



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

GUIDE TO WELCOMING AND INCLUDING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS IN QUEBEC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS



by the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec
in collaboration with Quebec Native Friendship Centres
and experts from the education sector





This guide was initiated, managed and written by the Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ).

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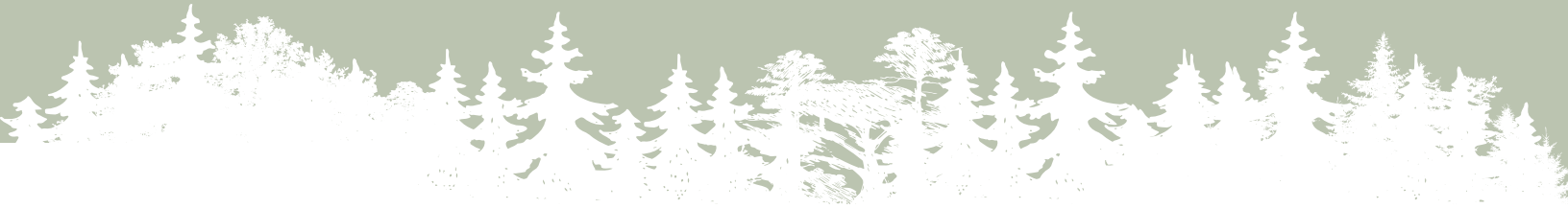


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Legend



Inspiring practices that promote the welcome, inclusion and educational perseverance of Indigenous students



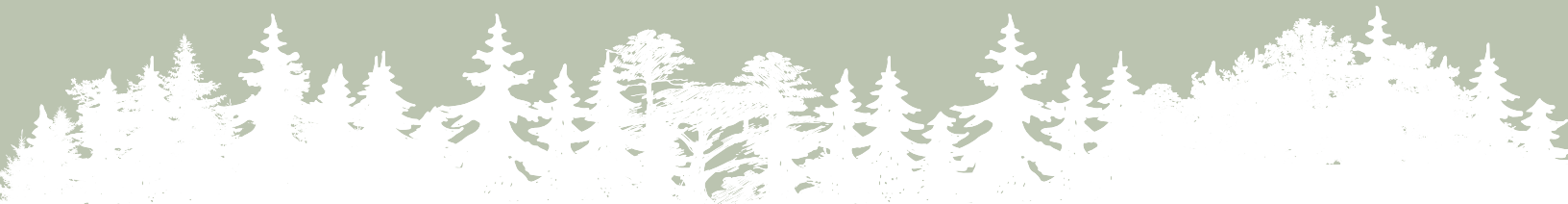
Tools available in the Toolbox



Avenues for collaboration between Native Friendship Centres and schools, school boards and school service centres.



Further reading or resources to encourage reflection or deepen the understanding of a subject



Quebec's Native Friendship Centre Movement

The Native Friendship Centre Movement has been growing in Quebec for over 50 years. The Movement comprises the Native Friendship Centres and the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), as well as all the Indigenous people who use the Centres. Together, they combine their efforts to improve the quality of life of urban Indigenous people and foster the harmonious coexistence of communities in the cities of Quebec.

The Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement is:

- Native Friendship Centres in several cities where there is a strong Indigenous presence.
- Approximately 300 employees in the Movement, more than 80% of whom are women.
- More than 200 partners that contribute to the success of the Native Friendship Centre Movement.
- More than 2,500 young people involved and participating in the Native Friendship Centres' programs and services.

A continuum of integrated services to support individuals and families in all spheres of life (health and wellness, culture, employability, education, justice, advocacy, youth engagement, early childhood and family, etc.)

The RCAAQ is the provincial association that represents the Native Friendship Centres. Founded in 1976, the RCAAQ advocates for the rights and interests of Indigenous citizens living in cities and actively supports the development of its affiliated Native Friendship Centres.

- Native Friendship Centres are urban service hubs, living environments and cultural anchors for Indigenous people;
- Interveners from these Centres work to build bridges and provide liaison and support for the family-school-community relationship.

Located in major urban areas, such as Montréal, and in smaller cities in more remote areas, such as Senneterre, Native Friendship Centres deal with very different realities. Variables include accessibility to public services, socio-economic issues in the city and the specific characteristics of their members (nation of origin, language, socio-economic situation, needs, etc.).

All the Native Friendship Centres share the common mission of improving the quality of life of Indigenous citizens living in or passing through urban areas. They are multi-service centres located in urban areas that meet the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis* people. Their "open door" policy means that all are welcome, regardless of status, nation of origin or place of residence. They create a continuum of integrated services to support individuals and families in all areas of life.

* In Quebec, the provincial government does not recognize any Métis nation within its borders.





