INRS UQAT

JOINT RESEARCH UNIT
INRS-UQAT IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES

EVENT SYNTHESIS

REPORT

The Future of Research with Indigenous Peoples:
Co-constructing a Common Vision at the INRS-UQAT Joint Research Unit in Indigenous Studies

November 21-22, 2024
UQAT First Peoples Pavilion
Val-d'Or

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CONTEXT

In March 2021, the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) and the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS) combined their expertise and consolidated their collaboration to create the **INRS-UQAT Joint Research Unit in Indigenous Studies** (JRU). By creating this space for intellectual, inter-institutional and multidisciplinary collaboration, where Indigenous voices and knowledge can be expressed and heard, the INRS-UQAT Joint Research Unit in Indigenous Studies highlights the contribution of Indigenous peoples to education, academic research and science, and promotes interactive, ethical and socially relevant research practices with First Nations and Inuit actors as well as with Indigenous entities working in Quebec and its various regions.

It is in this spirit that, on 21 and 22 November 2024, the first collective meeting was held at the UQAT First Peoples Pavilion between INRS and UQAT professors who are members of the JRU and different Indigenous partners with whom they work. Students and representatives from various bodies at both institutions were also invited to attend. The event was organized with a shared desire to transform relations between the academic world and the Indigenous world to highlight the dialogue between Indigenous and scientific knowledge. It was also an opportunity to listen to Indigenous partners to guide the JRU's activities and practices. The meeting therefore allowed Indigenous partners to share their understanding and perception of the relevance of a scientific program for the JRU.

This report presents the various stakeholders involved in the process, as well as the key topics discussed during the two-day meeting. It concludes with the presentation of the guiding principles of the JRU, which emerged directly from the exchanges and discussions that took place throughout the event.

Acknowledgments

The committee wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the organization of this first event, which is essential to the continuation and development of the JRU's work.

“Today I feel truly important

NORMAN KISTABISH

“Revitalisation honours the memory of ancestors and restores it”

RICHARD EJINAGOSI KISTABISH

« Memory comes before knowledge »

LINDA SHECAPIO

ATTENDEES

This first gathering brought together at least 57 people, including professors, students, and members of the administrative staff of the INRS and UQAT, as well as Indigenous partners.

JRU management committee

Ioana Radu, *Professor, UQAT*

Marie-Ève Drouin Gagné, *Professor, INRS*

Mireille De La Sablonnière-Griffin, *Professor, INRS*

Sébastien Brodeur-Girard, *Professor, UQAT*

UQAT

PROFESSORS

Hugo Asselin
Suzy Basile
Benoit Éthier
Francis Lévesque

STUDENTS

Adam Archambault, *doctoral student*
Philippe Nadon, *doctoral student*
Emmanuelle Piedboeuf, *doctoral student*
Linda Shecapio, *master's studen*
Myriam Trudel, *master's studen*

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

Louis Imbeau, *Vice-Chancellor of Research and Creation*
Vincent Rousson, *President*

UQAT
UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC
EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

INRS
Institut national
de la recherche
scientifique

INRS

PROFESSORS

Stéphane Guimont Marceau
Carole Lévesque
Magalie Quintal-Marineau
Sophie Van Neste
Nancy Wiscutie-Crépeau

STUDENTS

Virginie Attard, *doctoral student*
Augustine Charbonneau, *master's student*
Léa Denieul Pinsky, *postdoctoral researcher*
Emma Fauteaux-Giguère, *master's student*
Sarah Fontier, *master's student*
Marie-Dominik Langlois, *postdoctoral researcher*
Karianne Martel, *master's student*

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

Véronique Bourget, *Partnership advisor, UCS Centre*
Marie-Soleil Cloutier, *Director of the UCS Centre*
Luc-Alain Giraldeau, *Chief Executive Officer*
Gabriel Joyal, *Interim Scientific Director*
Simon-Pierre Pouliot, *Director of Cabinet and Government Relation*
Marie-Claude Proulx, *Coordinator of the Ethics Committee on Research Involving Humans*
Héloïse Roy, *Head of Academic and Faculty Affairs, UCS Centre*

Partners

VAL-D'OR NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre is an urban service hub, a living environment and a cultural anchor for First Peoples. Dedicated to well-being, justice and social inclusion, it promotes harmonious coexistence in its community

Stéphane Laroche, *Director of Strategic and Organisational Development*

LE CENTRE D'ENTRAIDE ET D'AMITIÉ AUTOCHTONE DE SENNETERRE (CEAAS)

The Centre d'Entraide et d'Amitié Autochtone de Senneterre (CEAAS) is a non-profit organisation that provides services to Indigenous children, teenagers, adults and elders who live in or are visiting Senneterre.

