experiences, the Universidad de Oriente sets a practical precedent for Indigenous reassertion of knowledge authority. During our stay at this Indigenous Mayan university, we were able to participate in workshops held in the ceremonial and knowledge transmission outdoor spaces. The knowledge transmitted was related to history, archaeology, medicinal plants, and ceremonial practices, the latter aimed as much at the preservation of territories and resources as the harmony of relations with the living entities of the territory and humans..

CONCLUSION

The workshops, conferences, and visits organized as part of the PSÉA meetings have contributed to the development of partnerships, alliances and Indigenous solidarity networks at the international level. These sustained activities strengthen trusting relationships, increase sharing and increase knowledge mobilization. They ensure that exchanges grow, evolve, deepen and become more complex. Finally, these efforts to mobilize and transmit knowledge promote self-determination and help preserve their territories, languages, cultures, and ontologies.

The inter-nation exchanges, organized for five years now, have revealed both the uniqueness of the different Indigenous contexts and their similarities in terms of the issues involved, the challenges faced, and the resistance strategies used. They have rekindled internal fires but also fires of alliances between peoples. During the various meetings, it was more than words and reflections that were shared. Friendships were created, renewed or consolidated, new visions have emerged, and commitments were made. We hope that this great momentum will continue in the coming years and lead to the construction of a world that is decolonized, supportive and respectful of traditional Indigenous territories and knowledge.



Knowledge transmission workshop on medicinal plants at the Universidad de Oriente, Valladolid, Mexico (photo credit: Benoit Éthier)

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WE SINCERELY THANK THEM!

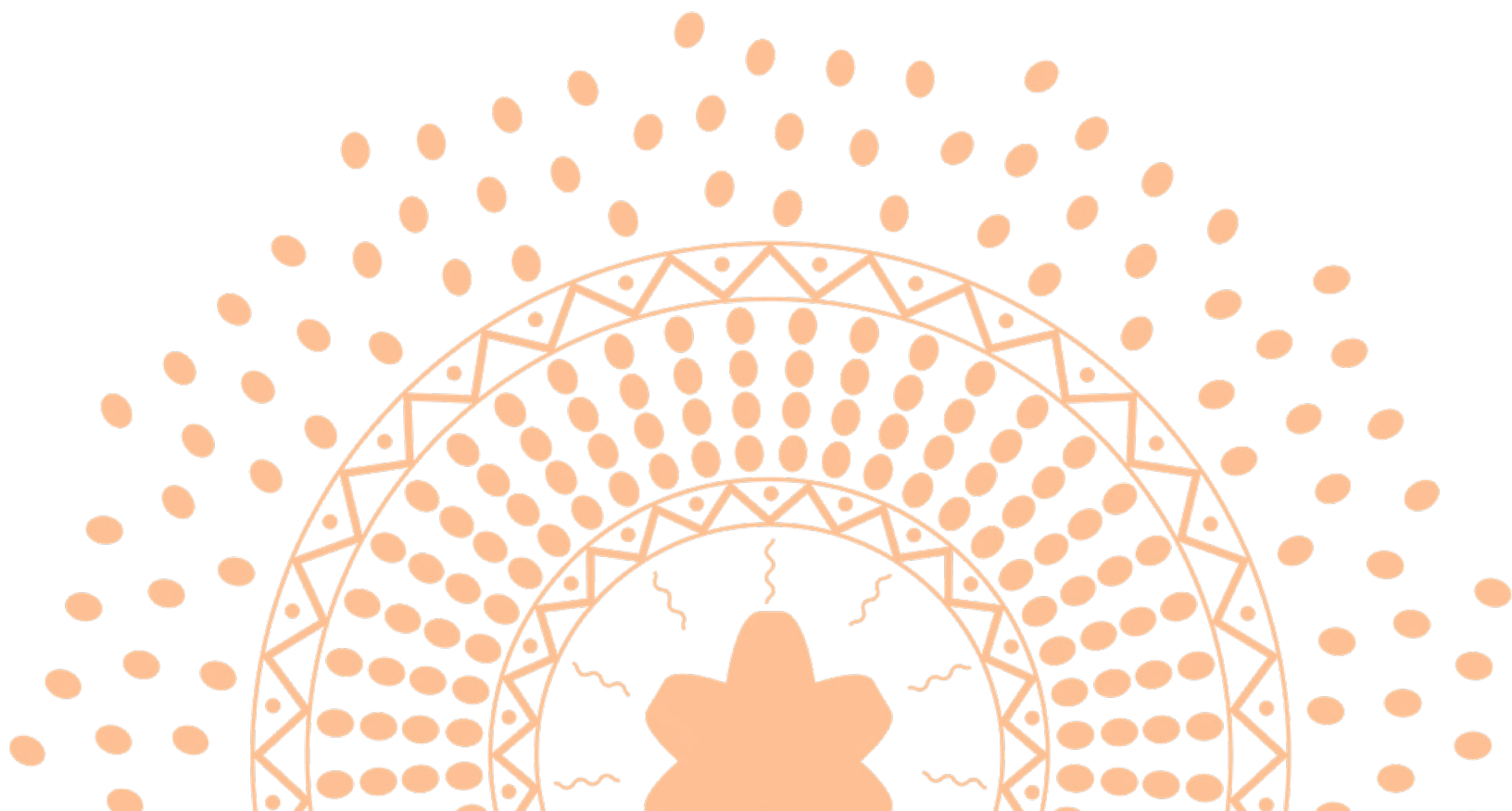
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CONCLUSION

