ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE
QUÉBEC

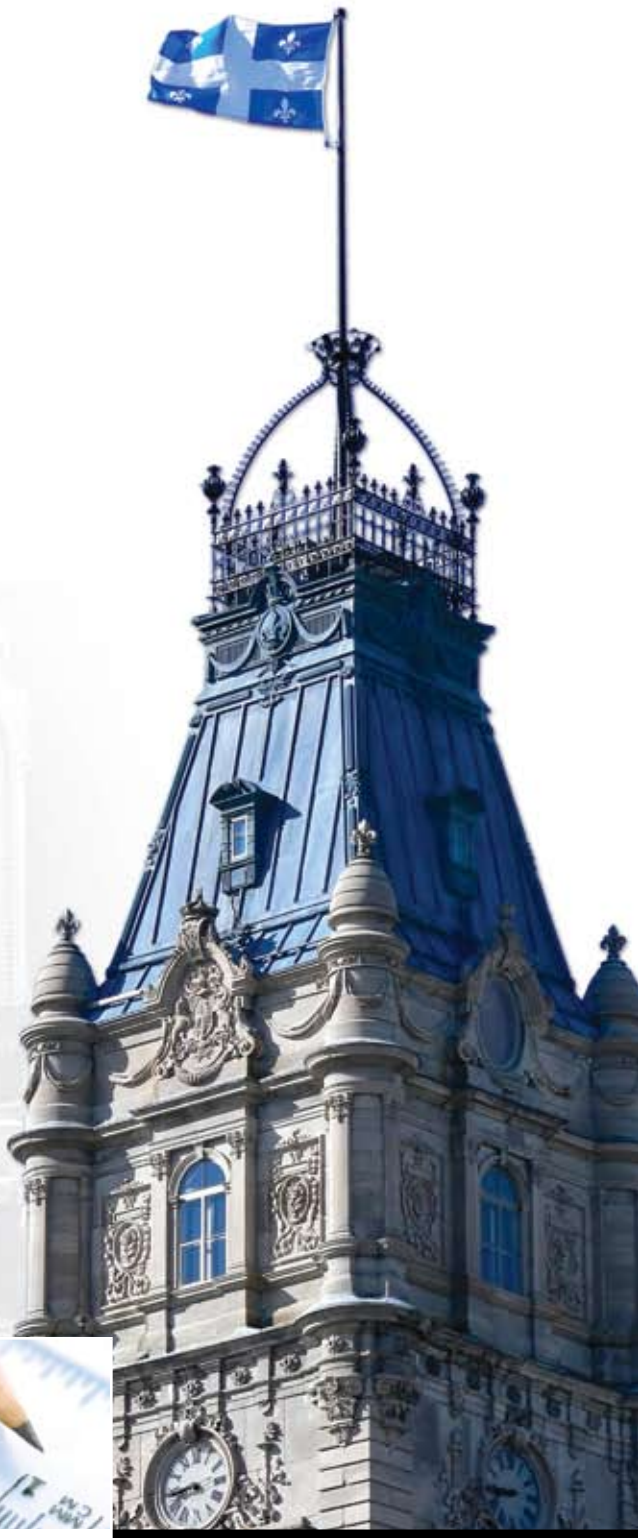
A place for every citizen

The Educational Success of Aboriginal Students

Self-assigned mandate

Report and Recommendations

FEBRUARY 2007



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

During a deliberative meeting held on March 16, 2006, the members of the Committee on Education unanimously adopted a motion, introduced by the Chair, to examine the educational success of Québec's Aboriginal students. Of all the self-assigned mandates the Committee might have taken on, this one stood out as a priority, particularly in light of the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum then scheduled for October 2006.

Our approach as member of the Committee owes much to experts on Aboriginal issues,[1] several of whom suggested that we visit the various communities. In September 2006, we visited five Aboriginal communities: the Inuit of Kuujjuaq, the Naskapi of Kawawachikamach, the Innu of Matimekosh, the Cree of Chisasibi and the Algonquin of Lac-Simon. Our visits to the elementary and secondary schools in these communities afforded opportunities to meet and exchange views with school administrators, teachers, village mayors and band chiefs. We also met with staff members of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Val-d'Or, the Centre de la petite enfance Abinodjic-Miguam and the Centre d'études supérieures Lucien-Cliche, situated on the Val-d'Or campus of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. In November 2006, we met with the Grand Chief of the Huron-Wendat nation, in Wendake, and with the administration of its elementary school and its Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre (workforce training centre).[2]

We wish to express our gratitude to all these persons, and in particular to the members of the communities we visited; everywhere we went, the welcome that awaited us was second to none.

In the pages to come, it will be important to keep in mind the distinction between the schools of nations covered by agreements and those of nations not covered by an agreement,[3] and between students attending provincial schools and those attending a school in an Aboriginal community.[4] Since our visits were to Aboriginal communities, our focus is mainly on the educational success of students living in those communities, regardless of whether they form part of a nation covered by an agreement. In other words, we did not examine the situation of Aboriginal students in provincial schools.

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[1] See Appendix 1.

[2] See Appendix 2.

[3] The two types of school are jurisdictionally distinct and differently funded. The schools of nations covered by an agreement operate under school boards answering to Québec's Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport; they are funded by the latter and by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Band schools answer to their band council and are funded exclusively by the DIAND.

[4] It should be noted that students' school experience differs in important ways under these two systems, with each system presenting its own challenges and difficulties.

Our approach has been exploratory, an attempt to gather information on the educational needs of Aboriginal persons as felt and defined by them, on the main problems they have encountered and on the types of educational projects that have proven successful.

We agree that the Aboriginal peoples themselves are in the best position to know what is good for them; respect for Aboriginal powers and autonomy are at the heart of this report, and guided our thinking throughout.

1 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUÉBEC'S ABORIGINAL POPULATION

This population[5] comprises Amerindians and Inuit, with the Inuit forming a single nation; Amerindians form 10 distinct nations: Abenaki, Algonquin, Attikamek, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu (Montagnais), Maliseet, Micmac, Mohawk and Naskapi.

At 80,000 individuals, Québec's Aboriginal population makes up approximately 1% of the province's total population and is growing rapidly, as may be seen in the age structure: children between the ages of five and fourteen account for 28% of the Inuit and 22% of the resident Amerindian population, but only 13% of the population as a whole.

Québec's 55 Aboriginal communities are spread over the entire province, with the exception of the Estrie region. Almost three quarters of the population live on reserves, in villages or in Agreement territories. In addition to the wide geographical dispersion of the Aboriginal population generally, we must bear in mind that each nation except the Huron-Wendat and the Naskapi is formed of a number of communities or villages.[6]

The Inuit live in villages, each with its own mayor and municipal council; Amerindians live mostly on reserves or in settlements administered by a band council comprising the band chief and a number of council members.

Each nation has a language of its own, with French or English (or both) being used in varying degrees from nation to nation, either as an everyday language or as a second language. The percentage of individuals able to speak their Aboriginal language likewise varies from community to community. Remoteness from large urban centres tends to go hand in hand with maintenance of the Aboriginal language for everyday use.

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, the information on population characteristics, the school system and learning paths is from "Statistical Portrait of School-Age Populations in Aboriginal Communities in Québec", in *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 30, July 2004, 28 pp., published by the Ministère de l'Éducation.

[6] See Appendix III for a maps showing the distribution of Québec's Aboriginal population.

2 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1 Administration and funding of educational services

Dramatic changes have taken place in Aboriginal education since the end of the 1970s. Some of these were brought on by the creation of the Cree and Kativik school boards under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (1975), and the creation of the Naskapi school under the North-Eastern Québec Agreement (1978). The two boards and the school are under full Aboriginal authority, and funded by both the federal and provincial governments.

The Cree and Kativik boards have jurisdiction over elementary, secondary and adult education. Though operated much like other school boards, they nonetheless have broader powers and obligations, the chief of which are to make agreements, for school purposes, with colleges, universities, other school boards, and the Government of Canada; to establish the school calendar; to select courses, textbooks and teaching material appropriate for the Aboriginal clientele and designed to preserve and transmit their language and culture; to offer educational services in the Aboriginal language, French and English; to set up teacher training courses and programs for Aboriginal persons; to set up courses and training programs for non-Aboriginal persons who will be teaching in their schools; and to acquire, build and maintain housing for their teachers.[7]

The situation of the Napaski school is slightly different. Having no school board of its own, it is administered by the Naskapi themselves through the Central Québec School Board. The Naskapi Education Committee establishes the school calendar and develops course content with an eye to preserving the Naskapi language and culture.

Under the two agreements, Québec pays 25%, and the federal government 75%, of the operating and capital costs of the Cree School Board and the Naskapi school; for the Kativik School Board, these percentages are reversed for the two levels of government.

In the case of the other Aboriginal nations, the federal government is responsible under the *Indian Act* for providing band councils with educational funding for Status Indians living on reserves. This funding is provided under agreements whereby communities administer the elementary and secondary school services on their territories. It should be noted that, parallel to the setting up of the Cree and Kativik boards and the Naskapi school, Amerindian communities were increasingly calling for band-council jurisdiction over the schools on their reserves. This movement, initiated by the National Indian Brotherhood, was so successful that by 1998 not a single federal school remained. In most cases, communities also assumed responsibility for secondary school services.