INTRODUCTION

Providing a welcoming, inclusive school environment that nurtures harmonious living and learning for all students is the shared responsibility of everyone in the education sector.

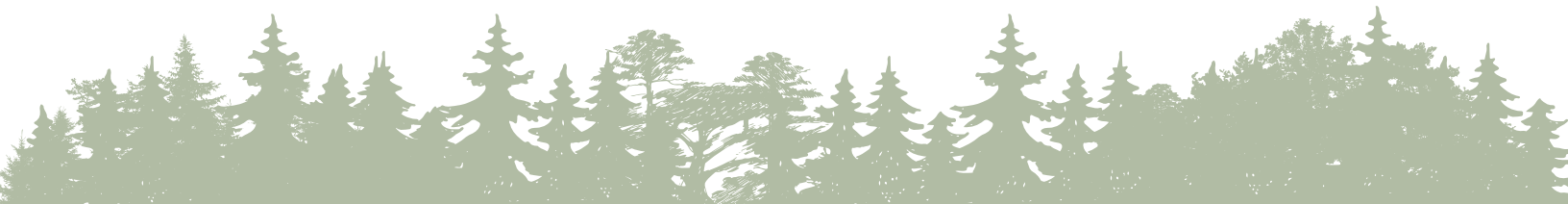
This guide is a reference tool for welcoming, including and promoting the educational success of Indigenous students in Quebec’s elementary and secondary schools. It provides information on the main issues related to the educational success of Indigenous students, practical courses of action, examples of inspiring practices, tools and resources to go further. Above all, it provides inspiration and ideas for encouraging collaboration between Native Friendship Centres and schools, school boards and school service centres (SSCs).

This guide is intended for all those in the Quebec education sector who wish to improve their practices, including school administrators, school board or SSC professionals and classroom teachers. We all have a responsibility to make our schools welcoming and inclusive spaces, to stamp out systemic racism and to recognize the value of Indigenous cultures and knowledge in education. As outlined in Quebec’s Policy on Educational Success, the threefold mission of schools is to educate, socialize and provide qualifications. This mission goes far beyond formal qualifications, instead taking into account the full potential of individuals in their intellectual, cognitive, affective, social and physical dimensions, from the moment they enter school. It is imperative that we take action to ensure that our schools help Indigenous students develop their full potential.

Reading this guide is therefore a first step for those who, with empathy and cultural and pedagogical humility, wish to work toward enhancing the welcome, inclusion and educational success of Indigenous students.

“Teachers play an indispensable role in the process of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (...). [They must work to] prioritize the strengthening of intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.” (Government of Québec, 2020, p. 14).

“For every educator, our responsibility is making a commitment to both unlearn and learn—to unlearn racism and superiority in all its manifestations, while examining our own social constructions in our judgments and learn new ways of knowing, valuing others, accepting diversity, and making equity and inclusion foundations for all learners.” (Battiste, 2013, p. 166)



Indigenous Peoples in Quebec are:

- 10 First Nations and the Inuit.
- 55 communities*.
- In Quebec, there is no legally recognized Métis community, as is the case in several western Canada provinces and in Ontario.
- Each nation has its own history, culture and language.
- Younger population than the rest of Quebec and, on average, with larger families.
- Higher demographic growth than the non-Indigenous population, particularly in urban areas.
- More mobile than the rest of Quebec's population, meaning more frequent moves and more complex school transitions.

53 %

Of the First Nations and Inuit population reside permanently in cities¹.

Cities also are often a place of transition or temporary settlement.

In urban areas, Indigenous people have been taking action, gathering and organizing resources for several decades already. Proof of this is the large number of urban Indigenous organizations in the province, including the Native Friendship Centres.



Click on tool to access

TOOL 1 Map of First Nations, Inuit and affiliated Native Friendship Centres in Quebec

You can have this tool printed for display in your classroom.

