
PEKUAKAMIULNUATSH-SPECIFIC CULTURAL CONTENTS



Nathalie Larouche, Director of Student Services, Pekuakamiulnuatsh Takuhikan

Claudie Robertson, Program Developer, Pekuakamiulnuatsh Takuhikan

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Since the taking over of education in 1980, many initiatives have been implemented in the schools of Mashteuiatsh to ensure that they are a stimulating environment, allowing the culture to subsist and be transmitted on a daily basis.

In the 1990s, teachers developed lessons and activities to transmit knowledge about the history and culture of the Pekuakamiulnuatsh.

These contents, although rich, presented no common thread, no tie between the learning cycles. This observation made us think. We had to review our way of operating methods to preserve our culture—the foundation of our identity.

Therefore, after a few years making various attempts, we adopted in 2006 a mode of organization, which was a determining factor in the success of our project. We have established a pedagogical committee that has implemented a structure and strategies for developing a viable program of language and cultural skills.

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At the same time, the implementation of the Quebec school reform provided favourable conditions for the integration of cultural content into the *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise (PFEQ)*. Indeed, the education sector has seized this opportunity and we have had the will not only to transmit specific knowledge, but also to develop competent young people, strong in their identity and their sense of belonging to the Nation. We therefore wish to train a succession of carriers and transmitters of this knowledge and skills who will be keen in preserving their culture.

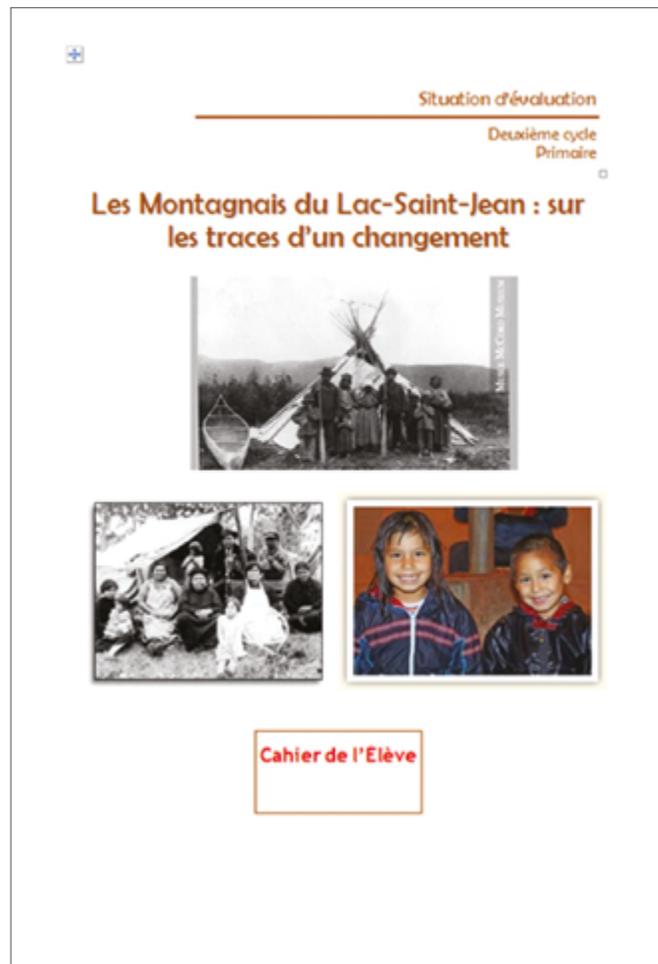
To do this, the committee, made up of pedagogical advisers, analyst-researcher and program designer has taken a step, a plan to carry out this work. It first analyzed existing programs to find that our First Nation is poorly represented in Quebec programs. Subsequently, this committee has identified writings on various themes and has selected content to share with our youth. The last step was the integration of these contents into the training programs. Considering that the priority was to transmit material dealing with the history of the Pekuakamiulnuatsh, it was decided to first insert contents containing our history in the Social Sciences. The clientele targeted by this project was at the level of the 2nd and 3rd cycles of primary school. At the same time, the material was developed for the first cycle of secondary school.

For example, it was decided to introduce the Mashteuiatsh Ilnus instead of the Iroquois. The first module developed by the pedagogical committee proposes the society of Pekuakamiulnuatsh around 1800, under the theme "The Montagnais of Lac-Saint-Jean from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, in the wake of change." Provided to elementary students, this module helps them understand the

changes that have occurred, and the reasons for these changes, which have influenced our way of life. Concretely, it locates the territory and the time in addition to addressing the major themes, such as those of colonization, the population and the causes of its demographic decline, life on the reserve, and traditions and beliefs. At the secondary level, primarily at the first cycle, the program addresses two main themes: social organization and decision-making. In Secondary II, we learn the impact of the arrival of Europeans and what was happening on the territory of the Pekuakamiulnuatsh. The development of the "ability to read the organization of a society on its own territory" (ministère de l'Éducation, 2006) is one of our priorities. Young people are therefore working on the elements of the Quebec school curriculum incorporating the specific content of the Pekuakamiulnuatsh. Young people can see and "interpret the changes that occur over time" or "compare social organizations" in our community, but also at the global level.

The second priority was the integration of cultural content into Ethics and Religious Culture. The Pekuakamiulnuatsh have rich traditions and beliefs in the religious field. Still according to the method of work adopted by the pedagogical committee, material was created. It includes festivals, gatherings, *teuehikan*, knowledge of nature and animals, religious heritage, rituals and ceremonies, etc. In high school, we consider as subjects our religious traditions and the establishment of our institutions. Students have the opportunity to learn religious elements of the world, of Quebec and of our Nation.

The purpose of this transmission of knowledge is also to enable young people to concretize the concepts learned in class. At the same time, cultural knowledge dealing with the way of life in the territory was developed. This integration of knowledge provides high-school students (1 to 5) with a multitude of experiences of life in the territory during their schooling. Young people have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills. There is an increase in self-esteem—they feel valued. The learning becomes meaningful and that is very motivating.





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