[7] R.S.Q., chapter I-14, Education Act for Cree, Inuit and Naskapi Native Persons.

Aboriginal persons who pursue postsecondary education ordinarily attend the colleges and universities of Québec's education system. Some institutions offer programs and integration measures designed especially for them.

2.2 Language of instruction

The language of instruction for Amerindians and Inuit is the subject of special provisions in the *Charter of the French Language*. Indian reserves are exempt from the Charter under section 97. For the Cree and Kativik school boards, section 88 provides that the language of instruction shall be Cree and Inuktitut respectively, in addition to any other languages of instruction used in Québec's Cree and Inuit communities on the signing date of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. This also applies to the Naskapi.

At present, most Amerindian and Inuit children who start school in their communities are taught initially in their native language. In accordance with section 88, the pace at which English or French is introduced as a language of instruction is decided by the commissioners after consultation with the school committees (Cree) or parent committees (Inuit). This also applies to the Naskapi, with the necessary adaptations.

2.3 Study programs and the pedagogical system

The Cree and Kativik school boards are responsible for applying the pedagogical system and the study program objectives prescribed by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS); however, optional content may be adapted and enriched by the boards according to their needs and priorities. Band schools usually choose to adopt Québec's pedagogical system.

2.4 Teaching staff

In the Cree and Kativik boards, the percentage of Aboriginal teachers at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels rose from 38% in 1989-1990 to 41% in 2001-2002; statistics for the latter year show that the majority of Aboriginal teaching staff worked at the preschool and elementary levels.

The teaching staff of both boards is younger, less experienced and, in terms of recognized schooling, less educated than that of Québec's non-Aboriginal boards (see Appendix IV, Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4).[8]

[8] Ministère de l'Éducation, "Statistical Portrait of School-Age Populations in Aboriginal Communities in Québec", *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 30, July 2004, p. 11. It should be noted that, lacking band school statistics, the MEQ treated the teaching-staff statistics of the Cree and Kativik school boards as indicative of the Aboriginal school system in general.

3 ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEVELS

It should be noted at the outset that little data on band schools is available, and that little often ill-suited for comparison.

3.1 School enrolment

Aboriginal enrolment figures for the years 1987–988, 1996–1997 and 2001–2002 show an increase in the total number of students and a decrease in the number attending, by agreement, either a school in a non-Aboriginal school board or a private school. By 2001–2002, 88% of Aboriginal elementary and secondary school students (13,844 out of 15,765) were enrolled in the Aboriginal system (see Appendix IV, Table 5).

Also to be noted is a drop in enrolment from elementary to secondary school. In addition, the number of preschool enrolments decreased from 2,059 in 1996–1997 to 1,920 in 2001–2002; one may wonder, along with the MELS, whether this decrease is a reflection of faulty registration practices or whether it is linked to a lower birth rate in the communities as a whole.

3.2 Education of Aboriginal school-aged population (elementary and secondary levels)

While Aboriginal enrolment has generally increased in recent years, the question arises of whether a corresponding increase can be observed with regard to the level of education attained. If we compare the growth rates for the three age groups forming the Aboriginal school-aged population living in the communities, that is, 5–9, 10–14 and 15–19, with enrolments for 1996 and 2001, we find that the school-aged population increased by 13.7% while enrolments increased by only 10.1%. The gap was particularly pronounced in the 15–19 age group (See Appendix IV, Table 6).

3.3 Educational paths by age of Aboriginal students in Native communities versus Québec as a whole

The age at which students ordinarily enter each grade is called the “modal” age. In Québec the modal age is four or five for kindergarten, six for Grade 1, seven for Grade 2, twelve for Secondary I and sixteen for Secondary V. Students who maintain this rhythm from year to year constitute the modal group; those who do not are said to have fallen behind in their schooling in relation to the modal group.

Statistics for 1996–1997 and 2001–2002 show that the grade-by-grade modal-age "gap" between Aboriginal students and Québec students as a whole narrowed over that period. Though less pronounced by 2001–2002, the gap still existed even in the first years of elementary school. In Grade 3, for example, the percentage of students at the modal age was 9.1% higher for Québec students as a whole than for Aboriginal students. In many Aboriginal communities, Grade 3 marks the transition from the native language to French or English as the language of instruction. By Grade 6 the gap widens to 25.8%, and it continues to widen in secondary school. In 2001–2002, only 28.1% of Aboriginal students in Secondary I were at modal age, compared to 71.3% for Québec students as a whole (see Appendix IV, Table 7).

All of this has important implications for educational success. According to one MELS study, almost two thirds of students who have fallen behind one year or more on entering secondary school will eventually drop out altogether; indeed, these students make up 50% of all drop-outs.[9]

3.4 Success in secondary school (Cree and Kativik school boards)

These school boards, like all Québec boards, keep data on their students, making it possible to carry out longitudinal analyses of educational success as measured, for instance, by graduation rates. The situation prevailing among Aboriginal students living in Native communities is illustrated in Appendix IV, Table 8, which gives the graduation rate after seven years of study[10] for cohorts from 1990 to 1995, and the percentage of those students to enter secondary school late in relation to the modal age.

The average graduation rates for those cohorts are 27.9% and 21.9% for the Cree and Kativik school boards respectively, compared to 72.8% for Québec as a whole. The higher rate variations for the Aboriginal boards are related to the small numbers of students newly enrolled in Secondary I for each cohort. The table clearly confirms the negative impact, on educational success, of late entrance into secondary school.

3.5 Students entering college immediately on completion of Secondary V

The low secondary school graduation rates for students in the two Aboriginal school boards has an impact on enrolment at the postsecondary level, as can be seen when the situation is compared with that in Québec as a whole. Though no reliable data exists on the total number of Aboriginal students engaged in postsecondary studies, the figures on students

[9] DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DE LA RECHERCHE, MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Retard scolaire au primaire et risque d'abandon scolaire*, 1991.

[10] For a cohort of students newly enrolled in Secondary I, this rate corresponds to the percentage of students from the cohort who obtained a first diploma within a seven-year period, whether from a public or private school, in either the youth or adult sector.

who enter the Québec college system immediately on completion of Secondary V may be seen as illustrative of the situation in general. These are students who, in the school year preceding their enrolment as full-time students in a program leading to a diploma of college studies (DCS), were full-time secondary school students in the youth sector.

From the fall of 1995 to the fall of 2001, the average percentage of students entering college directly from Secondary V was 5.7% and 9.1% for the Cree and Kativik school boards respectively, compared to 60.1% for Québec boards generally (see Appendix IV, Table 9). These figures do not include students in adult or part-time programs at the college level, or students who entered the postsecondary system after an interruption in their schooling.

3.6 Level of schooling of the Aboriginal population aged 15 or older (2001 Census)

Table 10 of Appendix IV shows the highest level of schooling (expressed as a percentage) attained by persons reporting either an Inuit or an Amerindian identity; Amerindians are further subdivided according to whether they do or do not live on a reserve.[11] The figures for non-Aboriginal students are also given.

These data support certain of our previous observations. We note, for instance, that the high school graduation rate is only 6.5% for Inuit and 5.7% for Amerindians residing on reserves; a significant gap also exists between the percentages of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons who obtain a college diploma or university degree.

On the other hand, the percentage of individuals with some postsecondary education, or a vocational certificate or diploma, is similar for the two populations. The adult Aboriginal population, like the Québec population in general, has access to postsecondary programs as mature students. Some colleges and universities have set up programs for Aboriginal students, particularly in the fields of education and social services.

Despite the high rate of falling behind, evident as early as the elementary level and accompanied later on, at the secondary level, by a high drop-out rate, the data also show that the situation is changing. The proportion of Aboriginal persons 15 or older who had not obtained a secondary school certificate decreased from 70.1% in 1996 to 63.7% in 2001 (source: Statistics Canada). Successful completion of university studies also rose slightly over the same period.

[11] In its study the MELS uses 2001 Census data for persons reporting an Aboriginal identity. For the purposes of the Census, this population includes persons who stated they belong to at least one Aboriginal group (North American Indian, Métis or Inuit), are treaty Indians or Indians registered under the *Indian Act*, or are members of an Indian Band or a First Nation. Certain Aboriginal communities, such as those on Mohawk reserves and settlements, and the Algonquin community of Rapid Lake, refused to be counted.

4 THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Given the importance of identity in Aboriginal culture, it is not difficult to understand why certain historical events have proven so devastating.

From the beginning of the 1900s to the middle of the 1970s, thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their families and placed in residential schools, institutions whose job it was to educate and assimilate their charges. The results of this practice were disastrous. The physical and psychological abuse that took place has been amply documented, but it hardly exhausts the harm done to Aboriginal peoples under this system.

In the course of our visits, we heard testimony from former residential school students who had been forbidden to speak their mother tongue or practice their ancestral customs.[12] Their traditional way of life, they were told, was "primitive". Eventually, having learned to look down on their own culture, many drew apart from their communities, only to find themselves, later in life, without a model on which to raise their own children in the traditional culture. Yet another sad legacy of the residential school system.

