

**FIRST NATION AND INUIT POSITION ON THE PARALLELS BETWEEN
TRAINING AND JOB MARKET NEEDS: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF QUEBEC.**

Presented to:

**THE « MINISTÈRE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA SOLIDARITÉ SOCIALE'S » REGIONAL
HEARINGS**

Presented by:



FNILMAC

THE FIRST NATION AND INUIT LABOUR MARKET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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1. **Preamble**

The First Nation and Inuit Labour Market Advisory Committee believe that it is important to present its position on the current regional hearings concerning the parallels between training and the labour market needs.

It is with a keen interest that we submit the present document which encompasses the main issues experienced by the First Nations and Inuit of Quebec in regards to the parallels between training and labour market needs.

Aware of the spin-offs linked to the demographic boom, the First Nations and Inuit of Quebec acknowledge the importance of bringing forth solutions that will improve their workforce's qualifications and adaptability to the labour market.

Though we are all aware that the parallels between training and labour market needs constitute an inescapable element that supports the advancement of First Nation and Inuit, we invariably recognize that the First Nation and Inuit's particular situation does not favour the development of winning support measures.

It is by considering these elements that the First Nation and Inuit Labour Market Advisory Committee wishes to actively participate in the current consultation process.

Let's hope that all of our efforts will lead to establishing new parallel strategies between training and employment and that these efforts will facilitate a greater integration of First Nation and Inuit citizens into the Quebec labour market.

2. General portrait and specific aspects

Because the general portrait of the situation regarding the parallels between training and labour market needs do not dwell on our clientele's specificities, we therefore wish to provide additional information which will better help understand the particular situation of First Nations and Inuit in regards to the parallels between training and employability as well as the challenges involved.

Most Quebec citizens view First Nations and Inuit as a similar group with the same governments capable of sustaining their development.

However, with a closer look, it is possible to subdivide them into two segments:

- Those under an agreement :

As indicated by the "Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones du Québec" in their information pamphlet:

"The signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement with the Cree and Inuit in 1975, as well as the North eastern Quebec Agreement with the Naskapi in 1978 bestowed a distinct status on the members of these three native nations of Quebec"

"In 1984, the Canadian parliament adopted the Cree-Naskapi (of Quebec) Act. This act provides those two nations with a different legal framework than the natives under the Indian Act".

- Those not under an agreement :

In regards to First Nations not under an agreement, this group is governed by the *Indian Act*.

An analysis of the specific aspects of the situation in regards to the parallels between training and labour market needs for First Nations and Inuit people of Quebec must consider these important differences between the two groups.

An example of the major differences that could exist is the fact that, for many years now, the management of training programs from Emploi-Québec in Nunavik has been transferred to the Kativik Regional Government (KRG) whereas other First Nations and Inuit of Quebec must deal directly with Emploi-Québec.

As stated by the regional chief of the AFNQL in his press release of January 31st, 2010:

"A part of this reality is that two First Nation groups exist: the ones who fall under an agreement and those who don't. This situation has serious consequences among which concerns the services available to our members".

Also, the particular situation of First Nations and Inuit, specifically in regards to self-government, prompts both the provincial and federal governments to develop native policies believing that both groups are, for the most part, exclusively under federal jurisdiction.

Another example refers to the socioeconomic forum held at Mashteuiatsh in 2006 where the AFNQL concluded a series of agreements with the provincial government regarding adult education and support for employment development. However, the actual benefits from these agreements had little effect on the First Nation people in the communities.

The reasons supporting this fact are the results of decisions taken by the different government departments involved in the application of those agreements emanating from the forum in Mashteuiatsh. At a closer glance, it appears that these decisions had, as an effect, to channel access to funding in a limited way from the "Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité sociale" to urban natives.

Similar principles were applied in the MELS-FNHRDCQ agreement whose purpose was to establish two regional vocational adult education centers. In fact, though the MELS announced a million dollar investment per year for five years for the organization, in its *action, education, employment and productivity Plan (2008)* and for the implementation of specific services adapted to adult First Nation populations, it should be noted that this agreement rests on the condition that similar funding be procured from the Federal government.

For its part, the Federal government is presently advocating for the development of essential skills which argues poorly for the creation of a tripartite agreement (First Nation and Inuit-Quebec government-Federal government) focused on the development of adult education services and ongoing training for First Nation and Inuit candidates.

As you can see, the lack of legal clarity causes bias shouldered only by the First Nations and Inuit.