Ève Custeau-Wiscutie, *Youth and Education Coordinator*

YOUTH RESEARCH NETWORK CHAIR OF QUEBEC – INDIGENOUS STREAM

The Indigenous Youth stream prioritises research based on the needs identified in the Indigenous youth strategies of the umbrella organisations of the Cree National Youth Council, the Quebec Native Women's Association, the Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), the Youth Network of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), and the Inuit Quarjuit Council. It also supports collaborative research by its 22 co-researchers and partners

Carole Bérubé-Therrien, *Projet manager*

Alicia Ibarra-Lemay, *Research Assistant*

AMIK OZO COMMITTEE

The Amik Ozo Committee is actively engaged in revitalising the Anicinape language and preserving the memories of the Elders

Maureen Papatie, *Teacher*

Pierre Papatie, *Elder*

FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION (FNQLHSSC)

The FNQLHSSC is an arm of the AFNQL whose mission is to support First Nations in Quebec in achieving their goals in terms of health, wellbeing, culture and self-determination.

Patricia Montambault, *Research Officer*

KITCISAKIK COMMUNITY

Kitcisakik is an Anicinape community with a population of 257.

Kigos Papatie, *Filmmaker*

PIKOGAN COMMUNITY

Pikogan is an Indigenous community of the Abitibiwinni First Nation with a population of 600.

Alice Jerome
Norman Kistabish
Emily Mowatt
all Elders of the community

CREE NATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE PROJECT – CREE NATION GOVERNMENT

The Cree Nation Research Institute (CNRI) is an initiative of the Cree Nation Government (Eeyou Istchee) aimed at overseeing research on their territory and protecting Eeyou knowledge.

Vincent Gautier-Doucet, *Anthropologist and Manager of the Cree Nation Research Institute*

GRAND COUNCIL OF THE W8BANAKI NATION - THE NDAKINA OFFICE

The Ndakina Office of W8banaki represents and supports the Abenaki Councils of Odanak and Wôlinak in matters of affirmation, consultations and land claims, as well as environment and climate change adaptation.

Myriam Landry, *Research Assistant*

TSHAKAPESH INSTITUTE

The Tshakapesh Institute, serving member communities and the Innu Nation, works to preserve and promote Innu-aitun (Innu culture) and Innu-aimun (Innu language)

Éva-Marie Nadon Legault, *Heritage Research Coordinator*

MINO OBIGIWASIN

Mino Obigiwasin is an Anicinape organisation that was established to provide services to children, families and its population following an agreement signed with CISSSAT on youth protection management for the four Anicinape communities of Kitcisakik, Lac Simon, Pikogan (Abitibiwinni) and Long Point (Winneway).

Pascale Josée Binette, *Information Officer and Facilitator*

Éric Dessureault, *Development and Practice Support Officer*

Alex Cheezo, *Social Worker*

MINWASHIN

At the heart of Anicinape AKI, Minwashin is a non-profit cultural organisation whose mission is to support, develop and celebrate Anicinape arts, language and culture.

Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish, *President*

Caroline Lemire, *Director*

NINSHIIYUU MIYUPIMAATISIIUUN

Nishiiyuu refers to future generations of the Eeyou and Eenou people. The Nishiiyuu Miyupimaatisiiun organisation ensures that Eeyou and Eenou knowledge and values are reflected in health services. It also provides healing services and programs on the lan.

Heather House, *President*

OBSERVATORY OF URBAN INDIGENOUS REALITIES OF THE REGROUPEMENT DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ AUTOCHTONE DU QUÉBEC (RCAAQ)

The RCAAQ is the provincial association of Indigenous Friendship Centres that has been advocating for the rights and interests of Indigenous citizens in Quebec cities for the past 45 years. In December 2022, it created the Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities to collect data and disseminate information on urban indigenousness, in particular through research conducted by, for and with Indigenous peoples, in their interest

Ariane Desjardins, *Research Coordinator*

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The Indigenous Knowledge and Education Partnership is the result of collaboration between various Indigenous communities and academic institutions. Led by Benoit Éthier, it grew out of initiatives driven by Indigenous leaders, researchers, and activists committed to the decolonisation of education.

Rolando Iván Magaña Canul, *Anthropologis*

MAMAWI MIKIMODAN SERVICE

The Mamawi Mikimodan service, which means 'doing together' in Anicinapemowin, is part of the UQAT administration. It aims to support reconciliation within the university through education and dialogue, working in consultation with First Nations and Inuit communities.