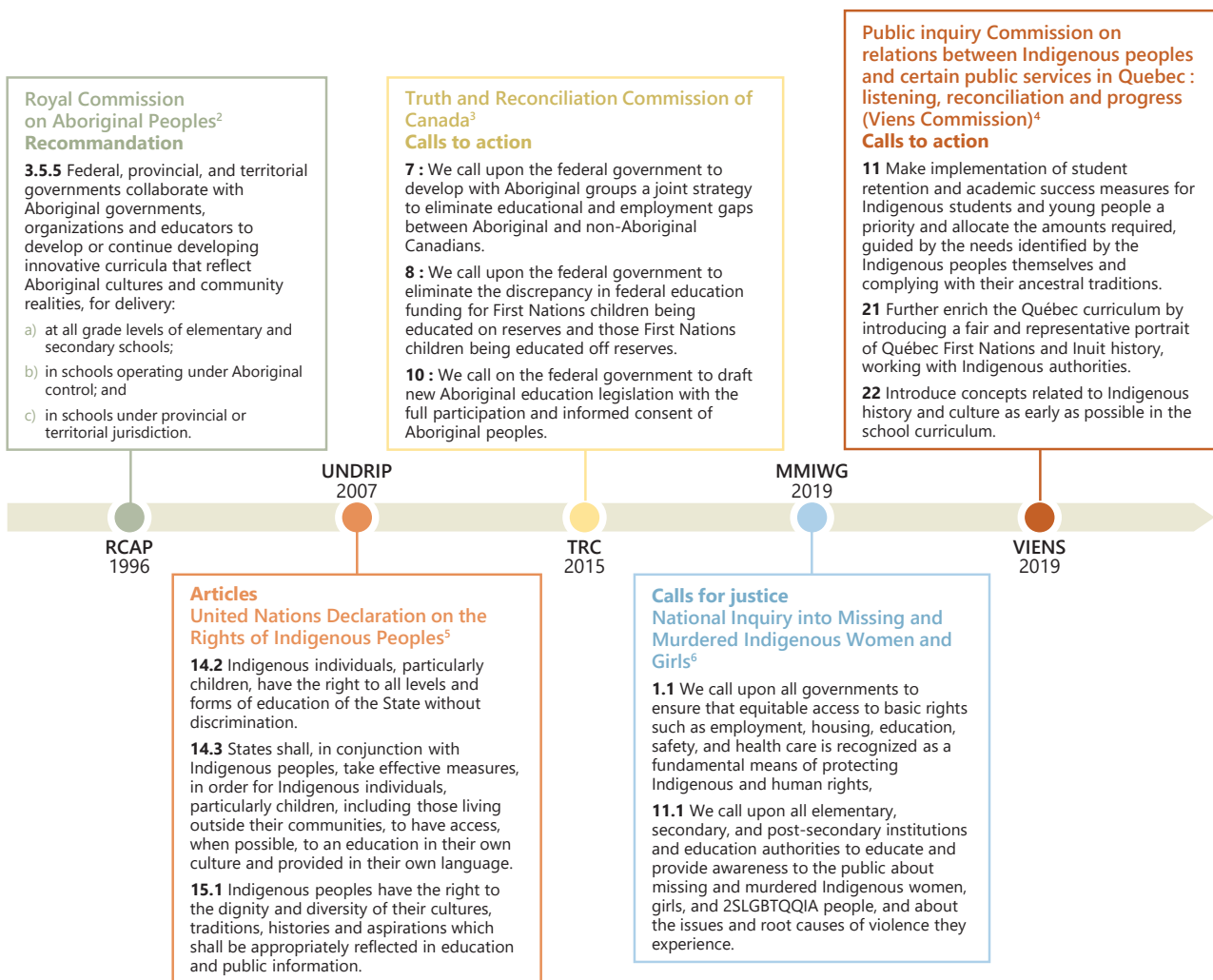
* Source: Lévesque et al. (2019), with data from the 2016 Statistics Canada census.



Commissions of inquiry

In recent decades, concerns about the education of Indigenous students have been the subject of several commissions of inquiry at the provincial, national and international levels.

These various reports call for greater consideration of the historical and contemporary realities of Indigenous students.



Despite all the findings and recommendations that have been made over many years, too few actions have been taken that would have a significant positive impact on Indigenous people, and such actions have often been delayed.

Better preparing schools to welcome and include Indigenous students

Who are urban Indigenous students?

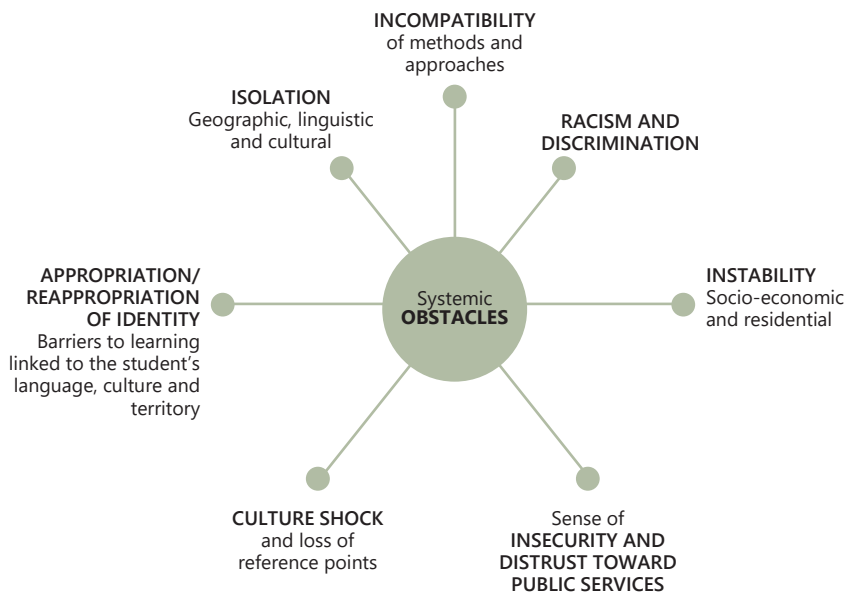
In the context of the increasing urbanization and mobility of Indigenous families, a growing number of Indigenous children and adolescents are attending Quebec’s public schools.