Though Aboriginal communities in general are trying to preserve and develop their culture, many are also witnessing the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge. Lifestyle changes in particular have impeded the transfer of knowledge from Elders to young people.

4.1 Cultural identity

Identity is defined in terms of one's relationship with one's parents, relatives, friends, the larger community, the region in which one lives, one's language and various other social factors. Many of the Aboriginal communities we visited were confident they could meet the challenges facing them, including the educational challenges, by inculcating a strong sense of cultural identity in children and young people. Identity is particularly important for the development of the younger generation, given that community and a sense of belonging play an integral role in their cultural belief system. A sense of identity is at the core of any sense of belonging; from the first breath to the last, each person develops his or her identity. A child with a strong sense of belonging to family, community and peer group is better equipped to confront the problems of life.

[12] During our meeting with teachers at the Kanatamat Tshitipetitamunu school, in Matimekosh, we heard moving testimonies from people who had experienced these situations first hand.

Studies and Aboriginal experience have both shown that "a clear and positive sense of cultural identity in institutions that allow for collective self-control […] can act as a protective force against despair, self-destructiveness and suicide."[13]

For the members of the communities we consulted, language, land, and ancestral heritage form the heart of the culture for First Nations children and young people, who must therefore be exposed to those components in their day-to-day lives. In the almost 40 years that Aboriginal peoples have been defining the objectives to be pursued by an Aboriginal education system, cultural identity has always had an essential role to play.

Accordingly, we believe that Aboriginal solutions must be applied for Aboriginal youth, in order to reinforce their cultural identity.

Aboriginal communities must develop solutions that they believe will help their young people. Worth noting in this regard are a number of initiatives we learned of in the course of our visits, initiatives designed to encourage the younger generation to learn their language and traditions, to foster communication between young people and Elders, and to establish special facilities (such as friendship centres and cultural centres) where traditional skills and knowledge can be taught and handed down.

4.2 Concept of educational success

In any discussion of this subject, two fundamental facts must be borne in mind. First, for hundreds of years Aboriginal knowledge was transmitted from one generation to the next by the family and the community. Schools entered the picture hardly more than 50 years ago, and therefore have a much shorter tradition with Aboriginal than with non-Aboriginal persons. Secondly, this relatively new school system conflicted in many ways with traditional ways of life. Within a few generations, a number of nations that had previously been formed of small nomadic groups, each a self-sufficient entity, were forced to come together in communities of several hundred. This brought about significant changes in the way people lived.

Under our education system, educational success ordinarily goes hand in hand with marks. The gauge of success must therefore be based on measurable realities that allow teachers to determine how much students have learned within the prescribed time. The case is quite different in Aboriginal cultures, where marks are not the sole measure of educational success:

[13] HEALTH CANADA, *Acting on What we Know: Preventing Youth Suicide in First Nations*, on line at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/pubs/suicide/prev_youth-jeunes/index_e.html (Consulted in November 2006).

> "Academic success is only part of it. Maintaining our culture and language is a large part. Teaching traditional skills does not mean that we are encouraging students to live in the old way. But when a skidoo breaks down in the dead of winter on the tundra, knowing how to survive on the land might make the difference between life and death".[14]

A survey conducted in one Innu community shows that educational success, as defined by parents, teachers and students alike, has more to do with the notion of perseverance—with the stick-to-itiveness required to achieve a passing mark.[15] Likewise for education experts, the idea of educational success comprises two dimensions: perseverance and results; their work also shows that, in the Aboriginal context, a strictly mark-oriented vision of educational success must be set aside in favour of a more holistic approach.[16]

Consequently, we believe that educational success in Aboriginal contexts must by examined in a perspective that recognizes perseverance equally with the kind of mark-based performance that ordinarily leads to the granting of a diploma.

The Committee recommends:

1. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport develop a series of indicators consistent with a perspective of perseverance at school, and that it propose these indicators to the school boards and band councils with a view to better taking into account the concept of educational success prevalent among First Nations;

2. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport publish, on a regular basis, a statistics bulletin to take stock of the educational success of Aboriginal students, and that it regularly carry out studies on the challenges faced by individuals and organizations in their quest to help Aboriginal students achieve educational success.

4.3 Resumption of Aboriginal control

Educational success is sometimes perceived in Aboriginal communities as a rejection of the group's own culture. In the 1970s, as Aboriginal communities began setting up their own

[14] KATIVIK SCHOOL BOARD, Report by the Kativik School Board for the Parliamentary Commission on Education, September 18, 2006.

[15] Carole Lévesque and Christiane Montpetit, *La réussite scolaire et la collaboration entre les familles et l'école*, Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Montréal, June 2005, p. 5.

[16] Jean-Claude Saint-Amant, *Comment limiter le décrochage scolaire des garçons et des filles?* [http://sisyphe.org/article.php3?id_article=446] (Consulted November 2006).

systems of education, there was a transitional phase when, from both a cultural and a linguistic point of view, the modes of transmitting non-Aboriginal knowledge were at odds with Aboriginal realities. Traditional learning had at its heart the community and the natural environment. One's teachers were the members of one's family. Each adult was responsible for ensuring that each child learned the things he or she needed to know. For the most part, traditional education was "an informal process that provided the young people with the specific skills, attitudes and knowledge they needed to function in everyday life within the context of a spiritual world view."[17]

The important role played today by family and community in the education and development of Aboriginal youth is in keeping with traditional education; at the same time, "the whole (and recent) concept of academic education has severed the ties between a real-life learning environment and its relation to inter-generational and intergenerational communication".[18]

In recent years Aboriginal communities have tried, and are still trying, to re-establish those ties and hence to find a place within the school for their own values, identity and traditions, while at the same time providing an education of high quality.

Many experts see parental participation in the child's schooling as essential for educational success, whether in an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal context; likewise, Aboriginal communities well understand that educational success is not the sole responsibility of the school:

> *We are aware that the success of our students does not depend exclusively on the school's actions. We need the parents to assist us in our mission and we would like to see all our schools involved in a project that would not only be the result of a school consensus but a consensus of all the stake holders.*[19]

In the course of our visits, we noted a clear desire on the part of Aboriginal communities to take charge of their own education systems. Some promising projects have already been carried out, but these remain piecemeal and insufficiently evaluated. To make learning more relevant, schools will typically host celebratory activities focusing on the Aboriginal language, culture and traditions. Despite such efforts, the creation of a close partnership with parents is a challenge that remains to be met. This can be explained in part by the fact that the school is still based on a "foreign" model.

[17] V. J. Kirkness, "Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Retrospective and a Prospective", Journal of American Indian Education, 1999, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 22-23.
[18] KATIVIK SCHOOL BOARD, Report by the Kativik School Board for the Parliamentary Commission on Education, September 18, 2006.
[19] *Meeting of the Cree School Board and the Committee on Education,* 20 September 2006.

And since the school is still often seen as a "quallunaq" (non-Inuit) institution, administrators must expend great efforts working with commissioners, education committees and the communities to make school more relevant for both parents and students.[20]

The challenge facing these administrators is to support parents and families as the first-line educators of their children. The contribution of parents and families must be recognized; parents are called upon to join parents' groups and participate in classroom activities; this gives them an opportunity to become more involved and to serve as stronger role models for their children and other members of the community. Parents must be encouraged to participate actively in the life of their communities.

The Committee recommends:

3. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support parents in their role as the first-line educators of their children, so that parents may come to play an essential role in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project;
4. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support extended families in the education and care of children;
5. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to encourage the participation of the local Aboriginal community in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project;
6. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support homework assistance and other projects.

[20] KATIVIK SCHOOL BOARD, Report by the Kativik School Board for the Parliamentary Commission on Education, September 18, 2006.

4.4 Mother tongue

In a policy paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education*, the National Indian Brotherhood noted that:

> Language is the outward expression of an accumulation of learning and experience shared by a group of people over centuries of development. It is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life. Knowing his maternal language helps a man to know himself; being proud of his language helps a man to be proud of himself.

It is well known that maintenance of the mother tongue is essential for self-esteem and psychological well-being, and that its loss gives rise to problems of identity. A number of studies, including some conducted in Nunavik, also seem to confirm that proficiency in one's mother tongue has a positive influence on intellectual development and academic results; lack of proficiency, on the other hand, has been cited as a factor in the learning difficulties experienced by Aboriginal children. Some education experts attribute the difficulties Aboriginal children experience in school at least in part to problems relating to the language of instruction.

Though Aboriginal children attending school in their communities are often taught initially in their mother tongue, the switch to a new language is soon made, sometimes before the child possesses a solid grasp of his or her own language. Children in this position are placed in a situation of subtractive bilingualism, their Aboriginal language skills deteriorating on contact with the language of instruction, in this case a second language.

Aboriginal nations are firmly convinced of the fundamental importance of the mother tongue, and have found ways of maintaining and reinforcing its use in educational activities. The Cree School Board has implemented a number of measures in that regard, and the Kativik School Board has adopted a policy on languages of instruction. Under a project carried out by the Institut culturel et éducatif Montagnais, Innu has been adopted as the sole language of instruction by the Innu preschool in La Romaine, an experiment that, after several years in operation, is considered conclusive.