Janet Mark, *Strategic Advisor on Reconciliation and Indigenous Education*

Frédérique Cornellier, *Indigenous Project Development Advisor*

Suzie Ratté, *Indigenous Relations Advisor and Liaison Officer*

OPENING REMARKS

Maureen and Pierre Papatie

"Every time I come to perform ceremonies, it gives me strength"

PIERRE PAPATIE

Maureen and Pierre Papatie, from the Anicinape community of Lac Simon, conducted the opening ceremony and shared their thoughts with the attendees.

Maureen, an Anicinabemowin language pedagogical counsellor and former UQAT student, spoke about the importance of language and cultural transmission in her life. She recounted how she was a very shy Anicinape in her youth. However, through the support she received, she learned to assert herself, overcome her shyness and spread her wings. Her father, Pierre, was a student at the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school for four years. Despite this difficult experience, he is extremely proud to still be able to speak his language, a heritage he continues to preserve and pass on with great pride.

Figure 1: Presentation by Maureen and Pierre Papatie.

The Amik Ozo Committee, to which they belong, means 'beaver tail.' This committee is actively working to revitalize the Anicinape language and preserve the memories of the Elders. The beaver, a powerful symbol in Anicinape culture, reacts to any threat by slapping its tail to warn of danger, a gesture that reflects vigilance and protection. In line with their mission, the committee has worked on bringing back the greeting 'Pojo' instead of "Kwe" in the Lac-Simon community. This term means 'Hello,' but it also has a deeper meaning related to 'pojok,' which means 'to reach out' in a gesture of respectful greeting.

Like the vigilant gesture of the beaver and the inviting gesture associated with 'pojo,' the partners in attendance called on researchers to be vigilant, so that future research practices implemented by the JRU respect Indigenous principles and rest on shared values.

Pierre and Maureen expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to be present and share their experiences on these subjects, which are very dear to their hearts.

Figure 2: Closing ceremony conducted by Maureen and Pierre Papatie; Linda Shecapio appears in the background.

PRESENTING THE JRU : A HISTORIC AND INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION

***Carole Lévesque** is an anthropologist specializing in Indigenous matters, working at the Urbanisation Culture Société Research Centre at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS). For over 40 years, she has devoted her career to working closely with Indigenous communities in Quebec and elsewhere..*

***Hugo Asselin** is a full professor and director of the School of Indigenous Studies at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT). He also holds the Desjardins Chair for Small Community Development since 2020.*

Figure 3: Presentation by Carole Lévesque and Hugo Asselin.

Professors Carole Lévesque and Hugo Asselin, who were members of the Joint Research Unit (JRU) implementation committee, spoke to introduce the JRU implementation process to Indigenous partners. They presented an overview of the historical milestones in Indigenous studies in Quebec that led to the creation of the JRU. They also mentioned that INRS and UQAT, which have been collaborating for more than two decades, will offer master's and doctoral programs in Indigenous studies in French starting in the fall of 2025 - a first in Quebec and Canada. The JRU consolidates the partnership between UQAT and INRS by formalizing it in a joint structure.

The objective of the JRU is to establish Abitibi-Témiscamingue as a hub of excellence in research on Indigenous matters, such as education, land, self-determination, revitalization of Indigenous languages, and contemporary urbanity, by promoting the co-construction of knowledge that will benefit all of Quebec.

The spirit of the JRU embodies a convergence between the expertise and interests of faculty members and members of Indigenous communities and organizations. It aims to provide a space for reflection and innovation where various scientific and Indigenous knowledge intersect. This new collaborative space is based on essential values: respect, equity, sharing, reciprocity and trust, in line with Indigenous principles (Table 1). The transmission of Indigenous and scientific knowledge contributes to creating inclusive and collaborative research.

Table 1: Description of the JRU's values

RESPECT	Respect is based on the full recognition of each person's knowledge and expertise, whether scientific, indigenous, spiritual or experiential.
EQUITY	Equity is reflected in the need to take into account and to value each person's respective contribution to collective production in the form of research papers, collections of texts, lectures, or scientific articles.
SHARING	Sharing highlights the importance of combining our experiences and expertise, and increasing opportunities to meet, exchange ideas and learn by providing an environment in which everyone has a voice.
RECIPROCITY	Reciprocity reflects belonging to a collective project, the benefits and results of which are collective, have positive repercussions in both academic and indigenous circles, and take on different written, oral, or artistic forms.
TRUST	Trust is embodied in the desire to contribute to maintaining at all times the quality of relationships and connections established through activities and initiatives.

This alliance represents both the culmination of a long history and a starting point for new research prospects. However, for this new start, it is important to consider Indigenous perspectives on research.