The basic elements that could argue in favour of promising development initiatives capable of improving the parallels between training and labour market needs and which will ensure skills development for First Nations and Inuit must be developed according to approaches that are current:

- The realisation that regional and provincial development cannot expand unless First Nations and Inuit are full participants.
- The population boom within the First Nation and Inuit communities of Quebec.
- The availability of a young workforce within close proximity able to satisfy the foreseeable manpower shortage in Quebec.
- Social and productivity benefits, which could represent a massive inclusion of First Nations and Inuit into the Quebec regional labour market, are all founded on the principle of equal employment opportunities.
- Regional development conferences that address policies regarding diversity where First Nations and Inuit must be present.

3. Training offered

In regards to improving the parallels between training and employment that answer the needs of the labour market, we have chosen to identify, for each segment of training offered, a list of main obstacles encountered by the First Nation and Inuit learners.

We base our findings on our 15 years of experience with First Nation and Inuit members who are part of the First Nation and Inuit Labour Market Advisory Committee.

A. Basic training

First of all, we must remember that, for many years, Quebec First Nation people vehemently denounced the under-funding allotted to education.

As indicated by the regional chief of the AFNQL, Mr. Ghislain Picard, at a press conference at Listujug on November 19th, 2009:

“First Nation education has been under formula funding since 1988. It has never been updated in over twenty years. It is out-dated and totally inadequate considering all the new developments. Moreover, to emphasize the inconsistent government decisions since 1996, the funding for all of our social programs, which includes education, has seen only a mere 2% increase which neglects the population boom, particularly high among First Nations and the increases in the costs of living. Nothing justifies such a situation which we can no longer tolerate”.

It is therefore imperative that the provincial government support the First Nations and Inuit claims with the Federal government with regard to education

The fact that First Nation and Inuit cannot benefit from additional financial resources that take inflation and indexation into account has scathing effects that undermine the efforts of the past fifteen years.

Also, when analyzing the present situation on First Nations and Inuit education success rates, we note that despite the implementation of educational initiatives over the past few decades, the results are still not there.

Though history can help us better understand the contributing factors to the current situations, we note that the social and financial consequences stemming from them have serious effects on Quebec society as a whole.

A Quebec strategy aimed at initiating talks with First Nation and Inuit representatives to suggest new collaboration methods in regards to education could assuredly establish the foundation for new and promising collaborations. A new outlook would be needed to undertake this task. The objective regarding equal employment opportunities between First Nation and Inuit and the Quebec workforce in each of the 17 administrative regions in Quebec would be an excellent way to measure the effectiveness of the labour market policies. This First Nation and Inuit Labour Market Advisory Committee objective will guide their recommendations to the “Commission des partenaires du marché du travail”.

As well, more concrete actions aimed at actively contributing to the development of the resident populations from large businesses located on First Nations and Inuit territory where natural resources are being extracted, would demonstrate the good intentions of all of the Quebec labour market players so that each and every one can take their rightful place in regards to employment opportunities.

The involvement of these businesses in supporting activities of the different First Nation and Inuit schools such as the discovery of jobs for the future or in present demand; information on basic labour market skills ; the funding of school activities related to initiating the youth to the labour market ; information on salaries offered by the industry ; access to study grants ; easy access to summer employment; participation in sports activities. All these suggestions would breathe new life in regards to promoting and developing skills.

Unions which are few could also play an important role. The distances between our clients and the Quebec labour market are such that they are unfamiliar with labour market regulations and the role of the unions.

We can only imagine the role that unions could play involving the First Nations and Inuit which would permit each and every one to learn about the labour code, the roles and responsibilities of all employers and employees, union regulations, etc.

Today's job market is complex. If we want to successfully include the First Nation and Inuit workforce, a fundamental premise is unavoidable: a full contribution of all the players who impact the Quebec labour market.

In other respects, the First Nation and Inuit representatives have identified the need to better understand the conditions necessary for the successful transfer of essential skills to the youth for their inclusion into today's labour market.

B. Adult education

In regards to access to financial educational assistance for adults, we must note that a high percentage of the budgets from the employment skills and training strategies from HRSD are utilized to finance adult education.

An important part of this funding is paid to school boards who provide this service. Another part financially supports the First Nation and Inuit adult learners attending adult education centers in Quebec.

The strong demand for adult education services is explained in large part by the poor level of school success of the clientele. The inclusion into professional training requires a high school diploma or the necessary prerequisites established for each profession.

Our citizens must also understand the importance of possessing essential skills which are vital to their inclusion into the labour market.

Because of all of these factors, everyone will agree that basic adult education remains an inescapable element for First Nation and Inuit.