Indigenous students:

- Have a different experience of school, family, social and cultural contexts than non-Indigenous students and newcomer students;
- Frequently experience school transitions outside cycle changes which are often very complex as they involve cultural, family, academic and geographic changes;
- Often have an interrupted school career and a very low graduation rate—realities that are attributable to the many systemic barriers they face.

In high school, Indigenous students are over-represented among those showing educational delays. In addition, the over-identification of learning and language difficulties among Indigenous children is of great concern.

Barriers Indigenous students face in cities⁷



Currently, there is no data to determine how many Indigenous students attend Quebec's public schools and no means of tracking their academic success. Nevertheless, it is estimated that more than a third of Indigenous students attend a school in Quebec’s public system.

Negative educational and social experiences in the city for Indigenous students and their parents are detrimental to school perseverance and success.

THE NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

Families need an informal network in the city and to come together as people who share a common history and culture. In addition to providing a continuum of services to urban Indigenous families and serving as a liaison between schools and families, Native Friendship Centres are living environments where Indigenous youth can expand their social network, have culturally relevant learning experiences, and reinforce a sense of pride in their identity—all elements that are considered essential to lifelong learning, development and success.



Turn to the Native Friendship Centres to:

- Promote services for Indigenous students attending your school and their families.
- Learn more about Indigenous languages and cultures in your area.
- Stay up to date with public events and cultural outreach activities in your city and participate with your class.
- Work in a complementary way to ensure that Indigenous students and their families have access to all the professional and community services they need.



TAKE IT FURTHER

- [Urban Indigenous People and the Accessibility of Public Services – Portrait of the Situation in Quebec](#), 2018 published by the RCAAQ (2018) (French only);
- [Le point de vue de jeunes autochtones en milieu urbain sur leur parcours scolaire](#), published by Natasha Blanchet-Cohen et coll. In the *Revue Jeunes et société* (2018) (French only);
- [Vidéo Nous|US](#), celebrating 50 years of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement.



PART 1 - SCHOOL ISSUES

Nearly a third of urban Indigenous students are behind in their education by the time they reach high school.

FINDINGS⁸

1 – Realities of Indigenous students are not recognized and are not properly addressed in schools

Transitions and hyper-mobility

The lives of many Indigenous families are shaped by numerous relocations, particularly between urban and community settings. More than half of Indigenous students have experienced at least one school transition in addition to the usual educational changes (childcare–elementary–high school). When a student moves from a community to an urban school, the transition is particularly complex because the school systems are completely different. Moreover, transitions are not always planned and can occur at any time during the school year.

Socio-economic factors

Many Indigenous families struggle with economic poverty and social challenges associated with the intergenerational consequences of colonial policies and systemic racism, such as the low educational attainment of many parents and the difficulty families have in accessing affordable, quality housing.

Rebuilding a trusting relationship with the school system

Indigenous students are often direct descendants of residential school survivors. Their parents and grandparents may be distrustful of Quebec’s school system, which is still often representative of abuse and oppression. This past may seem like a long time ago, but the wounds from it are still very present in many families.

COMPETENCY 15: Value and promote Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, cultures and history

This competency has been proposed for the Reference Framework for Professional Competencies for Teachers and developed jointly by the First Nations Education Council (FNEC), the Institut Tshakapesh and the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main d'oeuvre Huron-Wendat (CDFM), with the unanimous support of the provincial table on the educational success of Indigenous students. The key elements described in this competency would enable teachers to have a greater understanding of Indigenous learners and to work alongside them to create an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

For more informations on [Competency 15](#), visit the FNEC website in the "Achievements" section.