ANICINAPE PERSPECTIVE ON RESEARCH

Following the official presentation of the JRU, Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish, Anicinape from Pikogan, was invited to open the discussion on research in Indigenous communities. He shared his perspective on research as an Anicinape .

"Let us honor our ancestors and their memory, and repair what has been broken"

Figure 4: Presentation by Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish

Known as "Ejinagosi," meaning "the storyteller," he spent ten years at the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery residential school. A former Chief of Pikogan, he also initiated the idea of bringing the school back into the community so that children could remain there. He is one of the co-founders of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre.

Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish served as the North American representative to UNESCO's global working group for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The transmission of language and culture is of paramount importance to him.

Research: what does it mean to the Anicinapek?

"To have been able to live here for 10,000 years, our ancestors had to do research to understand what the land holds."

For Richard Ejinagosi, his ancestors were constantly researching, which meant trying, experimenting and bringing things to life. To live on the land for more than 10,000 years, this was necessary. He believes that harmonizing one's relationship with the land meant understanding its components. He explains that as Anicinape, when you go into the woods, you become Anicinape, you become human, you become what you are meant to be. However, when you are placed in institutions, you forget these essential values and they disappear.

Institutions and their values have disrupted the transmission, use and preservation of knowledge. Today, we are confronted with new words (decolonization, reconciliation, revitalization, etc.), but they do not always make sense. In Anicinapemowin, 'revitalization' (and 'reconciliation') could instead mean: «Let us honor our ancestors and their memory, and repair what has been broken».

We often talk about rights (territorial, linguistic, legal, etc.), but it is even more important to focus on the responsibilities, duties and obligations of individuals and their institutions. We urgently need to shift our focus towards indigenous knowledge, after having given too much space to non-indigenous knowledge.

The notions of time and space must also be revised. In several indigenous cultures, these two concepts form a whole. This makes it difficult to formalize them in administrative documents. It is necessary to unify them so that the results are satisfactory for indigenous peoples. Kigos (Kevin) Papatie proposed the word 'natakenidan', meaning 'I seek to know', to describe research. The discussion invites us to focus on how we seek knowledge, rather than what we seek to know.

Fire: a guiding principle in research

Richard Ejinagosi emphasized the importance of fire, one of the four elements (fire, earth, water, air), as a symbol of balance. When the First Peoples Pavilion at UQAT in Val-d'Or was created, he mentioned the importance of integrating this element into the space, but it remains difficult to make room for it in our institutions. Today, fire sometimes arouses fear because the beneficial connection with fire has been lost. Yet it is a powerful symbol for research, as a guiding principle. How can we use fire to go beyond the subject of research and conduct research in an appropriate manner? Territory and language are not only objects of study, but also bearers of knowledge. Fire symbolizes movement, employment, home and the freedom to exercise one's responsibilities. It represents the constant search for balance between all elements. When individuals are deprived of this responsibility, their individual and collective health suffers. When all the elements are in place, the essential conditions for true balance and the transmission of values are recreated.

DISCUSSION WORKSHOPS

Following Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish's speech, the participants were invited to engage in a dialogue on research in Indigenous contexts. This dialogue took the form of a discussion workshop, where several small groups were formed, each consisting of students, Indigenous partners, professors, and university administrators, so that the participants could exchange ideas and reflect on two questions: What does research mean to you? What are your priorities and aspirations in terms of research? Following the group discussions, each group presented the main points of their conversations to all participants. After the group discussions, the ideas shared were presented to all participants. The themes that emerged are reflected in the word cloud below. From these words, five key themes arose from the conversations: a vision of research rooted in the values, needs, and aspirations of communities; respectful and innovative methodological approaches; the importance of relationships and co-creation; the valuing of knowledge, its transmission, and the democratization of research; as well as the responsibility of research teams and institutions in their practices and commitments. These themes are described in greater detail below.

Figure 5 : Word cloud illustrating the themes discussed during the workshops

A vision rooted in the values and needs of communities

Research must be transformational and inspired by the Anicinape vision (or other Indigenous visions) to continually seek to improve the living conditions ofcommunities and be locally rooted. The purpose is to be useful and respond to the real needs of communities, by achieving concrete and tangible results. It must serve as a catalyst for action, favoring processes suited to local realities, including language. Decolonization is a central objective: it is about moving away from the colonial framework and embracing the circle (Indigenous vision) rather than conforming to the square (Western vision). The relationship between these visions, just as when a circle and a square are superimposed, implies a space of inadequacy that must be respected and make room for an ethical space of relationship and work.