Now here is a mission that the Quebec government could assuredly act upon as a priority. Their actions should however focus on equal employment opportunities between the First Nation and Inuit and Quebec's active population and the labour market needs in Quebec. Let's end discrimination founded on where First Nations and Inuit reside.

This message should be broadcasted in all the Quebec regions so that First Nations and Inuit may play primary roles at regional conferences of the elected, at regional boards of the PMT's, etc.

The weak participation level of our workforce in the Quebec labour market as well as their high unemployment rate represents in itself elements which we must work on as a priority.

Also noteworthy is that work related to the realization of the commitment of the socioeconomic forum at Mashteuiatsh involving adult education show that initiating adult education services answering the needs of First Nation and Inuit cannot be carried out without considering the social, familial or personal problems experienced by our populations.

Several actions could be undertaken on many levels:

New First Nation and Inuit partnerships with the MESS

Establishing First Nation and Inuit partnerships with the MESS to support the financial assistance needed by their adult learners attending adult education centers as much for members residing in the communities as in urban centers.

Partnerships with the MELS-FNI focused on a new principle :

Though the MELS announced a one million dollar investment per year for five years within its action, education, employment and productivity plan (2008) and the implementation of specific and adapted services for the adult First Nation and Inuit population, the required equal Federal government contribution renders the realization of this agreement quite perilous.

Government actions must surpass the present stage. With our thoughts on new principles such as equal employment, let's consider each Quebec region in order to develop actions which take into account regional disparities. Emploi-Québec possesses the leading expertise when it comes to establishing a portrait of the regional labour market.

Let's work it out so First Nation and Inuit are depicted in each regional strategic development plan.

New service approach with the school boards:

Though only three of the eleven First Nations in Quebec (Cree, Inuit and Naskapi) have signed agreements within the past few years giving them authority in regards to adult education, note that the situation for the other non-signing First Nations is different and is so for a greater number of First Nation and Inuit urban residents.

A survey conducted by the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNRDCQ) in partnership with the MELS demonstrated a great disparity in services offered from Quebec school boards with regard to adult education services offered to our members. The major element detected when carefully reading the survey leads us to believe that the access to training offered to First Nation and Inuit communities by the Quebec school boards remains the department of business services.

Despite this, collaborations have demonstrated that the implementation of special projects focused on the client's needs produce promising results.

Also to be considered is the special collaboration that exists between the Horizon adult education center in Val d'Or and the AHRDCA with their *Acceleration* program or the present collaboration between the "Centre Laure-Conan of Chicoutimi and the Opitciwan community which is implementing services adapted to First Nation learners.

Active participation of the socioeconomic players of Quebec:

An active participation of the economic players of Quebec in the establishment of support measures in skills development of First Nation and Inuit would lead to greater improvements.

These players have a certain effect on the duties of the regional structures such as the PMT's regional boards of the CPMT. If they decided to direct their views to actively include First Nations and Inuit of the local job market planning of each region then the impact on regional productivity would be significant.

Also, when we analyze the educational experiences of First Nations and Inuit over the past fifty years it must be acknowledged that these experiences cannot argue in favour of a normal desire to integrate into the systems in place. Consider the residential schools experience, the attempts to assimilate. Our people continue to feel the negative generational impact of these policies.

It's not that long ago that if a First Nation individual graduated from University, they automatically became enfranchised and as a result lost their Indian status.

Furthermore, considering that work-study and on-the-job training are preferred First Nations and Inuit learning methods, the industry could benefit from a competitive advantage.

C. Professional training

Financial support for our clientele often comes from the community's post-secondary funding. From this fact emerges the notable difference that exist between the Quebec education system

and that of the other provinces plus federal funding formula that is inconsiderate of these differences.

Also, the fact that First Nation and Inuit individuals do not have the prerequisites to access professional training programs in Quebec considerably reduces their chances in using these services. Many First Nation and Inuit communities must therefore seek professional training programs offered by the department of business services of professional training centres which offer made-to-measure training which leads to a diploma.

Decisions taken by the MESS to limit access to its funding to urban clients only does not bode well for establishing innovative First Nation and Inuit partnerships or for candidates residing in First Nation and Inuit communities. So, do two types of First Nation and Inuit citizens exist in Quebec?

Furthermore, the distance between our clientele and the urban centers where most of the professional training programs are located force our clientele to move away from home, to find new accommodations, a daycare able to quickly accept their family and to avail themselves of a dependable mode of transportation. Considering that our clientele continues to deal with prejudices, the inclusion into a new social and financial setting is a huge challenge in itself.

D. College education

A situation similar to that of professional training applies to a college education. Our clients are unable to meet the basic prerequisites required to access technical training programs due to low levels of school success rates.