5 – Pedagogical approaches in schools could be more inclusive and more in line with Indigenous pedagogical approaches

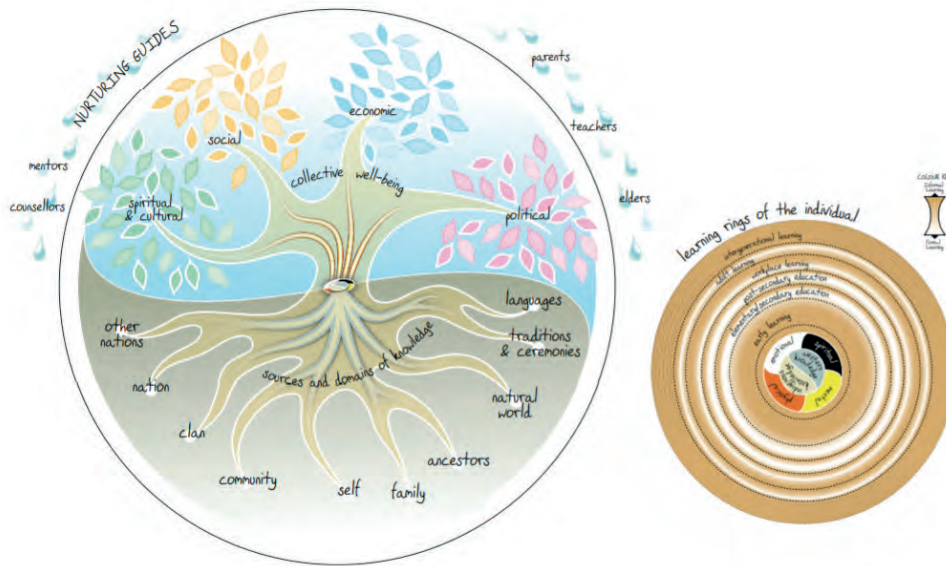
- Many studies have demonstrated the positive impact of inclusive pedagogical approaches and Indigenous pedagogy on all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
- Using Indigenous pedagogical approaches and the holistic view of learning would be beneficial to all schools.
- In general, teaching and assessment do not take into account this holistic view and the ways in which knowledge is transmitted in Indigenous pedagogy.

INCLUSIVE APPROACH

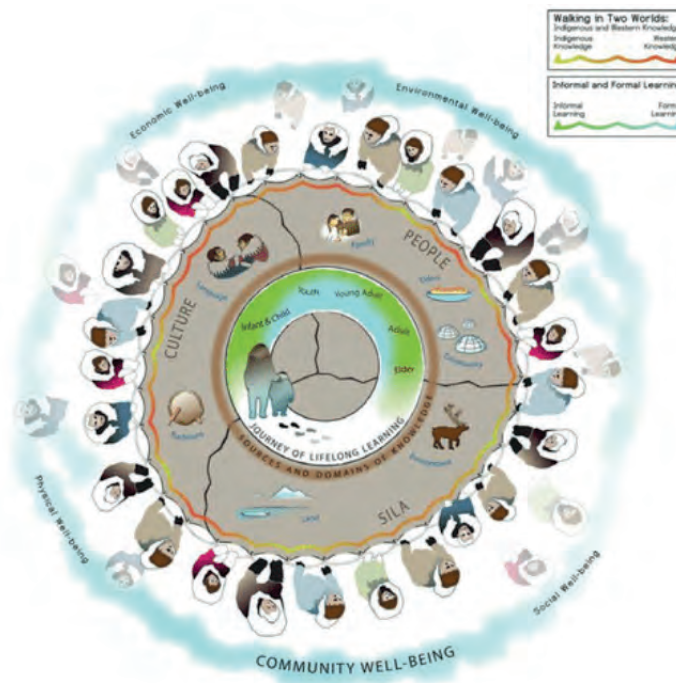
Inclusive education⁹ draws on the strengths, qualities or skills of people in a community. The aim of this relational dynamic is to ensure that children with specific needs can develop their full potential and learn the skills they need for autonomy and self-determination. Being inclusive means first and foremost looking at and deconstructing one's own cultural biases through a lens of cultural humility. This approach is beneficial for all students!



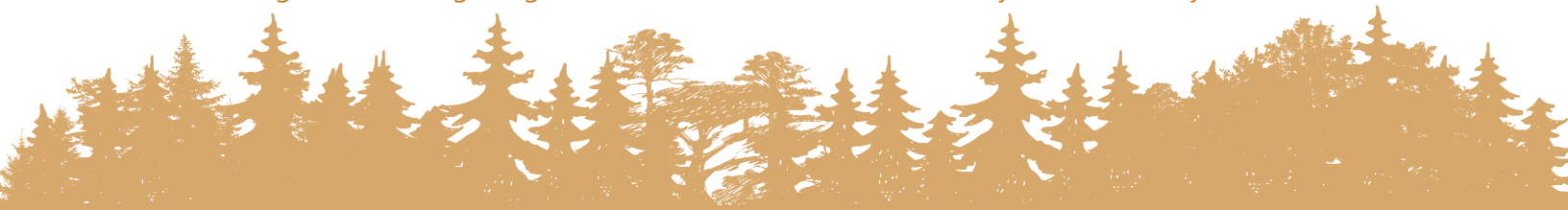
First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model*