It need hardly be said that such projects demand enormous effort from the education community as a whole. One need only think of the time and resources that go into study-program development and implementation in schools in general to imagine the challenges inherent in setting up the trilingual programs that exist in some Aboriginal schools.

But there is another challenge on the language front. While school authorities are making every effort to achieve their objective of "balanced" bilingualism, in which the mother

tongue plays a primary role, parents are not unanimous in recognizing the importance of the Aboriginal language as an instrument for the transmission of knowledge. This is not surprising, since it was not all that long ago that educational institutions still vigorously forbade the use of Aboriginal languages. In addition, some parents feel that a second language is an indispensable asset for their children's future.

As the mother tongue is the cornerstone of the identity of Aboriginal nations and the vehicle by which knowledge is acquired, the Committee recommends:

> 7. That the authorities concerned, namely the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and (federally) the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, do more to support educational institutions, Aboriginal schools and organizations working to further Aboriginal education in their efforts to reinforce the learning of Aboriginal languages.

It should be mentioned that, during the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum, the MELS made a commitment to developing an Innu language and culture program in collaboration with the Institut culturel et éducatif Montagnais (ICEM).

5 HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE STAY IN SCHOOL

5.1 Myriad realities

Aboriginal nations differ from each other, and the communities of a single nation may differ among themselves in their ways of life and socioeconomic situations. Some communities are situated near urban centres, while others are not even accessible by road.

Aboriginal education shows a similar lack of homogeneity: on the one hand, there are the school boards and schools covered by an agreement, on the other, autonomous band schools. And this does not take into account the schools of the Québec school system, which receive a small percentage of Aboriginal students.

It appeared to us that a broad educational network helped reduce the impact of community isolation on educational services. Thus, the Nunavik and Cree schools, which operate under school boards, seem to have more resources and pedagogical support at their disposal than do the band schools of, say, Matimekosh and Lac-Simon. Moreover, in a survey conducted in the Innu community of Betsiamites, teachers mentioned that although they viewed Québec's educational reform as more in keeping with their own pedagogical approaches and therefore more likely to benefit Aboriginal students, they lacked the supplementary resources required to apply it.

Various Aboriginal organizations have founded their educational mission on the idea of providing high-quality education for all Aboriginal young people. Here we might mention the First Nations Education Council, which serves 22 communities of the nations that compose it (Abénaqui, Algonquin, Attikamek, Huron-Wendat, Micmac, Mohawk, Innu (Mashteuiatsh) and Maliseet), and the Institut culturel et éducatif Montagnais, which serves eight Innu communities in the Côte-Nord region.

Despite the support communities receive from such organizations, we believe that the task of providing all Aboriginal students with access to the whole range of educational services is easier for schools that belong to a structured educational network. The Memorandum of Understanding on Education, signed in Masteuiatsh by representatives of the Government of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Education Council, is a potentially significant initiative in this regard, since it provides for the creation of a working group to develop a strategy for a comprehensive First Nations education system. Such a system could help improve educational services and make them more broadly accessible to the communities concerned.

5.2 Vocational and technical programs

A number of lessons have been learned from the employment and training programs implemented in Canada and the U.S. over the past 30 years; it is now admitted, for example, that programs of a general nature yield only modest results in terms of the number of jobs subsequently obtained. Today, intensive, job-related training at school, school-work transition programs, and drop-out prevention programs are seen as the most promising approaches for long-term results, and economic development initiatives on the community level are increasingly favoured.

In 1996, the federal government and the First Nations of Québec signed a new type of agreement, the Regional Bilateral Agreement (RBA), which transferred to the First Nations full jurisdiction over the training and development of the Aboriginal workforce. The Inuit, Cree and Algonquin nations created their own operational structure, while the remaining First Nations elected to pursue the route they had already chosen and consolidated their action by amending the constitution of the Regional Aboriginal Management Board of Québec (RAMBQ) in Resolution No. 7/98 of the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador (AFNQL) to create the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ). Twenty-two local organizations representing more than twenty-nine communities comprise the regular membership of the Commission.

Despite the previously noted limitations of some training and development programs, there are ways of improving the promotion and follow-up of job-training programs. As an example we may point to First Nations community employment centres, which provide their local populations with the job training and development services they need to find jobs

over the short or medium term, on or off the reserve. We visited one such centre, the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre huron-wendat, whose services in the adult sector include general education programs preparatory to college or vocational studies; programs leading to a secondary school diploma or a college degree; and optional courses. In addition, it provides regional training adapted to the needs of the various Aboriginal communities.

Other types of local organization also exist. The Centre autochtone du Cégep de Baie-Comeau offers training and services specifically designed for Québec's Aboriginal communities. Its goals may be described as follows: to meet the training needs expressed by the communities it serves; to encourage participation of Aboriginal students in the life of the cégep; to maintain a high profile for Aboriginal culture at the cégep; to integrate traditional skills and knowledge into the study programs with a view to reinforcing the cultural identity of young people and adults; and to encourage the emergence of new programs for Québec's Aboriginal populations. Three custom-made programs—in construction site supervision, Aboriginal day-care, and tourism (Innu)—lead to an Attestation of Collegial Studies; other custom-made programs focus on such areas as psychopedagogical action and becoming an Aboriginal foster family. Such centres exist essentially to provide personalized support and guidance for Aboriginal persons wishing to pursue an education or training in some field. Their broad aims are to foster social integration and provide pedagogical support and educational and vocational counselling.

Despite some progress, First Nations still face a number of obstacles with regard to vocational and technical training. In the course of our visits, we noted that there were few if any such programs for Aboriginal students in secondary school; and while some programs exist in certain communities, they are not widespread among First Nations as a whole. Services are often provided on an ad hoc basis, and it is difficult to determine what is available and how many people benefit; difficult, as well, to determine the type of services being offered, even though some communities have technical and vocational training service agreements with secondary schools or cégeps. It would be of considerable interest to see pedagogical approaches (such as mentoring systems) developed with the realities of the communities in mind. In our view, there can be no doubt as to the importance of developing projects and approaches for vocational training.

The effectiveness of employment and training programs for Aboriginal young people could be determined through longitudinal studies. Aboriginal organizations want this type of information, which emphasizes program strong points and possible improvements, but at present there is little or no stock-taking being done of successful practices, lessons learned and future challenges—information which could then be shared with all Aboriginal communities.

The MELS will be contributing financially to a study on vocational and technical training, carried out jointly by the FNHRDQC and the First Nations Education Council. We fully support this study, given the importance of this type of training, and hope to be informed of its findings.

We likewise support the two regional pilot training centres for Aboriginal adults which emerged from the Socioeconomic Forum; these centres, of which the first should be in operation in 2008–2009, will contribute to the improvement of existing adult education and vocational services.

5.3 Teaching staff and non-teaching professionals

In taking charge of their education systems, First Nations also assumed responsibility for hiring their own teachers. Classroom use of Aboriginal languages opened the door to the hiring of Aboriginal teachers, who did not always have the qualifications required of teachers in the Québec school system. Non-Native teachers working in an Aboriginal context tend to be recent university graduates, and many do not last long. Lacking both teaching experience and significant knowledge of Aboriginal culture, they quickly become discouraged by the sheer magnitude of the problems faced by so many of their students. Lower salaries also appear to be a major disincentive for non-Native teachers.

Similar recruitment and staff-retention problems can be observed with regard to non-teaching professionals, a fact which can be explained by the huge challenges inherent in the professional task at hand and the meagre means possessed by the schools to meet those challenges. Members of the Cree School Board cited the lack of qualified teachers and non-teaching professionals as a serious impediment to educational success.

Partnerships between universities and First Nations have been formed to train Aboriginal teachers. Postsecondary training programs are offered at the local level, so that students can remain in their communities while they study. One of the aims of these programs is to augment the qualifications of persons who already have experience as teacher assistants or language teachers.

Hence, McGill University and the Kativik School Board are working together to train elementary school teachers and specialists in the teaching of Inuktitut; the training is provided in the community. After earning their teaching diploma, graduates may undertake studies at McGill for a B.A. in education. This model has also been used by McGill to train teachers for the Algonquin, Cree, Micmac, and Mohawk nations.

The Université du Québec à Chicoutimi provides training in some 15 Amerindian communities. Working closely with Aboriginal representatives and experts, its Centre d'études amérindiennes has developed programs to respond directly to community needs

by, for example, providing training for teacher assistants and substitute teachers working in the Aboriginal context, as well as training in teaching and promoting Aboriginal languages and in written French. A research project conducted by the university in collaboration with elementary and secondary school teachers in Mashteuiatsh has resulted in a teaching model that is sensitive to the variety of learning styles and rhythms encountered in the classroom.

The Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue has been working with Inuit and First Nations communities for several years. According to its study on the university training needs of these communities, the most pressing need is for training in the field of education itself. The university has responded by offering courses and certificate programs in the communities themselves. Aboriginal students also attend courses held on campus.