It's for these reasons that the signatories of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) are seeing to the creation of a college diploma program. This new initiative signifies that additional funding will have to come from our organizations.

Though concrete measures have enabled the development of First Nation and Inuit schools at the elementary and secondary levels, basic adult education, professional training and training at the University level, more is needed at the college level. As a first initiative, a First Nation and Inuit post-secondary institution will open its doors in September 2011 in the Odanak region. This institution which is built on the values, aspirations and challenges of the First Nation and Inuit people will offer a bilingual college degree in social sciences.

The efforts of the First Nations Education Council to provide the First Nations of Quebec with a native college institution supported by the provincial government denote a promising gesture of unity.

The data results from the installation of educational institutions that are adapted to First Nation and Inuit in regards to adult education, professional training and training at the university level, encourage First Nations and Inuit student success.

E. University education

The Quebec university world has been working hard for several years to propose new approaches to programming to help recruit First Nation and Inuit students into their institutions.

Though initial attempts have produced programs adapted to First Nations and Inuit, some universities have accomplished a great deal since then.

This is how the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region has, within the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) set up a First Nations pavilion dedicated to accepting First Nation and Inuit students first.

The Université de Laval and the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi are also very active in regards to providing access to a university education for First Nation and Inuit clients. McGill University, for its part, provides teacher training studies.

Though the initiatives are greatly received, we must focus our efforts on an increase in representation of First Nations and Inuit on university boards as well as a more official ownership of institutions established in partnership with First Nations.

4. Skills development and updating

In regards to skills development and updating, little has been done in this area for First Nation and Inuit clients.

We are nevertheless convinced that this option could constitute a very important and interesting avenue in skills development for the First Nation and Inuit workforce specifically if we can rely on a serious commitment from Quebec businesses to undertake an inclusion policy whereby the First Nation and Inuit workforce is part of the Quebec labour market. This measure could be combined with an on-the-job training sector to ensure the acquisition of the necessary skills by the First Nation and Inuit workforce as identified by the employers. The employment equity principle could apply and serve as a quantitative foundation for a follow-up of the results.

This approach also closely corresponds to the learning styles of the First Nation and Inuit populations. The life-long learning programs that practice this approach with the Inuit workforce through Emploi-Québec are achieving excellent results.

These programs are offered for different jobs such as for mining apprentices. Well thought out, they are used for individuals who lack the prerequisites necessary to integrate technical or professional training. This apprenticeship is possible because of the Raglan mining site and the active participation of the Xstrata mining company.

However, the fact remains that it is difficult to integrate private companies because of their lack of knowledge of the medium term benefits that they could earn.

Even so, a survey carried out by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) demonstrated that for every dollar invested in an apprenticeship, there is a \$1.47 return on the investment.

Another study by them identified major obstacles faced by First Nation and Inuit to access and complete apprenticeship programs. These nine identified obstacles must be addressed by the decision makers:

1. The negative attitude regarding apprenticeships and the trades.
2. The lack of information and knowledge regarding apprenticeships.
3. The difficulties created at unwelcoming work or training sites.
4. The apprenticeship costs imposed on the individual, the employer and the unions.
5. The eventual repercussions of the economic factors on employment and the pursuit of an apprenticeship.
6. The shortage of support services for apprenticeships.
7. The concerns regarding basic and essential skills of the trainee.
8. The inadequacies of the on-the-job or technical training programs.
9. The difficulties created by apprenticeship regulations.

F. Recognition of competencies

Because of its novelty, few First Nation and Inuit clients have accessed training programs through this process of recognition of competencies.

Following presentations on this topic by Quebec school officials as to the process for recognizing competencies, we must acknowledge that this approach reaches only a minority of First Nation and Inuit clients.

Our populations have acquired skills working for various companies. These jobs are often a result of agreements between First Nation and Inuit representatives and companies which are

exploiting the First Nation and Inuit territory. On-the-job training in this case is not normed. Skills develop with each new job. Considering this fact, the characteristics related to First Nation and Inuit languages as well as the selected approach to recognize competencies make us aware that this procedure requires many modifications in order to better answer the distinctiveness of our clientele.

G. The CCQ approach

Because of an important history of First Nation and Inuit clients working in the construction industry, First Nation and Inuit representatives have initiated talks with the CCQ (Construction Commission of Quebec) to first of all propose a method to recognize professional competencies of our older workers who have worked in construction for many years. This approach was retained because a great number of our adult clients actually hold adequate skills in this area.

We must however realize that this initiative was never brought to light because of inadequate funding to support non-certified employees working towards certification.