Inuit Holistic Lifelong Learning Model



* Pour For more on the holistic learning models, see the Canadian Council on Learning document (CCL, 2009). The State of Aboriginal Learning in Canada: A Holistic Approach to Measuring Success. Ottawa: Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre,



THE SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

(OR THE SEVEN GRANDFATHERS TEACHINGS)

The seven sacred teachings serve as a guide to and a means of entrenching traditional cultural values. Although there may be some differences between nations or communities, the seven traditional values are shared by most First Peoples.

WISDOM

Protecting knowledge is a path to wisdom. Communities are built on the gifts that each person has received from the Creator. We must use all our gifts to create healthy and peaceful communities.

LOVE

To know love is to know peace. We must love those around us, but we must also love ourselves.

RESPECT

To honour all of Creation is to have respect. We must show respect if we want to be respected.

COURAGE

Facing adversity with integrity. The courage teaches us to have the mental and moral strength to do what is right and good, even if the consequences may be difficult to accept.

HONESTY

Facing a situation with bravery. We must keep the promises we make to others and those we make to ourselves.

HUMILITY

Seeing ourselves as a sacred part of Creation. Thinking of others before yourself.

TRUTH

To know the truth is to learn, understand and respect the sacred teachings. We must speak the truth and not deceive others, nor seek to deceive ourselves.

Inspired by:

Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Center (2021)

Best Start Resource Centre (2010) A Child Becomes Strong: Journeying Through Each Stage of the Life Cycle.





ACTION AREAS

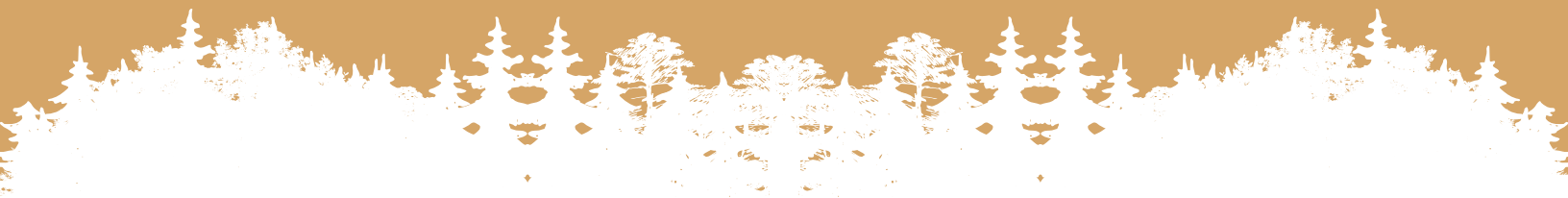
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Establish **policies** to ensure equal opportunities in education: recognize circumstances that may influence students' capacity to learn (bilingualism, multiple transitions, intergenerational trauma, etc.).
- Establish **policies for voluntary self-identification** of Indigenous students by nation and record statistics related to Indigenous students.
- Put in place a **service dedicated to school transitions** for Indigenous students, extending from early childhood to high school, to help ensure the implementation and continuity of appropriate and effective means of intervention.
- Develop **agreement protocols** with Indigenous organizations, including Native Friendship Centres, to facilitate the sharing of information and to formalize collaborative best practices.

AT SCHOOL

- Create and adopt a **strategic action plan** to foster pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to Indigenous realities and that value Indigenous knowledge and cultures.
- Establish specific **welcoming procedures** for Indigenous students.
- Establish **advisory committees*** to support Indigenous students and their families while developing and applying intervention plans to ensure they correspond to the students' situations and needs.
- Provide ongoing **education** for all students and staff, including those in after-school services, on Indigenous realities.
- Provide **ongoing training** for teachers and all professionals who work with Indigenous students (including speech therapists, resource teachers, psychologists, psychoeducators, special education staff, afterschool staff, etc.) to ensure that Indigenous students have access to appropriate assessment and support services that take into account their historical, family, cultural and linguistic realities.
- Put in place the **necessary mechanisms** to ensure that assessment, diagnostics and placement of Indigenous students are in no way influenced by school professionals' cultural and linguistic biases or lack of knowledge of Indigenous realities, and conduct regular reviews to correct such errors.

* These committees may include parents, Indigenous liaison, a teacher's aide, special educator (if needed) and psychoeducator (if needed). Support measures and time spent on this task could be recognized for those involved.