Aware that the high turnover of non-Native teachers has a detrimental effect on students' educational success, the school boards have adopted strategies for integrating and retaining such professionals. Under one Cree School Board program, new teachers are helped to acclimatize by being paired with experienced teachers; under another, they spend two or three days becoming familiar with available resources and learning about Cree values and culture. In keeping with the tenor of the Socioeconomic Forum, the Institut culturel et éducatif Montagnais will be developing a First Nations awareness course for non-Native professionals called upon to work in Aboriginal communities. A committee responsible for evaluating needs and resources will be formed, made up of ICEM members and representatives of the MELS and of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

We are well aware of the staff recruitment and retention problems particular to Aboriginal schools. We salute the teacher-training efforts made thus far, and greatly hope to see them continue in the future. We also support the step being taken to facilitate the integration of non-Native teachers.

The Committee recommends:

8. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport provide financial support for school boards and band schools to hire and train qualified Aboriginal or non-Native personnel with a view to fostering continuity in the education of children and young people;

9. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, in collaboration with universities and Aboriginal education organizations, ensure that training programs exist to prepare future teachers who want to work in an Aboriginal context for the particular challenges encountered there.

5.4 Québec's school programs and basic school regulations

The basic school regulations

A common complaint heard during our visits was that the demands of Québec's basic school regulation were out of synch, on a number of points, with Aboriginal realities. Before exploring these points, it will be necessary to review briefly both the regulations and the particular realities of Aboriginal schools.

While elementary education ordinarily lasts six years, divided into three two-year cycles, some Aboriginal communities add a seventh year preparatory to secondary school.

Students in the general education program who obtain a DSS may go on to university; in some schools, a sixth year of secondary school is offered.

Under the basic regulation for secondary schools, some subjects are compulsory; the number of credits required in compulsory and optional subjects is generally specified. Except with regard to uniform provincial examinations, evaluation is the responsibility of the school boards. A DSS is granted to students who have earned at least 54 credits during the final two years of secondary school; some of these are earned on the basis of uniform examinations, such as the History exam, which is compulsory.[21]

But Québec's programs in history and civics do not reflect the social and historical realities of Aboriginal nations. Learning about Québec's seigneurial system, for example, requires an understanding of realities that may, to say the least, be difficult to grasp for Naskapi youth or for students living in Nunavik.

Cultural heritage projects do exist in Aboriginal communities. Thus, forest expeditions have been undertaken to develop wilderness survival skills; arts and crafts projects have been carried out; workshops on First Nations legends and courses in the art of working birch bark are dispensed by the Huron-Wendat nation; and Inuit youth from Nunavik learn throat singing and traditional dances, which we were able to watch via videoconferencing.

[21] The passing mark on provincial exams is 60%. The required number of credits in compulsory subjects is as follows: 6 credits in French or English (whichever is the language of instruction) for Secondary V students; 4 credits in English for francophone students in Secondary IV or V; 4 credits in French for anglophone students in Secondary V; and 4 credits in the History of Québec and Canada for students in Secondary IV.

With a view to better reflecting the social and cultural reality of Aboriginal peoples, the Committee recommends:

10. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport closely examine requests from the school boards and band schools to adjust the teaching program, and particularly the content of history courses, and that it be possible to incorporate into the program other skills components that relate more closely to Aboriginal culture. For example, the department might grant credits for courses specifically geared to the realities of Aboriginal peoples.

11. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport be on the lookout for aspects of educational programs that might be discriminatory toward members of Aboriginal communities.

Québec's programs (MELS)

Two MELS initiatives to encourage Aboriginal success in school should be mentioned. The first, implemented in 2005, is a measure known as *Educational Success of Aboriginal Students*. Its purpose is to help school boards increase the number of Aboriginal students who achieve an educational profile comparable to the average profile in the school they attend. The two-fold measure is aimed, in the first place, at supporting school board initiatives to improve student[22] proficiency in the language of instruction, and, in the second place, at ensuring that school boards have the tools they need to do the job—tools such as compilations of effective approaches and university research on second-language acquisition by Aboriginal students. This second part of the measure is coordinated by the Direction des affaires autochtones et des services administratives. An evaluation of the measure will be carried out in 2008-2009.

The second MELS initiative is a support program for members of Aboriginal communities under which universities are granted financial assistance to provide expertise in areas designated by the communities themselves or to offer study programs specifically designed for Aboriginal students. In the latter case the assistance is used to defray the cost of developing the new programs and providing individual pedagogical support, and to help pay travel expenses in cases where the courses are dispensed in the community.

[22] The measure is aimed at young people who ordinarily live on a reserve and who meet the criteria for the declaration of Aboriginal children in the Système de la declaration d'effectif scolaire des jeunes en formation générale (DCS). Aboriginal students who do not ordinarily live in a territory reserved for an Aboriginal community may also be considered.

5.5 Health problems and social problems

Media reports regularly bear witness to the environmental and psychosocial factors that characterize the often difficult living conditions in Aboriginal communities: the tough socioeconomic realities faced by Aboriginal institutions; physical and mental health problems; poverty; parenting problems; drug and alcohol abuse; a feeling of powerlessness, desperation and marginalization; and, finally, acculturation.

So many land mines, as it were, on the road to educational success. Collapse of the traditional economic model and erosion of the cultural and social fabric have brought with them their share of social problems.

Many communities are actively working to prevent further deterioration of living conditions and to combat the psychosocial problems related to them. Yet the daily lot of school staff remains a difficult one. In some communities, projects are being developed that bring different partners together to find common solutions to problems before they culminate in students' dropping out. Parental skills development and child stimulation are two areas such projects focus on to create the conditions for educational success.

In Nunavik we were told about a program that "encourages parents to see themselves as their child's first teacher, to see the home as the first school, and to spend quality time with their children."[23]

A preschool assistance program called *Tiknagin* in Val-d'Or and *Chiannou* in Senneterre, and sponsored by the Centre d'amitié autochtone in each of those locations, supports families with preschoolers and helps them prepare the children for school. Other initiatives, such as the abuse prevention program at Lac-Simon, provide support to troubled youth and their families.

Since 1996, the social sciences department of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue has been conducting a research project in collaboration with Anishnabek families from Lac-Simon. Commissioned by the band council, the project is aimed at improving parent-child relations through recreational activities and a varied lifestyle that promote family communications. Families in difficulty are paired with volunteer families in an effort to find solutions that are rooted in the community's own culture.[24] Also in Lac-Simon, a school health project has been set up to combat obesity and diabetes.

[23] KATIVIK SCHOOL BOARD, Report by the Kativik School Board for the Parliamentary Commission on Education, September 18, 2006.

[24] [http://www.uqat.uquebec.ca/Repertoire/services.asp?RefEntite=228&RefPav=UQ] (consulted November 2006).

Such programs as these, while not necessarily exportable to all Aboriginal communities, testify nonetheless to the importance of preventing health and psychosocial problems and of creating positive conditions for growth that will help children start school painlessly and stay in school longer.

Parental skills programs, child care services, projects with strong roots in the community, and cooperation between partners involved in the community are all important factors we observed for improving the situation of these young people.

Some experts believe that, to gain a broader understanding of the lack of perseverance and educational success among Aboriginal students, it would be desirable to examine the impact of psychosocial problems on schooling.[25]

The Committee recommends:

12. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux come together to support communities interested in developing models of multi-service community schools.

5.6 Pilot projects, infrastructures and funding

Pilot projects

The relationship of people to the environment is one of the most important aspects of Aboriginal culture, and time spent on the land is seen as an important means of transmitting knowledge and culture.

To preserve their culture for future generations, some communities have set up cultural and heritage programs. Thus, on the North Shore, hunting and trapping activities have been given a boost through the efforts of the Centre de formation Nutshimiu Atusseun, one of whose programs brings young people and Elders together for several weeks on the land; and in Nunavik, the AVATAQ Cultural Institute organizes a traditional Inuit camp each year, at Inukjuak.

[25] Annie Presseault et. al., "Contribution à la compréhension du cheminement et de l'expérience scolaire de jeunes autochtones à risque ou en difficulté en vue de soutenir leur réussite et leur persévérance scolaire", 2006, p.15.

Similar programs have been introduced by the educational authorities. The Kativik School Board, convinced that classroom use of Inuktitut has helped the language to survive, but doubtful as to the survival of Inuit culture in the absence of further efforts, has implemented a land survival skills program emphasizing the Inuit relationship with nature. Elders are an integral part of the program, transmitters of knowledge that would otherwise be lost. These intergenerational exchanges result in a strengthening of community ties that help young people get more out of their cultural heritage.

For the Kativik School Board, integrating basic cultural realities into the study programs helps students develop their social identity and enhance their self-esteem. This is particularly important in Nunavik, where students live in a "trilingual, tricultural environment"; inclusion of such realities is also a vital component of the board's mandate and an important part of its strategy to reduce the drop-out rate.

Despite being tested with positive results in two Inuit communities, this project has had to be shelved due to a three-year limit on MELS funding.

Since programs of this kind can reinforce young people's pride and sense of identity, as well as foster their educational success, the Committee recommends:

13. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport revise its funding criteria to encourage, on the basis of decisive results, the development and implementation of local programs, including on-line education projects, specifically adapted to the characteristics of Aboriginal communities.

Infrastructures

In the course of our visits, we had occasion to observe that the Aboriginal population is very young, with an average age much lower than that of Québec and Canada generally. Moreover, it is growing at twice the rate of the Canadian population as a whole. Almost two thirds of Aboriginal persons are under 30, and almost one third of reserve residents are under 15. To place this in the larger perspective, however, it must be remembered that the under-15 Aboriginal population makes up only 6% of Canadian youth.

