CDFM Wendake

CONSEIL EN ÉDUCATION DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS
FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION COUNCIL

INSTITUT Tshakapesh

COMPETENCY 15

Value and promote Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, cultures and history

Project management
- Conseil en Éducation des Premières Nations (CEPN)
- Institut Tshakapesh
- Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'œuvre huron-wendat (CDFM)

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Alexandra Uniam, Naskapi Artist
« When Two Rivers Merge into One »

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All requests must be sent to the FNEC by email at the
following address: info@cepn-fnec.com

First Nations Education Council
Wendake (Québec)
Tel.: 418-842-7672
www.cepn-fnec.com

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Competency 15

Competency 15 is the result of concerted efforts between the First Nations Education Council, Institut Tshakapesh and the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre huron-wendat, and has received unanimous support from the Table on First Nations and Inuit Student Success. Competency 15 is an exhortation to the province of Quebec to fulfill its duty, and to integrate the recommendations issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry and the Viens Commission, not only for education, but in all areas affected by its calls to action. We consider that knowledge of Indigenous cultures cannot, and must not be relegated to a bit of trivia in teacher training or an optional course. On the contrary, it should be placed at the heart of all preparatory teacher training, and become an essential component of professional development for practicing teachers. We believe that reconciliation and knowledge of Indigenous realities in Quebec must be at centre stage, yet an *add and stir* approach without a broader view has been taken in the current version of the set of competencies required for teachers and teacher training programs. We would like to present competency 15 in its entirety, as it was initially developed, to support universities in the development of their teacher training programs and to guide practicing teachers on what we, as Indigenous peoples, expect of them.

The Inuit and ten First Nations are geographically spread out in different parts of the province, and have their own distinct and unique historical and cultural backgrounds. Indigenous peoples, who are the founding peoples of Canada, have contributed and occupied a fundamental place in Quebec society. The Indigenous reality must be considered independently from that of immigrants.

Two of the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action directly address teachers:

1- make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to Grade 12 students;
2- educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

Research clearly states that young Indigenous students will experience success when teaching approaches value Indigenous knowledge and include Indigenous learning and perspectives. One way of doing this is by finding ways to incorporate holistic lifelong learning, which by definition "involves a circular activity where everything is interconnected (as opposed to the classic "linear" theory of learning based on cause-effect dynamics). Learning is formed through language, tradition, nature, family, elders, ancestors, community, etc. All these elements are interdependent and the absence of one element would destabilize the whole learning process." (CCL, 2007)

The Indigenous language provides a sense of belonging, a sense of continuity among a collective, a deep connection to a knowledge system that grounds the individual to a place, a history, and an ancestral heritage. This is represented in the Holistic Lifelong Learning model. This is why Indigenous peoples are doing everything in their power to ensure the protection of their languages and cultural identity, and to safeguard their traditional knowledge. (Battiste, 2013; NIB, 1972; UN, 2008)

Indigenous expertise is recognized, and teachers must use authentic material created by authorities recognized by the communities. Teachers must also know how to build a network with the Indigenous community. (MEES, 2015) Therefore, teachers have a duty to facilitate the integration of Indigenous ways of understanding into the classroom so that education can play a leading role in reconciliation and knowledge development. The key elements described in this competency allow for teachers to know, respect and work with Indigenous learners in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces. Instead of being at the centre of student learning, this viewpoint requires teachers to have the humility needed to see themselves among a group of actors occupying a special place in a child's lifelong learning. These actors include elders, parents, extended family, the community as a whole, and even the land.

In the above illustration, you see two rivers; one represents Indigenous ways of understanding and learning, and the other represents Western ways. These rivers illustrate these two world views on learning, understanding, and education. Each river flows at its own pace, with its own purpose and own understanding of what learning is. The time has come for these two rivers to merge into one, giving us an opportunity to paddle in balance.

Key elements of competency 15:

- Create respectful and welcoming learning environments that connect and reflect to the holistic lifelong vision of education.
- Actively engage in cultural security practices including cultural consciousness, awareness and competence.
- Value Indigenous culture, language, land and knowledge in the classroom and in relations with families and the community.
- Provide culturally responsive Indigenous instruction and assessment.
- Develop respectful professional relationships with Indigenous learners, parents and community.
- Incorporate Indigenous ways of learning and teaching in the classroom and of those on the land.
- Recognize that each learner is part of a greater and wider family and community that contribute to his/her lifelong learning journey.
- Participate in opportunities that involve establishing connections with students, colleagues, parents, the community and its members as well as connections to place.
- Know how to select authentic material to address Indigenous culture and history.
- Engage in a continuous learning process and see yourself a learner, not an expert.

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Figure 1. When Two Rivers Merge into One, by Alexandra Uniam, Naskapi artist