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WEMOTACI: POSITIVE TRANSFER EXPERIENCE OF THE EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPED IN LAC-SIMON

As part of this report, Ms. Céline Auclair, Executive Director of the First Peoples Innovation Center (FPIC), discussed with us the successful experience of academic entrepreneurship model developed in Amik-Wiche High School, in Lac-Simon. Winner of numerous awards, this project called Ateliers P+C=R (Persévérance + Compétence = Réussite—Perseverance + Skills = Success) emerges as a successful model which might be of benefit to many communities. Wemotaci's Nikanik High School is the first school to import this educational entrepreneurship model promoting school perseverance of Aboriginal students. This model was presented during the first Convention on Perseverance and Academic Achievement for First Peoples at Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC). In this interview, the original project outlines are first exposed; they then lead to the terms surrounding its transfer to Nikanik School and the results observed in the community of Wemotaci. An insight on the future prospects of the model concludes the interview.

Initially, how did the idea of transferring this educational model emerge?

To answer this question, we must analyze and understand the educational entrepreneurship project implemented in Amik-Wiche School in Lac-Simon; a project amply rewarded on local, provincial and national scenes. We must also acknowledge the genius of the P+C=R model initiators who combi-

ned efforts in school perseverance and practical needs of the community because it is primarily this feat that caught the CPIC's attention.

Educational entrepreneurship within Aboriginal communities evolves with them and responds tangible needs.

First, it is important to emphasize the difficulty in school perseverance among Aboriginal youth, for whom the Western system of education does not conform to the transmission modes of Aboriginal traditions: one teacher for 30 students, it does not reflect First Peoples' practices over the millennia. The educational model was in fact reversed: 30 teachers were available for one child; the whole community contributed to his learning, in everyday life with its evolving realities rather than a closed class with prescribed modules that often escape the reality of autochthonous lifestyles. Consequently, high school dropout rates increased among First Nations. The path that leads to the end of high school

this real market where the Native community has many unmet needs particularly due to its isolation, the students get contracts from the school, band council, members of the community and even from regional businesses. These students learn to multiply, to measure, to extrapolate, to write and to present, and do so through their business and for real clients. The report to school has become quite different. The program which initially targeted second-cycle secondary is now available to special education programs.



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What are the educational intentions surrounding the educational entrepreneurship model?

As a source of motivation for students, the program primarily aims to increase the graduation rate. Experiencing success also has the effect of increasing their self-esteem. Conducive project-based learning, this program also allows to combine the realities of school with those of work. Moreover, the educational entrepreneurship model opens a window on the avenues offered by post-secondary education, such as finance, management, cooking, carpentry, and mechanics. It thus enables the student to grow and to plan for the future.

What are the admission requirements for the program?

To be considered for this program, students must commit to the two rules of success in FPT:

- 1) Have less than 5% of absences and unmotivated delays during the school year;
- 2) Actively participate in all the financing activities of the Entrepreneurship Committee.

At the end of the school year, FPT students who met the two rules of success are entitled to travel abroad from the profits generated by the project. And it is the students themselves who choose the destination!

What positive effects have been seen in Lac-Simon as a result of the implementation of the educational entrepreneurship model?

The statistics are proving very encouraging in this regard. While barely five years ago, only 10% of students were pursuing post-secondary education in 2015, it is more than 57% of graduates of Amik-Wiche School who started post-secondary studies, driven by confidence they have developed through this experience. Motivation, commitment and desire to succeed of students are greatly stimulated through this project which has a global impact on school, family and community life.

How was the FPIC collaboration with Amik-Wiche School initiated?

With its media outreach and the many awards won, the Amik-Wiche educational entrepreneurship model attracted a lot of attention and other communities are interested in it. The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) even accompanied several representatives from various schools in the Lac-Simon community to meet the Program representatives. The committee quickly found itself overwhelmed by the demand and that is when we provided assistance.

A few years ago, the FPIC was participating in a conference in Quebec during which I was introduced to the model, which corresponded exactly to the role that our organization hopes to play in communities. Indeed, one of our mandates is to highlight successful models coming from different Aboriginal communities and to support their transfer to the communities interested. Given its strong conclusive results, the P+C=R project became very interesting to us. Pragmatic and contextualized, this approach holds, according to us, a real potential to propel school perseverance of Aboriginal youth which, as we know, remains below their actual potential. We contacted the Amik-Wiche School interveners to offer them our support and express our willingness to accompany them in propagation of

the model. At this pivotal moment, the requests for the model's transfer were beginning to be numerous, which had become demanding for the P+C=R team that go into communities to present the project and welcomed the group in its school. The FPIC then offered to support the P+C=R team by writing a guide and accompanying tools that enable school principals and teachers to understand the nature of the project and to plan its adaptation to their environment. Observation visits at Amik-Wiche School would then be more profitable; follow-up would then be less demanding for the P+C=R team.

Do you use educational tools or other to transfer the model?