Communities need schools and other facilities to accommodate their young people. School architecture should reflect an environment both inviting and stimulating, and be rich with references to Aboriginal culture. Some schools we visited possessed these characteristics, but others, to make the grade, would have to be rebuilt or extensively renovated.

Aside from schools, which are the child's primary living environment after the home, we see housing as a major factor in the pursuit of educational success. The presence or absence

of adequate housing impacts many aspects of life: health and well-being, education, social interaction, employment, and the sense of belonging to one's community.

In its 1996 report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) concluded that the housing conditions of Aboriginal communities were inferior to those of non-Aboriginal communities. The gap persists today despite the efforts deployed by the federal government in recent years to improve the situation, a fact which underlines the need for new mechanisms and funding.

In some cases, as in the village of Chisasibi, we saw for ourselves that recruitment of new staff (teachers, psychologists, etc.) was made more difficult for lack of suitable housing.

Given the seriousness of these problems and the obstacle they represent with regard to school perseverance, the Committee recommends:

14. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport support new school infrastructure projects in Aboriginal communities.

15. That the Gouvernement du Québec alert the federal government to the urgency of making more resources available and of getting together with Aboriginal communities to find solutions to the housing problem.

Funding

In addition to the housing problem, we observed a significant variation in funding between band schools and schools covered by an agreement.[26] Band schools appear to be disadvantaged by the funding formula of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This observation is supported by the findings of a 2005 study carried out by a committee[27] of DIAND representatives and members of the First Nations Education Council. Owing to an outmoded 1988 funding formula that makes no provision for cost-of-living indexation, band schools receive far less funding, on an average per-student basis, than do the schools operating under a school board.

[26] Band schools are funded 100% by the DIAND; the schools of nations covered by an agreement are funded by the DIAND and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, at the rates, respectively, of 25% and 75% for the Cree School Board, and 75% and 25% for the Kativik School Board and the Naskapi school.

[27] COMITÉ SUR LES FRAIS DE SCOLAITÉ CEPN/AINC (2005), *Une analyse des coûts relatifs à l'éducation et aux frais de scolarité : niveaux préscolaire, primaire et secondaire*.

The Committee recommends:

16. That the Gouvernement du Québec call on the federal government to make available the resources Québec's Aboriginal communities need to provide educational services comparable to those of the Québec system, given that the 1988 DIAND funding formula no longer meets current needs.

17. That the Gouvernement du Québec alert the federal government to the shortcomings of secondary school funding programs, which do not give Aboriginal young people access to vocational training—training that is known to be effective in reducing drop-out rates and increasing employability.

18. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport impress upon the DIAND the necessity for the latter to adjust its funding for band schools each time adjustments are made to Québec's school programs and services, so that band schools may offer comparable services shortly thereafter.

We believe that a follow-up to this report should be carried out within five years; it would be based on hearings during which the main stakeholders would describe the steps they have taken to act on the recommendations made in the report.

CONCLUSION

This report has sought to provide examples of essential measures, but such measures are too few and far between given the magnitude of the problems currently impeding the progress of education in Aboriginal communities. Much, therefore, remains to be done; yet our examples also show that positive changes have taken place, thanks to community action and the initiatives of parents and Elders.

So the situation has improved over the years, and continues to improve.[28] We saw, for instance, that Aboriginal communities are expending much effort to pass on their language and culture to future generations. This report is intended as a contribution to a process already under way, a process whereby Aboriginal communities are taking control of their education.

[28] Thus, the percentage of Aboriginal persons aged 15 or older who had earned a Certificate of Secondary Studies rose from 29.91% in 1996 to 36.3% in 2001 (source: Statistics Canada). A slight increase in completed university studies may also be observed for those years.

APPENDIX I

EXPERTS CONSULTED BY THE COMMITTEE

EXPERTS CONSULTED BY THE COMMITTEE

During the spring of 2006, the members of the Committee held a number of meetings to learn more about educational success among Aboriginal peoples. In the course of these meetings they consulted the following persons:

- Lise Bastien, Director of the First Nations Education Council;

- Sampson Einish, chair of the Naskapi Education Committee
  Curtis Tootoosis, principal of the Jimmy Sandy Memorial School in Kawawachikamach;

- Carole Lévesque, research professor at the INRS and
  Jean-Claude Saint-Amant, retired Université Laval professor;

- Andrée Bélanger, Director of government relations at the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones;

- Anny Bussières of the Service des affaires institutionnelles et des affaires autochtones at the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport.

APPENDIX II

REPORT ON MISSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN CONNECTION WITH A SELF-ASSIGNED MANDATE ON THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Report on Missions of the Committee on Education in connection with a Self-Assigned Mandate on the Educational Success of Aboriginal Students

September 18 – 21, 2006

Kuujjuaq, Shefferville, Chisasibi, Lac-Simon, Val-d'Or

November 2, 2006:

Wendake

ACTIVITIES

- Missions to the following communities: Kuujjuaq (Inuit), Kawawachicamach (Naskapi), Matimekosh (Innu), Chisasibi (Cree), Lac-Simon (Algonquin).
- School visits and meetings with principals, teachers, students, school board authorities, and community leaders from each community.
- In Val-d'Or: visits to the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Val-d'Or, the Centre de la petite enfance Abinodjic-Miguam and the Pavillon des Premières-Nations at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

- In Wendake: Visit to the Ts8taïe elementary school and the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'œuvre (CDFM) and a meeting with community leaders.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE MISSION TO NORTHERN QUÉBEC (*September 18–21, 2006*):

Jacques Chagnon
Member for Westmount–Saint-Louis
Chair of the Committee on Education

Maxime Arseneau
Member for Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Vice-chair of the Committee on Education

Yvan Bordeleau
Member for Acadie
Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports

Camil Bouchard
Member for Vachon
Official Opposition critic for education

Sarah Perreault
Member for Chauveau
Vice-chair of the Committee on Public Administration

Michèle Rioux
Research officer, Committee on Education

Robert Jolicoeur
Clerk, Committee on Education

PERSONS CONSULTED DURING THE MISSION TO NORTHERN QUÉBEC

1. Inuit community of Kuujjuaq (*September 18, 2006*)

Visits to the Jaanimmarik and Pitakallak schools:

- Denis Daigle, principal
- Daniel Lafleur, person responsible for second languages
- Meetings with teachers and students

Meeting with Kativik School Board authorities:

- Alacie Nalukturuk, President
- Charlie Watt Jr., Vice-president
- Michel Gordan, executive member
- Annie Grenier, Director General
- Mary Aitchison, Assistant Director General
- Betsy Annahatak, Director of Education Services
- Gaston Pelletier, Associate Director of Education Services
- Valentina de Krom, Co-ordinator of Teacher Training Services

Meeting with community leaders:

- Larry Watt, mayor of Kuujjuaq
- Pita Aatami, President of the Makivik Corporation
- Representatives of the CRSSS and the hospital, municipal councillors

2. The Naskapi community of Kawawachikamach (*September 19, 2006*)

Visit to the Jimmy Sandy Memorial School:

- Curtis Tootoosis, principal
- Meetings with teachers and students

Meeting with community members:

- Philip Einish, chief
- Curtis Tootoosis, school principal
- Other members of the community

3. The Innu community of Matimekosh (*September 19, 2006*)

Visit to the Kanatamat Tshitipetitamunu School:

- Yvette Vachon, principal
- All teachers (but no students, since the school was closed from May to September 25)

Meetings with community members:

- Thadée André, chief
- Léo St-Pierre, director geneal
- Mathieu McKenzie and Alexandre McKenzie, councillors
- Robert Madden, director of health and social services
- Other members of the community

4. The Cree community of Chisasibi (*September 20, 2006*)

Visit to the James Bay Eeyou School:

- Michel Beauchamp, principal
- Meetings with teachers and students

Meeting with Cree School Board authorities and members of the community:

- Gordon Blackned, CSB chairperson
- Mabel Herodier, commissioner
- Jim Laird, coordinator of instructional services
- Councillors and employees of the village and the school board

5. The Algonquin community of Lac-Simon (*September 21, 2006*)

Visit to the Amik-Wiche and Amikobi schools:

- Virginia Damon, principal
- Marie-Jeanne Papatens, principal
- Meetings with teachers and students

Meeting with community members:

- Daniel Pien, chief
- Adrienne Jérôme, director general
- Adrien Boucher, consultant (former director general of the Val-d'Or School Board)
- Other members of the community

6. Visit to the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Val-d'Or and the Centre de la petite enfance Abinodjic-Miguam

Meeting with:

- Denise Nauss, associate general director of the CAA
- Meeting with CAA employes and users

7. Visit to the Centre d'études supérieures Lucien-Cliche on the Val-d'Or campus of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue

Visit to the pavillon des Premières Nations and meeting with:

- Johanne Jean, Rector of the UQAT
- André Bellavance, Val-d'Or campus director at the UQAT
- Janet Mark, administrative attachée and liaison officer to First Nations
- Rebecca Moore, Nancy Crépeau and Paul Cormier, advisors with the Service aux Premières Nations