IN THE CLASSROOM

- Obtain and use **Indigenous pedagogical material**.
- **Carry out projects** designed to encourage Indigenous students' success, using available funding*.
- Promote learning through **observation and experimentation**.
- Organize activities **outside the school**.
- Provide tools for students to improve their **vocabulary in the language** of instruction (e.g., create a glossary for all school subjects).
- Encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to work together by creating **mixed groups**.
- Recognize the essential role of **Knowledge Keepers** in the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and integrate this latter into certain lessons.
- **Allow students to take part in catch-up activities adapted to their realities** (e.g., offer catch-up meetings in a location chosen by the student and family, on a flexible schedule; provide remedial camps during the summer; offer academic support at the Native Friendship Centre which Indigenous students are already attending).

It is important to work collaboratively with the Native Friendship Centre and other community-based organizations to ensure that the measures in place match the realities of Indigenous students and to ensure that students' families have access to the support they need.

DID YOU KNOW?

Native Friendship Centres offer cultural activities for all students. You can work with the local Native Friendship Centre team to organize a cultural activity for your class or for your school!

KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Indigenous knowledge includes the unique cultural systems, languages, governance systems and history of the Indigenous people of a particular community or nation. Knowledge Keepers are the people best positioned to define and transmit the Indigenous knowledge of their community. Knowledge Keepers are often Elders.

Be careful: People are only considered to be Elders if they are publicly recognized as such by their community. An Elder cannot be self-proclaimed. It is important to be sure of the legitimacy of a Knowledge Keeper before inviting them into the classroom. You could do this by contacting a local Native Friendship Centre or the local community's band council.

* There are operating budgetary rules for school resources that provide financial support for the educational success of Indigenous students in schools in the Quebec school system. For more details, visit the Ministère de l'Éducation website.



Turn to the Native Friendship Centres to:

- Contribute to developing or validating policies, mechanisms and procedures related to Indigenous students.
- Participate in follow-up and intervention plans for Indigenous students and their families.
- Offer homework help*.
- Offer after-school activities and summer camps*.

* Services offered vary from one Friendship Centre to another. Check with your local Friendship Centre to find out which services are available to Indigenous students.



TAKE IT FURTHER

- Understanding and Supporting Harmonious School Transitions for Indigenous Youth in Urban Settings, published by RCAAQ (2020).
- Indigenous pedagogy and pedagogy of place: proposal for an Indigenous teaching model, an article of Diane Campeau in the Journal *Éducation et francophonie de l'Association canadienne d'éducation de la langue française* (2021).
- Journal of Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples, published by the Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite de l'université du Québec à Chicoutimi.

PRE-SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Play is important for language development. It helps children not only use but also understand language and symbolic representations. In the context of play, children have many opportunities for language learning, in which adults become key partners.
- It is important to communicate to parents of pre-school and elementary school children that oral proficiency in the first language is an essential basis for learning to read, even in another language.

Resources from the CPE Premier Pas

Great language stimulation resources (French only) for young children (up to kindergarten) are available on the [CPE Premier Pas website](#).



INSPIRING PRACTICES

Ongoing training on language issues specific to First Nations

- The Institut Tshakapesh organizes ongoing training for resource teachers and special educators in their schools.
- The Centre des Premières Nations Nikanite offers workshops for speech therapists on cultures and languages in Indigenous communities, specifically those of the Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Innu and Naskapi nations.

Limiting cultural bias in assessment tools

In British Columbia, major work has been done to limit the cultural bias of assessment tools for Indigenous children: even when they are proficient in the language of instruction, dialectal variations can be identified in the English used by many Indigenous communities.

For more informations, see Jessica Ball and Barbara May Bernhardt, *First Nations English dialects in Canada : implications for speech language pathology (2008)*.

Inclusion of Indigenous languages at Maniwaki Woodland High School

Maniwaki Woodland School incorporated Indigenous cultures and languages through visible signs that recognize the Indigenous presence in the school. They are particularly aware of place given to the Algonquin language. Indigenous youths say they are proud to see vocabulary words in Algonquin, English and French on school signage.

For more information, visit the [Western Quebec School Board](#) website, in the "Educational project" section.



Be careful of the following situations:

- Dressing up as an Indigenous person for Halloween.
- Playing “Cowboys and Indians.”
- Watching films that convey a false version of colonial history (e.g., Pocahontas).
- Using outdated language that conveys stereotypes or prejudices against Indigenous people, e.g., “to sit Indian style” or call someone “chief,” etc. (students can sit with their legs crossed or “criss-cross applesauce” and call someone “dude” or “boss”).
- Use outdated terms that are stereotypical or prejudiced, such as Indian, American Indian, savage, reserve, Eskimo.

Why is it not okay to use the term “Indian”?