Though the CCQ relies on a budget of several million dollars used to develop workers competency skills certified by the CCQ, these funds cannot be used to support adult workers who would require made-to-measure training to be certified in their field.

With this challenge in mind, Kahnawake, Mashteuiatsh and the CCQ have formed a partnership and have obtained the necessary funding to create the Vocational Training Center for Aboriginals in Construction Trades. Their mandate is to offer training to a great number of First Nation and Inuit construction workers.

The funds to support the VTC ACT come from the MELS and from non-recurring federal funds. Graduates from this training program who have acquired CCQ certification will probably have access to CCQ training funds for their additional training and will therefore be aware of the new technologies and tools used in the industry.

It is clear that the CCQ and the First Nation and Inuit representatives must continue to work together to identify experienced workers who would want to be certified and to locate the funding sources available for this training.

H. On-the-job training

On-the-job training is still, for First Nations and Inuit people, the best method to use if we want a great number of people to participate in the Quebec economy.

Though this activity exists in First Nations and Inuit communities, everyone agrees that a strategy of this nature requires a firm commitment from private businesses and government

agencies. The regional players such as the PMT boards are essential to the success of such an initiative.

Those actors hold the key and the legitimacy to assure the necessary conditions for the implementation of initiatives related to on-the-job training in their respective regions.

Maximum use of the different programs should be reflected upon to support such an undertaking. Let's consider on-the-job training programs funded in partnership with the MELS apprenticeship funds, contributions from the private sector's Law of 1% and employability programs administered by the First Nation and Inuit, etc.

The creation of regional funds for First Nation and Inuit skills development could also allow greater support from large industries.

These types of proposals from the mining industry are coming. The perspective of obtaining good jobs should be the motivation needed to pursue studies for those residing on the Plan Nord territory where the First Nation and Inuit drop-out rate is on average three times greater than the rest of Quebec.

5. Participation in the Quebec labour market

Everyone's desire to be included in a given society originates from the fact that the common and practiced values of this society must correspond with their basic values.

Though openness is a value of the Quebec society, we must acknowledge that little measures have been carried out at this level in regards to total involvement of First Nations and Inuit people.

While policies are developed for diverse populations to propose adapted support measures that facilitate their integration into Quebec society, the inclusion of First Nation and Inuit populations into the labour market requires measures that are specific to them and that take into account their uniqueness.

This observation is still more difficult to conceive when we consider that First Nation and Inuit populations are neighbours to Quebec citizens; the majority live in resource rich regions and wish to remain there.

Though the signing of specific agreements and agreements where hydroelectric enterprises in Quebec have put certain measures into place to include First Nations and Inuit into the workforce of these major companies, these partnerships rely most often on the direction of a company in accessing a new part of the market rather than the principle of inclusion. Including First Nation and Inuit individuals into the Quebec labour market requires a firm belief that all

the players of Quebec society want to undertake the necessary measures to see it succeed. This element in itself constitutes a project for society.

When we examine history and more specifically the actions that the decision makers of Quebec had to take to be recognized as a Quebec nation within Canada, we believe that the society more apt to understand the reasons for which First Nations and Inuit need to take their rightful place would be the Quebec society.

The demographic boom within the First Nation and Inuit populations requires immediate action by the Quebec players.

When the Quebec society accepts the principle that First Nation and Inuit populations constitute a nation within Quebec and that these nations can play a significant role in establishing a new social contract founded on the total participation of First Nations and Inuit in the development of Quebec, the basic premise allowing to undertake a serious effort will then be present. First Nations and Inuit will be able to reconcile their participation into the economy and the exercise of their rights.

Recommendations :

1. That the Quebec government make First Nations and Inuit adult education a priority.
2. That the Quebec government encourage the active and equal participation of First Nations and Inuit in regional development.
3. That First Nations and Inuit-based schools be established by the Quebec government (adult education centers, CEGEPS, learning centers, centers for excellence, French immersion for a great number of our English clientele).
4. That the Quebec government promote First Nations and Inuit access to on-the-job training and that this training and its certification be approved and sanctioned at their personal educational level and accredited to their individual student file in view of obtaining a diploma.
5. That the Quebec government see to it that First Nations and Inuit have increased representation on university boards and that they support a more official appropriation of institutions established in partnership with First Nations and Inuit.
6. That the Quebec government strongly urge all regional players such as the regional boards of the PMT's to develop appropriate mechanisms to guarantee First Nation and Inuit's full participation in the labour market.

7. That the Quebec government obtain a firm commitment from the labour market players to take all the necessary measures to encourage job inclusion and retention of First Nations and Inuit who wish to participate in the Quebec labour market.