Considering the high demand for the model and to facilitate its implementation, the position of FPIC was immediately not to get involved in piece-by-piece accompaniment. Instead, we explored with experts in transfer of knowledge, how we can build an accompanying guide and a toolkit making possible the development of a portability framework that would apply to each of the communities interested in the model.

Thus, we work at the development of a knowledge transfer guide for educational entrepreneurship in Aboriginal communities. In producing this guide and application tools that will soon be made public, we also consult experts in Aboriginal education and academic entrepreneurship. Then, from a dense scientific material, we are popularizing the project to extract its essence, to make it accessible to stakeholders. The CTREQ (Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative du Québec— Quebec Transfer Centre for Educational Success) is working with us to coordinate the scientific part; Diane Marie Campeau, an expert in Aboriginal education, ensures that the project complies with the spirit and scope of this pedagogy.

In respect of Aboriginal modes of acquisition and transfer of knowledge, the guide and its tools will be accompanied by visuals and video capsules describing all components of the P+C=R model. By way of integration and in a spirit of continuous improvement, we intend to conduct a follow-up of implementations of Amik-Wiche model within the various communities to document processes and integrate lessons learned. The Amik-Wiche model guide and implementation tools cover the commitment and involvement of the following actors: the school's teaching staff (the main courses involved are French, Mathematics, English and Entrepreneurship), the school administrators, the band council and its educational services, and the parents' committee. This guide will be facilitating in that it will give more autonomy to importing schools in the implementation of the model. Nevertheless, support remains in our opinion the key to the success of the model's import, as it allows you to truly ease the task of interveners who find themselves overloaded.

Did the will to implement the project come from Wemotaci's Nikanik School or was the idea proposed by the FPIC?

Over time, different communities have shown interest in this model. The first community to engage in educational entrepreneurship project is Nikanik High School, in Wemotaci. Note, however, that the transfer of knowledge does not correspond to copies of the original model. It is rather to be inspired by it and to take ownership of it. While writing the guide, we realized that ownership by another community is a key factor to success. In Wemotaci for example, acknowledging the paternity of the model of Lac-Simon, Nikanik School was able to take into account the particularities of its community to develop a new model, the Wemotaci model, which guarantees its uniqueness and, by extension, its success!

Which actors were initially involved in the export initiative of the model?

At Lac-Simon, the whole school team and several European institutions contribute to this unifying project. Among the leading actors, M. Patrick Binette, a high-school teacher, M. Dave Lefebvre, Director of Amik-Wiche School, were the resource persons to guide us in our efforts. At Nikanik school, the principal, Mr. Pascal Sasseville-Quoquochi, and the Deputy Director, Mr. Guy Bourassa, form the team that carries this initiative within the Wemotaci community. Apart from these, all school staff and several community members are also involved in this major project.

In this real market where the Native community has many unmet needs particularly due to its isolation, the students get contracts from the school, band council, members of the community and even from regional businesses. These students learn to multiply, to measure, to extrapolate, to write and to present, and do so through their business and for real clients. The report to school has become quite different. The program which initially targeted second-cycle secondary is now available to special education programs.

Who did the implementation and adaptation of the P+C=R model go in Wemotaci? Were the needs different from those of Lac-Simon

The reality is different, certainly, or rather the community has prioritized differently needs in Wemotaci. For this community, the landscaping proved to be a priority. The shared desire to beautify the environment has become one of the main orientations of the project which rallied everyone into ac-

tion. Moreover, as this is a real market rooted in the needs of the community and that it is not artificial, students become true entrepreneurs and the fruit of their efforts is palpable and rewarding. The catering service and carpentry workshop are, with landscaping, the orientations of the Wemotaci model.

What were the main results of the first export experience of the model in another community?

One of the priorities is to recognize the important contribution of Amik-Wiche School of Lac-Simon, which was very successful with respect to increasing the graduation rate after implementation of the educational entrepreneurship project. This success is the backbone of school perseverance for our youth and motivation for the school team, which devotes considerable time to this approach. For the Wemotaci community, it is certain that, although still fragmented, the results are also positive. We note, among others, that to participate in such a concrete and significant project significantly increases the sense of responsibility and autonomy of the students involved. This has an impact on their sense of competence, their self-esteem and, consequently, their school perseverance. With the landscaping project, the environment literally flourished under the community's eyes who is very pleased to have taken part in this adventure and who wishes to continue to develop educational entrepreneurship in its image.

In conclusion, how do you see the future prospects of the model fostering school perseverance of Lac-Simon in Aboriginal communities?

Certainly, such an initiative requires the mobilization of many human and material resources which may bring their share of complications. The guide and the tools that are being developed by the FPIC and its collaborators, with the help of ambassadors of the educational entrepreneurship model in Aboriginal communities, aim to release Amik-Wiche School and to facilitate the implementation process in other Aboriginal schools. We are confident that the many benefits of this model outweigh the efforts that are sometimes imposed by the integration of a new pedagogical orientation.

With the successes achieved in Amik-Wiche School, we believe that schools elsewhere will have no trouble