This sixth Journal of Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples bears witness to the strength, creativity, and resilience of communities working to transform learning environments into safer, more caring and forward-looking spaces. The reflections and initiatives presented highlight the importance of thinking about learning not only as an academic pathway, but as a holistic process, embedded in all spheres of life and at all stages of life. They emphasize the depth of indigenous knowledge and practices which, in their intergenerational, community, and geographic dimensions, remind us that education serves as both a vehicle for transmission and a channel for revival. Along the lines of the Convention, these contributions also underline the importance of pedagogical approaches that recognize the plurality of voices and are rooted in authentic, secure and culturally relevant relationships. By valuing the voices of young people, Elders, actors and allies, a collective movement towards personal, social and academic success is taking shape, in harmony with the values of truth, reconciliation, and perseverance upheld by First Peoples' communities.

Beyond the findings, this Journal reminds us that ensuring student retention is not just a matter for individuals, but a shared commitment between institutions, families, communities, and society as a whole. It is in this solidarity and mutual acknowledgement that educational paths are formed which make it possible not only to overcome obstacles, but also to fully affirm the identity and richness of First Peoples.

The educational success of First Peoples is a source of hope and transformation for the whole of society. The shared experiences and inspiring initiatives that mark these pages demonstrate that when communities, institutions, and allies converge, it becomes possible to build plural paths to success rooted in culture, the identity, and pride of First Peoples.

Everyone, at their own level, has the power to support this movement. Whether by listening, recognizing the richness of traditions, openness to dialogue or concrete action, the mobilization of all is the key to building educational environments where every one can reach their full potential. Together, let us continue to turn dreams into reality, to open new paths, and to accompany future generations towards the just and meaningful future they deserve.

In conclusion, the Journal reaffirms its role: to provide a platform for dissemination, dialogue and mobilization, so that everyone can contribute, in their own way, to building a fair, equitable and successful educational future for present and future generations.





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Rio Tinto est fier de soutenir le Colloque sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires chez les Premiers Peuples et de faire briller l'étincelle qui accompagne nos jeunes vers un avenir prometteur.



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CN's Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan (IRAP) outlines clear, actionable steps for the next three years. It's our pledge to meaningful, lasting change.

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Notre feuille de route vers la réconciliation

Le plan d'action du CN pour la réconciliation avec les peuples autochtones (PARPA) présente des mesures claires et concrètes pour les trois prochaines années. C'est notre engagement envers des changements significatifs et durables.

En savoir plus : www.cn.ca/planreconciliation



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Notre objectif fondamental : être innovant dans nos manières de faire pour favoriser la réussite éducative des élèves et leur renforcement identitaire.

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