PARTICIPANTS IN THE MISSION TO WENDAKE *(November 2, 2006)*:

Jacques Chagnon
Member for Westmount–Saint-Louis
Chair of the Committee on Education

Maxime Arseneau
Member for Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Vice-chair of the Committee on Education

Yvan Bordeleau
Member for Acadie
Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports

Marie Malavoy
Member for Taillon
Official Opposition critic for international relations, La francophonie and cultural diversity

Sarah Perreault
Member for Chauveau
Vice-chair of the Committee on Public Administration

Hélène Bergeron
Research officer, Committee on Education

Robert Jolicoeur
Clerk, Committee on Education

PERSONS CONSULTED DURING THE MISSION TO WENDAKE

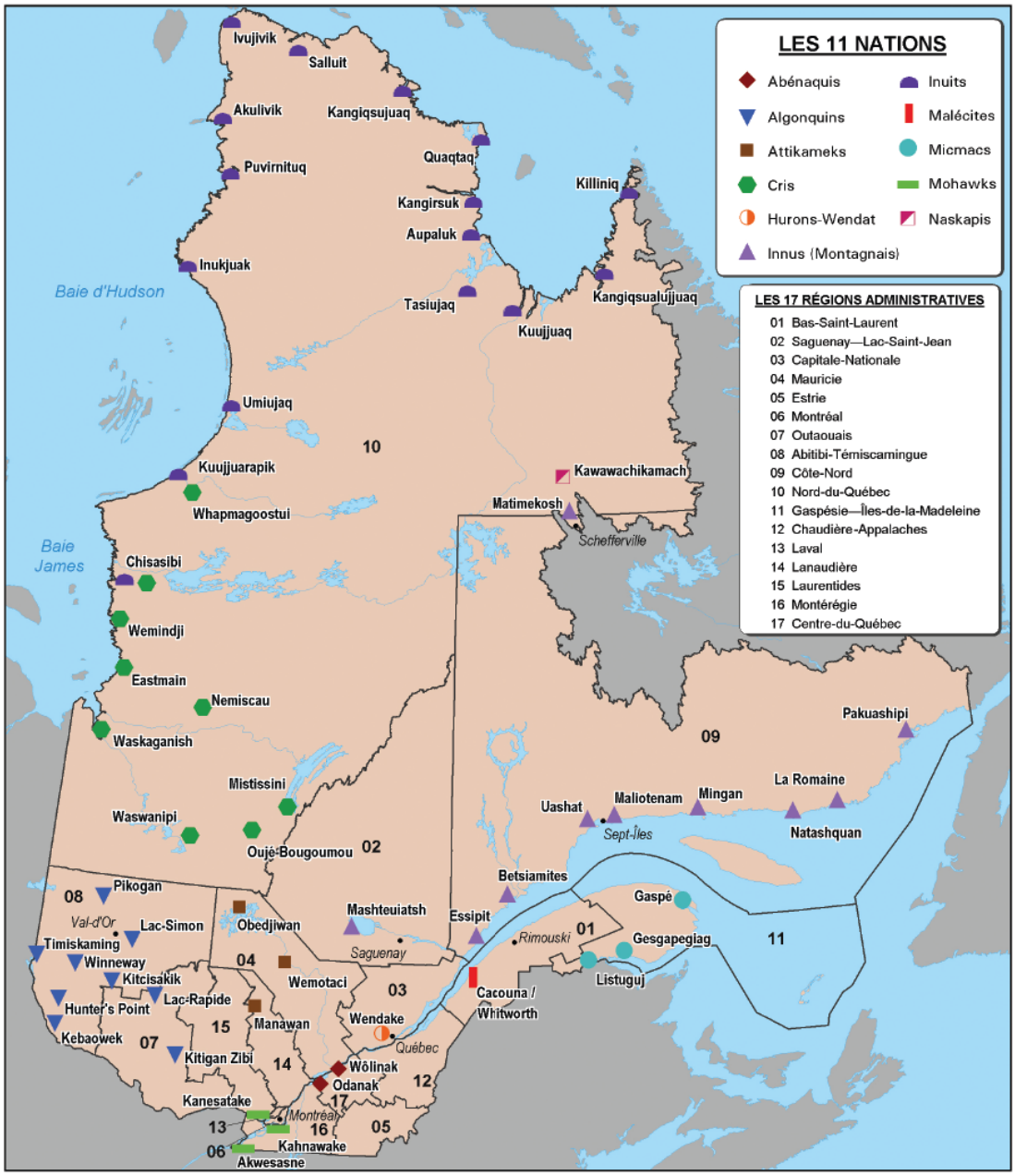
Visit to the Ts8taïe elementary school and the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'œuvre (CDFM), and meeting with:

- Max "One-Onti" Gros-Louis, grand chief
- Line Gros-Louis, chief responsible for the CDFM
- Yves Sioui, principal of the Ts8taïe school
- Julie Vincent, director of the CDFM
- Meetings with students, teachers and non-teaching professionals

APPENDIX III

MAP

Carte 1 - Les communautés autochtones au Québec



Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et des indicateurs

Novembre 2003

APPENDIX IV

TABLES

TABLE 1

Percentage of Teaching Staff by Mother Tongue						
	1989–1990			2001–2002		
	Preschool/ Elementary	Secondary	Total	Preschool/ Elementary	Secondary	Total
Mother Tongue	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cree School Board						
Aboriginal	32	29	31	61	16	41
Non-Aboriginal	68	71	69	39	84	59
Kativik School Board						
Aboriginal	52	26	43	51	19	40
Non-Aboriginal	48	74	57	49	81	60
Total for Both Boards						
Aboriginal	45	27	38	56	17	41
Non-Aboriginal	55	73	62	44	83	59

Source: MEQ, DRSI, Système PERCOS, Annual data, version 030220.

TABLE 2

Age of Full-Time Teachers in the Cree and Kativik School Boards and in Other Québec School Boards				
	1989–1990 School Year		1999–2000 School Year	
Age Group	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.
	%	%	%	%
Under 25	8.4	0.7	4.2	0.9
25–29	20.7	3.8	18.7	10.0
30–34	21.7	6.4	14.0	12.7
35–39	17.6	14.7	15.6	11.7
40–44	15.1	30.3	13.6	11.5
45–49	8.4	24.7	12.5	17.4
50–54	5.6	12.9	12.2	26.9
55–59	1.5	5.2	5.8	7.8
60–64	08	1.2	2.9	0.9
65 +	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1
Average age	36.1	44.0	40.0	43.9

Source: MEQ, DRSI, SIDE, PERCOS as at March 15, 2003 – Panorama F160.

TABLE 3

Years of Experience of Full-Time Teachers: Cree, Kativik and Other Québec School Boards				
	1989–1990 School Year		1999–2000 School Year	
Years of Experience	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.
	%	%	%	%
1	7.4	0.4	8.5	0.2
2–4	34.9	3.0	30.9	11.2
5–9	24.7	6.5	22.2	17.0
10–14	14.0	11.3	14.7	13.8
15–19	16.8	30.8	10.4	11.3
20–24	1.8	22.7	9.8	14.3
25–29	0.0	16.7	2.2	18.3
30 +	0.3	8.6	1.3	13.9

Source: MEQ, DRSI, SIDE, PERCOS as at March 15, 2003 – Panorama F140.

TABLE 4

Recognized Schooling of Full-Time Teachers: Cree, Kativik and Other Québec School Boards				
	1989–1990 School Year		1999–2000 School Year	
Years of Schooling	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.	Cree and Kativik	Other S.B.
	%	%	%	%
14 or less	26.5	15.5	26.0	5.5
15	5.4	12.9	3.6	4.7
16	34.2	19.8	33.8	28.3
17	20.9	21.8	19.3	25.9
18	7.7	15.3	9.6	17.7
19	5.4	14.6	7.3	17.7
20 or more	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.2

Source: MEQ, DRSI, SIDE, PERCOS, as at March 15, 2003 – Panorama F150.

TABLE 5

Number of Aboriginal Students by Level and as a Percentage of Total Enrolment								
School Level	**School Enrolment in the Communities**						**Other Public and Private Schools**	**Total**
	Federal Schools	**Band Schools**	**Cree S.B.**	**Kativik S.B.**	**Naskapi School**	**Total**		
			Agreement Territories					
1987–1988 School Year								
Preschool	377	413	417	213	–	1 420	174	1 594
Elementary	954	1 248	1 650	1 179	–	5 031	929	5 960
Secondary	165	940	683	637	–	2 425	1 672	4 097
Total	1 496	2 601	2 750	2 029	–	8 876	2 775	11 651
1996–1997 School Year								
Preschool	32	1 164	543	283	37	2 059	111	2 170
Elementary	94	2 985	1 531	1 636	101	6 347	785	7 132
Secondary	–	2 005	1 072	723	48	3 855	1 184	5 032
Total	126	6 154	3 146	2 642	186	12 254	2 080	14 334
2001–2002 School Year								
Preschool	–	1 120	533	227	40	1 920	93	2 013
Elementary	–	3 681	1 802	1 867	142	7 492	752	8 244
Secondary	–	2 420	1 102	832	78	4 432	1 076	5 508
Total	–	7 221	3 437	2 926	260	13 844	1 921	15 765

Sources: For 1987–1988 and 1996–1997: MEQ, Education Statistics Bulletin, No. September 7, 1998, pp. 7-8.