Respectful and innovative methodological approaches

In this ethical space of relationships and work, research must respect the cultural and territorial cycles of communities, considering their rhythm and space-time. For example, it is important to avoid fieldwork during periods such as hunting season. It is also essential to favor appropriate practices, such as participatory workshops followed by individual interviews. Listening must be a priority, and spaces for dialogue must be created to identify needs and prioritize topics relevant to communities. In addition, it is important to respect Indigenous research principles, such as the principles of OCAP®1. These principles affirm that First Nations exercise control over data collection processes and retain ownership and authority over how information is used. Finally, we must value research processes rather than focus solely on results. Research must be participatory and collaborative.

Figure 6 : Linda Shecapio presents the discussions and reflections of her group.

Relationships and co-creation at the heart of the process

Research is a relational process that involves deepening ties with communities. It must be collaborative, involving co-creation at all stages, and foster lasting alliances that go beyond simple partnerships. It must enable us to “mov[e] forward in a good way together” (Group 4).

Working together means recognizing and valuing transgenerational voices, both those of young people and elders. This commitment must be balanced, with knowledge exchange taking place on an equal footing, along with increased reciprocity and transparency at all stages of research, including during data collection and the dissemination and mobilization of results.

1 - First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession: **https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/**

Figure 7 : Comments from one of the groups during the discussion workshops

Ways of knowing, transmission and democratization of research

Research is an act of transmission: it is akin to storytelling, while consolidating knowledge that is sometimes diffuse or abstract. Democratizing research is essential by integrating non-academic forms and community narratives. This involves rediscovering practices that were disrupted by colonialism, while innovating to respond to contemporary challenges. The territory, as an anchor point, is central to the entire process. Temporality is important: respecting Indigenous values also means taking the time and ensuring transfer to future generations. Thus, research must fuel dialogue, contribute to lasting transformations of colonial frameworks based on Indigenous knowledge, and serve as a tool for intergenerational transmission of Indigenous ways of knowing.

Responsibilities of research teams and institutions

Researchers must engage in ongoing introspection by continually asking themselves the following question: Who and what does this research serve? They must avoid the over-solicitation of communities and work together to untangle challenges and overcome obstacles that hinder collaborative research. The discussions highlighted the important role of institutions in revising regulations to better support Indigenous partners. In addition, participants emphasized the need to increase the number of Indigenous students. For example, one initiative could involve improving networking opportunities and the flow of information among Indigenous graduate students at the master's and doctoral levels. Such an initiative would help foster a more welcoming environment and reduce the sense of isolation that some students may experience in their academic journeys.

PARTNERS' VISIONS OF RESEARCH

To illustrate the implementation of the research principles expressed during the discussion workshop, it seemed essential to hear from Indigenous organizations on how they conduct research. The event was intended to be a space for reflection and dialogue on the meaning of research for Indigenous partners. For this reason, it closed with the attending partners sharing their visions of good research practices, thereby helping to lay the foundations for the JRU's operations. This section details the partners' contributions and summarizes the concerns and priorities expressed.

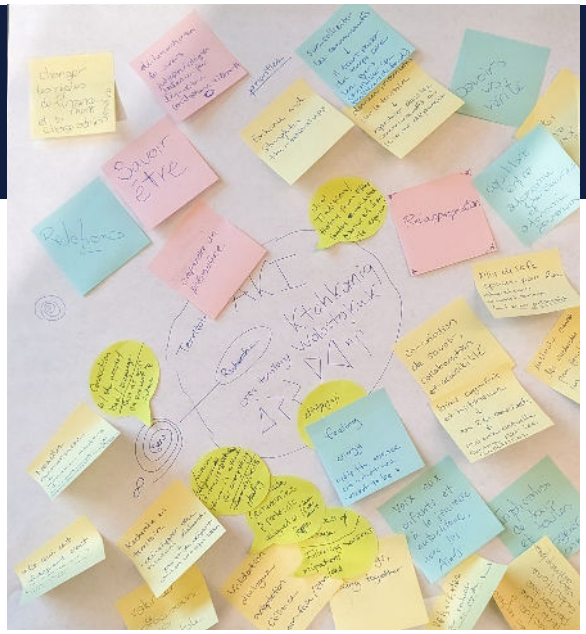

Figure 8 : Comments from one of the groups during the discussion workshops.

Cree Nation Research Institute Project : Cree Nation Government

Vincent Gautier-Doucet presented the Cree Research Governance vision, which emphasizes data management and the promotion of research aligned with local priorities. This initiative, led by Deputy Grand Chief of the Cree Nation Norman Wapachee, reflects a collective and concerted approach to research.

In 2022, the Cree Nation Government established a working group to conduct an internal consultation process, followed by consultations with Cree communities, band councils and regional Cree organizations. This rigorous process culminated in a forum in March 2024, where proposals for a mandate were validated to create a Research Governance Centre.