The term “Indian” refers to the historical error of colonizers mistakenly thinking they were arriving in India. Its use is now seen as pejorative in that it perpetuates the injustices suffered by Indigenous peoples. The term “American Indian” is also suggestive of the colonial power from which Indigenous peoples wish to break free.

Watch the video [Briser le code - Autochtones 102](#) on the Tele-Quebec website (French only)

Many prejudiced ideas about Indigenous peoples are spread within schools, often unintentionally. It is essential to deconstruct them and, above all, to ensure that they are not perpetuated by students. *Being inclusive also means challenging one's own cultural biases.*



The Oka Crisis

In July 1990, a 78-day dispute over a golf course to be built on Kanien'kéhaka (Mohawk) land in Oka led to confrontations between Mohawk, Quebec police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian army.

For more information:

- *Kanehsatake, 270 years of resistance*, a film by Alanis O'Bomsawin (1993)
- *The Oka Legacy*, a documentary by Sonia Bonspille-Boileau (2015)
- *Beans*, a film by Tracey Deer (2020)

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violence than other women in Canada and are over-represented among the country's missing and murdered women. Over a 30-year period, more than 1,186 Indigenous women have been victims of homicide or have been declared missing in Canada.

For more information:

- [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)
- *Rustic Oracles*, a film by Sonia Bonspille-Boileau (2019)

The intergenerational trauma and resulting marginalization caused by these events continue to affect many Indigenous families.

CULTURAL SAFETY

DECONSTRUCTING STIGMA AND PROVIDING A CULTURALLY SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

“The process of ensuring social and cultural safety is one of affirmation, transformation and reconciliation intended to reduce the gaps and inequalities that exist between the Indigenous population and the [non-Indigenous] Canadian and Quebec population in health and other areas. Based on the foundational principle of social justice, it recognizes the legitimacy of the social and cultural differences of Indigenous people. It proposes a response to the power imbalance between the dominant society and Indigenous people” [translation]. (Blanchet E., Laroche S. et Wawanoloath M., 2019)¹⁴

In practical terms, working toward social and cultural safety is a process of learning and mutual respect, demonstrated by a collective and community will for social transformation and innovation.*

Here are some indicators that a service is NOT culturally safe for Indigenous people:

- Indigenous people rarely use the service.
- Indigenous people are reluctant and distrustful when interacting with the service provider.
- Indigenous people do not follow the advice or the proposed intervention plan.
- Indigenous students are over-represented in special education.
- Indigenous people show signs of low self-esteem and sometimes even anger.
- Complaints are made about the lack of cultural relevance of some tools or intervention methods that come from the dominant culture.
- Some members of the school’s staff deny that there is a problem.

The results of ensuring cultural safety are as follows:

- Indigenous people have the power to evaluate the quality of the services they receive.
- Students and their parents feel that their cultural identity and way of being have been respected, or at least not challenged or harmed.
- The availability of several different avenues or opportunities means that all Indigenous people can be reached (as opposed to a single model, which would not respond to the different languages, nations, economic situations, ages, education levels, etc. of Indigenous people).

* The process goes beyond individual adjustments to the services or support offered: for systemic changes to be made, cultural safety must involve public and governmental institutions as well as Indigenous people.

Where are you on the cultural safety ladder?¹⁵

1. Cultural AWARENESS

- I know which nations and communities the Indigenous students at my school/in my class belong to.

2. Cultural SENSITIVITY

- I learn about the realities of the nations and communities of the students at my school and/or in my class.
- I have a map of First Nations and Inuit displayed in my classroom, and I invite Indigenous students to tell us about their communities if they want.

3. Cultural COMPETENCY

- I contribute to dismantling prejudices and stereotypes.
- I plan activities that value Indigenous knowledge.
- I have invited an Elder to come and share about the realities of his nation, followed with a talking circle.

4. Cultural SAFETY

- The school team has a variety of measures in place to dismantle biases, train its staff, and support and value Indigenous students and their families.

ACTION AREAS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Adopt a **concerted action plan to prevent and counter racism, discrimination and intimidation**. Ensure that it contains guidelines to avoid the use of certain outdated or inappropriate terms (e.g., American Indian, Indian, etc.).
- Formally **recognize the actions taken to support coexistence** and provide funding for them.
- Encourage the **hiring of Indigenous teachers and professional staff**.
- Have a **full-time expert resource on Indigenous realities who supports Indigenous students and their families** and communicates with Indigenous organizations and communities, including Native Friendship Centres (e.g., liaison officer; Indigenous education consultant).
- Provide **Indigenous awareness training or workshops to current teachers** and, when needed, to new teachers.
- Organize an **Indigenous cultures week** and support schools in its implementation.