For 2001-2002: INAC, Report: Inscription by Band, School Type, Group and Grade – Data as at September 30, 2001. For Agreement territories: MEQ, DRSI, Banque de cheminement scolaire (BCS) (SM3JS026) – Data as at February 19, 2003.

TABLE 6

Rate of Growth of School-Aged Groups and Total School Enrolment in Aboriginal Communities			
	1996–1997 School Year	**Rate**	**2001–2002 School Year**
School-Aged Population			
5–9 years	5 949	9.6 %	6 522
10–14 years	5 046	18.3 %	5 971
15–19 years	4 439	14.0 %	5 060
Total	**15 434**	**13.7 %**	**17 553**
School Enrolment*			
5–9 years	5 771	9.4 %	6 314
10–14 years	4 906	13.6 %	5 575
15–19 years	2 738	5.1 %	2 876
Total	**13 415**	**10.1 %**	**14 765**

* Students enrolled in elementary and secondary school.

Source: For Inuit: MSSS, Registers of Cree, Inuit and Naskapi beneficiaries (data as at December 31 of each year). For Amerindians: INAC, Indian Register Population by Sex and Residence (data as at December 31 of each year). For Québec as a whole: Statistics Canada, Age Groups and Sex for Population, for Provinces and Territories, 1921 to 2001 Census.

The table is taken from: MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 30, July 2004, p.12.

TABLE 7

Percentage of Students at or Above the Modal Age for Each Grade (1996–1997 School Year)									
		Aboriginal Students (Communities)				Québec as a Whole			
		Number of Years Above the Modal Age (% of Students)							
Modal Age	**Grade**	**None**	**1 year**	**2 years**	**3 years or +**	**None**	**1 year**	**2 years**	**3 years or +**
4	**Kindergarten for 4-year-olds)**	98.8	1.2	-	-	100.0	-	-	-
5	**Kindergarten for 5-year-olds**	98.2	1.7	0.1	-	99.0	1.0	-	-
6	**Grade 1**	90.6	8.3	0.7	0.4	95.7	2.9	0.5	0.9
7	**Grade 2**	85.3	11.7	2.4	0.7	89.9	7.5	1.3	1.3
8	**Grade 3**	80.4	17.1	2.1	0.4	89.5	9.1	1.0	0.5
9	**Grade 4**	72.3	22.1	4.7	0.9	86.4	11.5	1.6	0.5
10	**Grade 5**	70.8	23.4	5.5	0.3	85.4	12.8	1.7	-
11	**Grade 6**	58.5	31.5	7.7	2.3	84.3	15.0	0.7	-
12	**Secondary I**	28.1	35.3	21.2	15.3	71.3	19.5	6.4	2.8
13	**Secondary II**	26.2	31.2	20.5	22.2	69.6	18.9	8.2	3.2
14	**Secondary III**	22.3	30.4	22.9	24.4	69.6	20.0	8.0	2.3
15	**Secondary IV**	26.0	28.2	22.2	23.6	72.9	19.4	6.7	1.1
16	**Secondary V**	29.7	23.4	21.8	25.1	74.8	19.1	4.4	1.7

Source: INAC, Report: Inscription by Band, School Type, Group and Grade (data as at September 2001). For Agreement territories: MEQ, DRSI, Banque de cheminement scolaire (BCS) (SM3JS026) – Data as at February 19, 2003, full- and part-time students in the regular sector.

MEQ, DRSI, Banque de cheminement scolaire (BCS) (SM3JS026) – Data as at February 19, 2003, full- and part-time students in the regular sector.

Table from: MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Education Statistics Bulletin,* No. 30, July 2004, p. 13.

TABLE 8

Graduation Rates After Seven Years of Study and Percentage of Students Who Experienced a Delay Entering Secondary School, for the Cree and Kativik School Boards and Québec as a Whole (1990–1995)

	Cree School Board		Kativik School Board		Québec as a Whole	
	Graduation Rate (%)	Delayed Entry Into Secondary School (%)	Graduation Rate (%)	Delayed Entry Into Secondary School (%)	Graduation Rate (%)	Delayed Entry Into Secondary School (%)
Cohort of 1990	31.5	61.2	22.8	90.1	73.7	23.1
Cohort of 1991	27.2	58.3	23.4	91.3	73.7	22.7
Cohort of 1992	19.9	61.9	19.4	91.7	72.8	23.8
Cohort of 1993	26.1	63.8	23.2	92.8	72.3	24.5
Cohort of 1994	35.5	56.6	21.7	94.9	72.2	24.5
Cohort of 1995	27.1	58.7	20.6	95.3	72.2	24.0

Source: MEQ, RESULTS on the June Uniform Ministry Examinations by School Board and by Private School and GRADUATION RATES by School Board.

Table from: MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 30, July 2004, p. 16.

TABLE 9

Rate of Immediate Transition from Secondary V (Full-Time, General Education) to College (Full-Time, Regular DCS Programs)

	Immediate Transition to College (%), Fall Session							
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Average
Cree School Board	7.9	8.9	7.9	3.5	5.0	5.7	1.2	5.7
Kativik School Board	8.1	1.1	7.0	11.7	14.7	5.5	6.3	9.1
Québec as a Whole	64.9	63.4	59.6	58.6	58.5	57.8	58.1	60.1

Source: DEQ, DRSI, Système informatisé des prévisions de l'effectif étudiant au collégial (SIPEEC)

Table from: MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, *Education Statistics Bulletin*, No. 30, July 2004, p. 17.

TABLE 10

Distribution of the Population 15 Years of Age and Older Reporting an Aboriginal Identity and Distribution of the Non-Aboriginal Population of Québec, According to the Highest Level of Schooling Attained (2001 Census)				
Highest Level of Schooling Attained (%)	**Inuit Identity**	**Amerindian Identity (living off reserve)**	**Amerindian Identity (living off reserve)**	**Non-Aboriginal Population**
Less than a Secondary School Diploma	67.9	62.5	40.1	31.5
Secondary School Diploma but no Postsecondary Education	6.5	5.7	15.8	17.2
Some Postsecondary Education	10.2	9.4	10.3	8.6
Vocational School Certificate or Diploma	9.3	11.8	10.6	1.8
College Diploma or Certificate	4.3	6.5	13.7	14.6
University Certificate or Diploma (but no Bachelor's Degree)	0.9	1.3	2.1	3.3
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.9	2.8	7.5	14.0

APPENDIX V

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport develop a series of indicators consistent with a perspective of perseverance at school, and that it propose these indicators to the school boards and band councils with a view to better taking into account the concept of educational success prevalent among First Nations.

2. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport publish, on a regular basis, a statistics bulletin to take stock of the educational success of Aboriginal students, and that it regularly carry out studies on the challenges faced by individuals and organizations in their quest to help Aboriginal students achieve educational success.

3. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support parents in their role as the first-line educators of their children, so that parents may come to play an essential role in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project.

4. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support extended families in the education and care of children.

5. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to encourage the participation of the local Aboriginal community in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project.

6. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux make available, for interested communities, the resources needed to develop programs and services to support homework assistance and other projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. That the authorities concerned, namely the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and (federally) the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, do more to support educational institutions, Aboriginal schools and organizations working to further Aboriginal education in their efforts to reinforce the learning of Aboriginal languages.

8. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport provide financial support for school boards and band schools to hire and train qualified Aboriginal or non-Native personnel with a view to fostering continuity in the education of children and young people.

9. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, in collaboration with universities and Aboriginal education organizations, ensure that training programs exist to prepare future teachers who want to work in an Aboriginal context for the particular challenges encountered there.

10. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport closely examine requests from the school boards and band schools to adjust the teaching program, and particularly the content of history courses, and that it be possible to incorporate into the program other skills components that relate more closely to Aboriginal culture. For example, the department might grant credits for courses specifically geared to the realities of Aboriginal peoples.

11. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport be on the lookout for aspects of educational programs that might be discriminatory toward members of Aboriginal communities.

12. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux come together to support communities interested in developing models of multi-service community schools.

13. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport revise its funding criteria to encourage, on the basis of decisive results, the development and implementation of local programs, including on-line education projects, specifically adapted to the characteristics of Aboriginal communities.

14. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport support new school infrastructure projects in Aboriginal communities.

15. That the Gouvernement du Québec alert the federal government to the urgency of making more resources available and of getting together with Aboriginal communities to find solutions to the housing problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. That the Gouvernement du Québec call on the federal government to make available the resources Québec's Aboriginal communities need to provide educational services comparable to those of the Québec system, given that the 1988 DIAND funding formula no longer meets current needs.

17. That the Gouvernement du Québec alert the federal government to the shortcomings of secondary school funding programs, which do not give Aboriginal young people access to vocational training—training that is known to be effective in reducing drop-out rates and increasing employability.

18. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport impress upon the DIAND the necessity for the latter to adjust its funding for band schools each time adjustments are made to Québec's school programs and services, so that band schools may offer comparable services shortly thereafter.

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