



*Signing of an historic agreement for the House of Knowledge*

# The first university for First Peoples in Quebec takes shape

**Quebec City, February 13, 2025**— The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is proud to announce an historic partnership with all Quebec universities to lay the foundations for the House of Knowledge, the first university teaching establishment by and for First Peoples in Quebec. The signing of this framework agreement will result in the drafting and presentation of a business plan with the goal of deploying a customized course offering, incorporating a unique model combining face-to-face and online teaching while creating a learning environment that promotes cultural safety for Indigenous students.

## **Academic pathways for First Peoples**

Thanks to a fruitful collaboration with university partners and the development of a structured business plan, the House of Knowledge, which was first announced several years ago, aims to provide specialized teaching and research programs tailored to First Peoples.

The House of Knowledge's mission is to offer a curriculum adapted to communities' needs, in a learning environment that reflects the identity and values of First Peoples. The aim is also to put in place measures to facilitate access to higher education through prior learning recognition and university transition programs with its various partnerships.

## **A growing demand for access to university studies**

Academic success rates have risen significantly over the past decade. The dropout rate among members of First Nations fell by 25% between 2011 and 2021. In addition, the graduation rate for First Peoples completing higher education programs, which is increasing each year, reflects the pressing need for the development of a truly Indigenous academic institution.

## **A major milestone has now been reached**

The FNEC has already received financial support from the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (MES) to set up a team dedicated to the project. The House of Knowledge business plan will be submitted to MES by 2027. The signing of the framework agreement is an important step in this business plan. This is also the first partnership of its kind to bring together all university teaching institutions in Quebec.

“The House of Knowledge is the result of the tenacity of communities to reaffirm their self-determination in education. It responds to a real need and will contribute to the trend of an increasing number of First Nations graduates in recent years. This project embodies the shared vision of First Nations to fully claim control over their education. Fifty years after the national policy ‘Indian Control of Indian Education,’ I am delighted to see this initiative take shape.”

— Ghislain Picard, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL)

“It is exceptional to think that, in my lifetime, I will see graduates of the House of Knowledge. This project is in line with the FNEC’s desire and vision of empowering First Peoples in their education and promoting lifelong learning. The agreement signed today is a significant step toward achieving this objective. I would like to thank the partner institutions for their collaboration and their enthusiasm in contributing to this innovative model.”

— Denis Gros-Louis, Director General of the First Nations Education Council

### **About the First Nations Education Council**

The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) is an association made up of 22 First Nations in Quebec that has been working for more than 40 years toward the recognition of First Nations right to exercise full control over their education through the establishment of a complete educational system, equipped with the necessary resources that are designed and managed based on their values and cultures. Excellence, school success, cultural pride, and control of education by and for First Nations are at the heart of its mission.

### **About the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador**

The AFNQL was created in 1985. It is composed of the Assembly of Chiefs and an administrative office. The Assembly is composed of the Chiefs of the 43 First Nations communities located in Quebec and Labrador and represents a total of 10 nations: Abenaki, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Maliseet, Mi’gmaq, Innu Mohawk and Naskapi.

### **About the House of Knowledge**

Created by and for First Peoples, in partnership with higher education institutions, the House of Knowledge is a large-scale, innovative, and collaborative project focused on the needs of communities and their students and future students. It wishes to offer a physical and digital space for flexible teaching, training, research and support for students, all in a culturally safe context.

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**Source:** First Nations Education Council (FNEC)

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