This initiative led to the meeting of an advisory committee in Val-d'Or, followed by the formation of an independent pilot committee of the Cree Nation Government. This Research Governance Centre has three main mandates:

1. **Review of research projects:** Develop a rigorous review system to ensure that projects meet community priorities and respect Cree governance principles.

2. **Governance and access to data:** Set up an online portal allowing researchers to register and consult existing projects, thereby avoiding duplications. Also develop a toolkit to ensure data transparency and accessibility while respecting Cree data sovereignty

3. **Research capacity building:** Identify local priorities, support Cree students, and encourage the training of Indigenous researchers. Promote partnerships that strengthen research capacity in the region.

This Centre embodies a collective vision of research, rooted in the needs and aspirations of Cree communities, while fostering autonomy and the development of local expertise.

Tshakapesh Institute

Èva-Marie Nadon Legault presented the Tshakapesh Institute's new "Heritage Research" initiative, which aims to inventory, collect and promote Innu heritage. This project seeks to paint a complete picture of Innu objects preserved in museums and archive centers around the world, as well as in the communities themselves, to catalogue objects and archives relating to Innu communities. One of the ongoing projects involves visiting communities and offering on-site digitization services to facilitate the preservation of local archives. Additionally, collaboration with external institutions, such as the National Museum of the American Indian, one of the Smithsonian Institution's museums, has made it possible to obtain copies of archives, including collections of photographs. During visits, communities are invited to participate by identifying the people in these photographs, thus promoting a collective reappropriation of history. Photo projections have also been held to encourage intergenerational exchanges and strengthen community ties.

The Tshakapesh Institute is also working to develop a digital platform dedicated to Innu heritage, with the aim of preserving and centralizing archives without necessarily making them publicly available. This approach safeguards collective memory while leaving it up to communities to decide how they wish to honor their heritage.

To support these initiatives, training is offered to cultural officers and community members, particularly on the conservation and local valorization of heritage.

At the same time, a major project is underway to collect the ancient words of the land through close collaboration with elders to preserve and pass on linguistic and cultural knowledge. Documenting this knowledge is both necessary and urgent. To engage younger generations, the Institute is also exploring innovative ways of doing this, such as using social media platforms like TikTok.

Lastly, a consultation committee made up of a representative from each community ensures the consistency and relevance of projects through a collaborative and inclusive approach.

Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities of the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec

Ariane Desjardins presented the Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities, created in 2023. Since September 2024, the team has consisted of seven people. Acknowledging the diversity of urban Indigenous communities, the Observatory works closely with Indigenous Friendship Centers and researchers.

The Observatory was born out of consultations with communities in urban areas. It is also part of the continued development of the **Research Framework by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec**. The Observatory focuses on the needs of Indigenous Friendship Centers and Indigenous peoples living in cities. Its collaborative and inclusive approach ensures that research projects respond to the priorities and concerns of these communities.

Grand Council of the W8banaki Nation: The Ndakina Office

Myriam Landry explained that requests for research projects in Odanak and Wôlinak had increased significantly. On average, the office receives a research request every two weeks, which results in an excessive workload for staff. To address this situation, a research framework was established in 2018 by a dedicated committee to assess the relevance and usefulness of submitted projects.

Despite this over-solicitation, several projects caught the attention of the office, including a book on the history of the Nation written by and for its members, as well as a comic book about fishing camp guides. Research projects related to the W8banaki Nation's land must go through the Ndakina Office. This department plays an essential role in structuring research and ensuring that the needs of the community are considered.

In addition to managing these numerous projects, supervising researchers also represents a significant workload for the office members. Moreover, the lack of respect for ethical standards by some students and researchers remains a persistent problem, which the team finds regrettable.

Indigenous Stream of the Youth Research Network Chair of Quebec

Alicia Ibarra introduced the team behind the Indigenous stream of the Youth Research Network Chair, composed of Natasha Blanchet-Cohen (co-holder), Véronique Picard, Flavie Robert-Careau, Alicia Ibarra-Lemay and Carole Bérubé-Therrien. Together with co-researchers and Indigenous organizations across Quebec, they work on projects aimed at co-creating knowledge and engaging Indigenous youth in research. Knowledge mobilization and the co-creation of various tools by and for Indigenous youth are at the core of the Chair's work. For example, it launched the collective book Les jeunesses autochtones au Québec : décolonisation, fierté et engagement (Indigenous Youth in Quebec: Decolonization, Pride and Engagement), which includes 12 chapters written by some 30 authors, many of whom are Indigenous youth. Carole Bérubé-Therrien presented several of the network's multimedia productions, including a research kit containing articles, a podcast, post-

cards and other visuals highlighting Indigenous youth perspectives on research. Eve Custeau-Wiscutie, from the Chair's advisory committee, made up of 10 Indigenous youth from various nations, spoke about the co-creation of projects with young people. She also discussed the legacy we want to pass on to young people who want to get involved in committees and highlighted the tools available online to support them in this commitment.

Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

Stéphane Laroche presented the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre and its team of approximately 75 people with the prospect of ultimately growing to 125 employees. The Friendship Centre offers a wide range of services aimed at improving the living conditions of Indigenous peoples, while constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of the community.

A specialized sub-team of 10 to 12 people is dedicated to knowledge mobilization and research innovation. This team documents the Friendship Centre's innovative initiatives and ensures that best practices are integrated to enable continuous improvement of services. The center also works in collaboration with various research partners, forming strong alliances with actors in the research community. These partnerships aim to co-construct projects at every stage, valuing Indigenous ways of knowing.

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre places great importance on Indigenous health. As such, it takes on a transformative approach and ensures continuous information monitoring with the support of Carole Lévesque. In addition, the research framework of the Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec is used daily in the center's practices. Indigenous peoples are at the core of this approach, with active and ongoing participation at every stage of the research process.

Ninshiiyuu Miyupimaatisiiuun

Heather House is president of Ninshiiyuu Miyupimaatisiiuun, a community organization of the Cree Nation of Chisasibi founded in 2014 by her late father, Larry House. This organization is dedicated to the well-being of the community and emphasizes the importance of traditional ceremonies and gatherings with Elders, which bring people together to share in informal settings.

On a personal level, Heather House emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, comparing the synergy between molecules to that which manifests itself during this gathering. She stresses the importance of finding a way to validate Indigenous oral histories, as well as rethinking research beyond conventional frameworks: "beyond the box and the circle."

Mamawi Mikimodan Service

Janet Mark, Strategic Advisor on Reconciliation and Indigenous Education and a member of the Mamawi Mikimodan Service, raised concerns regarding the discomfort experienced by graduate students due to the recurrence of similar research projects, which can create tensions with Indigenous organizations.

To address this issue, she proposed organizing a two-day consultation event bringing together 60 to 70 Indigenous participants from diverse backgrounds and sectors in order to collectively reflect on research priorities and practices. The objective would be to collectively identify the major challenges related to research conducted in Indigenous communities. This approach would enable the development of a summary document outlining the main issues and needs of these communities, while taking the time to listen to and respect Indigenous perspectives. To ensure the representativeness and diversity of participants, the creation of a selection committee is being considered. This project would offer future students and researchers a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous communities, while providing an inclusive and respectful space for dialogue.

Linda Shecapio's intervention - Cree master's student, UQAT

Figure 9 : Janet Mark during her talk

Linda emphasized the need to deconstruct preconceived ideas to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Indigenous peoples. She described the research environment as encompassing both defined boundaries and ambiguous grey areas, represented metaphorically by a circle and a box. In her view, current research structures have not yet done justice to Indigenous peoples, notably due to the disparity of processes between universities, and the prevailing siloed approaches. The deep roots of colonial power in research paradigms often lead to the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems. She advocates for the integration into existing structures of the holistic research approaches championed by Indigenous researchers. However, a major challenge remains: Indigenous traditions are fundamentally rooted in storytelling, where narratives are the primary form of knowledge transmission, and not all knowledge can be formally documented.

She called for a fundamental reassessment: How can Indigenous ways of knowing be prioritized within colonial structures? Linda stressed the critical importance of creating spaces dedicated to Indigenous academics and encouraging collaborative efforts to reform current processes and identify best research practices.

Figure 10 : Photo of the room showing the event participants.

Summary of Key concerns

The particularly relevant presentations by the partners highlighted concerns and issues that will need to be carefully considered in the implementation of the JRU's activities and practices.

Respecting Indigenous priorities

First, it appears essential that research be based on the priorities of indigenous partners and communities. This is crucial to ensure that the results truly meet their needs and aspirations. Emphasis was placed on the need for academia to respect Indigenous knowledge, cultures and histories to avoid reproducing a paternalistic approach in the research process. For example, the collection and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage can be beneficial to communities, but only if they are fully involved in the entire process.

Building relations

Sharing, respect, transparency and reciprocity must be at the heart of the research relationship. Dialogue must play a key role in research. It is also important to create networking and collaboration opportunities for Indigenous researchers.

Ethical practices and governance

Several negative experiences related to non-compliance with ethical rules were raised, reminding the JRU of the importance of ensuring that students and researchers adhere to these principles. Useful tools for this purpose, such as reference frameworks for research with Indigenous partners, were suggested. Furthermore, the importance of respecting existing protocols was mentioned. In addition, research results must be accessible and useful. In this regard, one partner stressed the importance of data governance by and for communities.

Over-solicitation of partners

A key issue raised was the over-solicitation of partners for research projects. It is essential to exercise discernment to ensure that research is truly useful and does not place a burden on communities. Solutions developed by and for partners have been proposed to assess the relevance of projects and their concrete impact on the concerned communities. Examples include the Cree Nation Government's Research Governance Centre and the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre's various alliances with research partners, which aim to co-construct projects at every stage, promoting Indigenous knowledge. However, institutions also have a responsibility in this regard, such as not working in silos and encouraging collaboration to avoid duplicating research and repeatedly soliciting the same individuals, organizations, or communities.

Support and coordination

Participants suggested that the JRU develops support tools on best practices in research for students and researchers. It was also noted that the JRU could support the development and strengthening of research capacities within Indigenous organizations and communities.

Figure 11 : Stéphane Laroche from the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre during his presentation

THE FUTURE OF THE JRU

At the end of the event, the discussion focused on the future of the Joint Research Unit (JRU) in Indigenous Studies.

Participants, researchers, students and partners reflected on how to move forward, asking questions about the directions the JRU should take. The discussion highlighted the importance of moving beyond traditional approaches to adopt research practices that are more respectful and adapted to Indigenous knowledge. It was proposed that the JRU should distinguish itself through a relational scientific approach, focusing on research methodologies and ethics, while decolonizing research processes. It would therefore be strategic to go beyond the notion of academic productivity to value relationships and collaboration.

Research processes should serve as spaces for consultation, giving importance to the participation of elders and young people, while respecting the principles of data governance and Indigenous methodologies. A key principle that has emerged is to consider Indigenous organizations as equal partners by involving them in the evaluation of research projects. It would also be relevant to create a directory of research projects to avoid duplication, over-solicitation, and to promote collaboration. Research results must not only be relevant to communities, but also respectful of the burden borne by them and the over-solicitation they face. Thus, collaborative practices must be strengthened, evaluation processes redefined, and results monitored to ensure their usefulness to Indigenous communities.

A central idea was formulated: 'People before data,' meaning that research must be conducted in a humane manner and with respect for cultural values. In addition, the JRU must recognize that Indigenous peoples can conduct their own research and that their knowledge is just as valid as academic knowledge.

"You have many words, and I have many actions."

ALICE JEROME

Among the most memorable interventions, Alice Jerome's statement particularly stood out: «When I am asked to participate in research, I must be treated as a human being. Because my language, Anicinape, means that I am human, a human being. When researchers join us on our territory, they put themselves on the same level: the territory and the language. I am more eager to participate because my territory is where I experience things. You have many words, and I have many actions. Kitci Migwetc.» This statement highlights the importance of respecting the realities experienced by Indigenous communities and their need for concrete engagement based on action and respect for their ancestral knowledge.

Thus, even though the decolonization of research and Indigenous research ethics have been topics of discussion for over a decade, this event highlighted the continuing need to decolonize research practices, adopt a respectful stance, and take concrete action to advance relations between research teams and Indigenous partners.

Figure 12: Marie-Ève Drouin Gagné during the opening of the collective discussions and reflections.

Following this meeting, the management committee of the INRS-UQAT joint research unit in Indigenous studies identified five fundamental principles for its work. The INRS-UQAT joint research unit in Indigenous studies aims to be an ethical space for working with Indigenous peoples, organizations, communities, and individuals, where the focus is primarily on research practices rather than content. In addition to the founding principles identified by Carole Lévesque and Hugo Asselin, this ethical space must be structured around the following five principles:

- **A vision rooted in the values and needs of Indigenous communities,organisations and individuals, and respect for their priorities;**
- **Respectful and innovative methodologies and ethical practices that respectIndigenous governance;**
- **Relationships and co-creation must be at the heart of research approaches,with constant efforts to build relationships with Indigenous communities,organisations and individuals;**
- **Indigenous ways of knowing, their transmission, and the democratization ofresearch;**
- **The recognition of the responsibilities of research teams and institutions,which must be attentive to avoiding the over-solicitation of Indigenouspartners and be able to respond to their needs for support and coordination.**

The next chapter of the JRU's story is taking shape from this point forward and, wehope, for many years to come, in continuity with these five guiding principles. Weanticipate that further opportunities for gathering will emerge in order to continuedialogue with Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals.