

FOREWORD

First general note:

This book is part of the continuing efforts of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ) to implement and support all the initiatives necessary for the development of the workforce and the labour market, in a culturally adapted context, so that First Nations people can achieve prosperity, including through fulfilling employment.

Founded in 1996 by the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), the FNHRDCQ represents a group of 31 employment and training service centres located in 27 First Nations communities and in four cities: Montreal, Quebec City, Val-d'Or and Sept-Îles.

Consequently, we frequently draw from the *Reference Guide – First Nations Employment Integration and Retention* (2019) developed by the FNHRDCQ. In particular, the six steps that it suggests for the integration and retention of workers are included in the proposed approach.

In general, this work will eventually achieve the same objectives as those of the FNHRDC. It is the result of a close collaboration with its representatives.

Second general note:

We have chosen to limit the number of direct quotations from authors in the text to make reading more fluid. When referring directly to ideas and excerpts from books or scientific articles, we cite the sources in footnotes. Moreover, at the end of the publication, we have included a bibliography of reference material that inspired us at some point during our research on the topic, even if we did not necessarily use them explicitly in the writing of the book. Given the scarcity of research on the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers, we felt that these references would allow readers to consult information that complements the results of our research.

Finally, we are always on the look-out for good practices as well as community or local organizational expertise to further adjust the model. Companies that would like to comment or implement the Indigenous Workers Social and Professional Integration Model presented in this book are invited to contact us (emiliedeschenes@yahoo.fr). Thank you!

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INTRODUCTION

In this book, social and professional integration refers to the process by which a person succeeds in integrating a social space, customs, norms, rules and work practices of an organization. It also covers the appropriation phase when Indigenous workers take up their new duties, during which they acquire the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and values required to adapt to their new environment (FNHRDCQ, 2019, p. 27). The integration of so many aspects is often achieved through organizational dialogue and values, through host culture and through the ideologies of workers and leaders, and policies and practices implemented by the organization. However, like retention, this integration is impossible without the efforts, motivation, adaptability and perseverance, first of the prospective worker, then of all actors within the organization who will focus their energies on successful integration and continued employment within the organization.

For Indigenous workers, integration is a journey that can involve several challenges. This book presents a set of tools for companies that employ Indigenous workers within their teams. It also aspires to offer solutions to the growing needs of the work environments that welcome them, while minimizing the challenges of integration for all.

For whom was this book written?

The primary audience comprises the managers of organizations operating near Indigenous communities and territories and who hire or wish to hire Indigenous workers. They work mainly in industrial sectors, including the exploitation of natural resources. They will find in the following book some guidance to assist them in their efforts. As a tool, each part of the book can be read separately from the others and the content is presented in graphic form so that managers can easily acquire practical knowledge despite their busy and time-restricted schedule.

Why write and share this book?

Indigenous people living on territories where natural resources activities are conducted, is a fast-growing demographic group that provides an available workforce. They represent a key population whose professional development should be a priority and that is located close to exploitation sites, which constitutes an added value and an economical advantage for companies, as well as a solution to high turnover rates.



For the FNHRDCQ, diversity and inclusion [of Indigenous workers] are no longer about compliance, quotas or checkboxes. Now, it is about:

- *Removing barriers between employers and vital sources of scarce talent,*
- *Bringing to bear the full power of diverse, personal knowledge, experiences and perspectives to understand [stakeholders in the field], create value and spur innovation,*
- *Being prepared for a future where demographic shifts will fundamentally change workforce dynamics.*

– FNHRDCQ, 2019, p. 17



The socio-economic development of Indigenous communities depends in part on their training and employment as well as their integration into the economy of their region. Public policies, combined with the social responsibility of organizations active in natural resources exploitation on or near Indigenous territories, encourage this necessary development¹. However, two types of issues are emerging.

On the one hand, Indigenous workers need support and guidance when they enter the workforce, and the challenges they face are significant². While they have a good capacity to adapt, their integration can remain difficult if they lack personal resources and tools. Their integration can come up against significant difficulties.

On the other hand, organizations that welcome Indigenous workers are often lacking in relevant knowledge and face difficulties related to the social and professional integration process. Tools usually used with other workers do not work as well, retention rates are lower, work teams are sometimes less efficient, work relationships may be affected, and Indigenous workers may be absent more often or experience problems that are not as well-known in these organizational environments. New needs are emerging, including the need to develop transversal skills, particularly in terms of cultural and intercultural skills. Questions are being raised about behaviours that are difficult to explain, such as higher rates of absenteeism among these workers.³

Although good progress was made by organizations from various sectors, the path taken by Indigenous workers toward social and professional integration has yet to be cleared.

In short, the two challenges are interrelated, highlighting the need for collective and organizational change. We must aim for change, openness to difference, collaboration, individual introspection and collective awareness of mutual biases or the reduction of stereotypes within organizations, with a view to mutual enrichment. This book is a first step in that direction: creating interest in the other and in the other's history, thereby contributing to bringing workers together beyond what they seem to represent, on both sides.

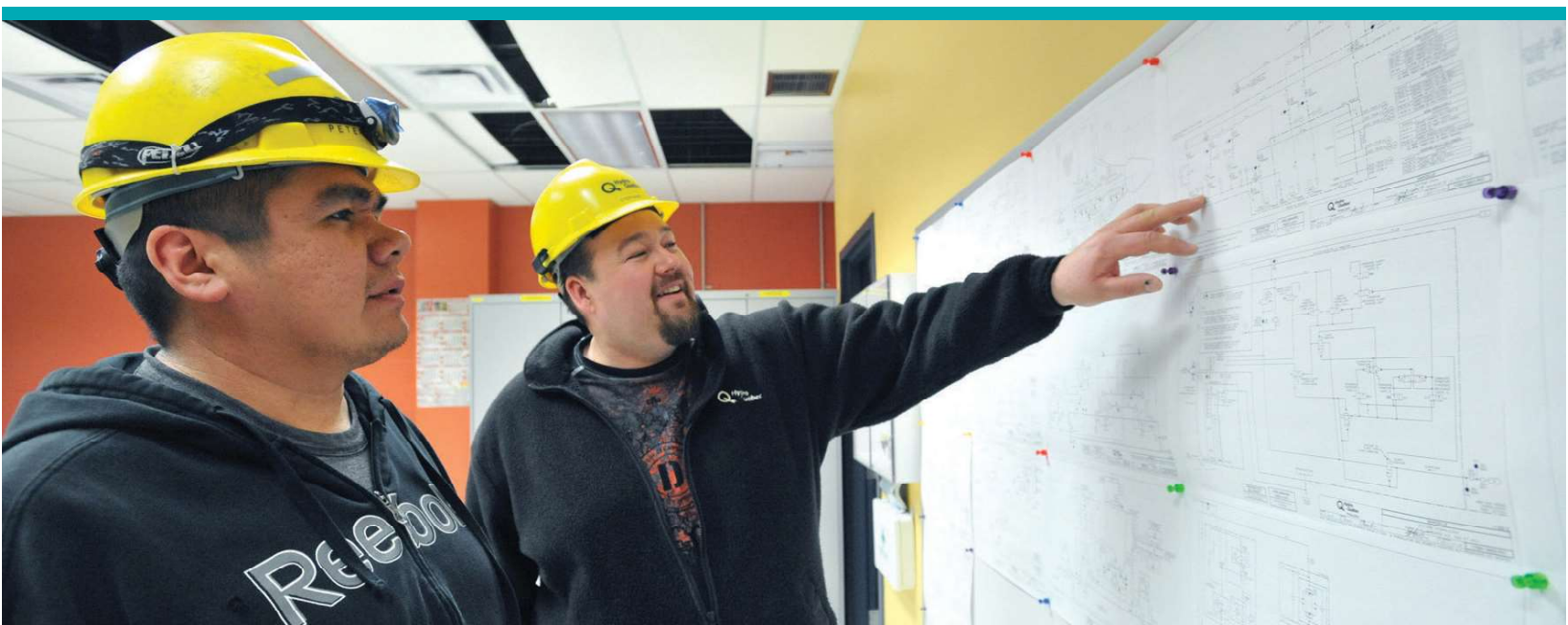


Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

– Albert Einstein



Courtesy of Hydro-Québec



What are the objectives of the book?

The objectives of this book are to:

- Briefly explain the terms used to refer to Indigenous people,
- Present Indigenous workers' values, cultural characteristics and perceptions to provide a better understanding of their realities,
- Understand the potential impact of these elements on their social and professional integration,
- Inform the various actors involved in the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers of the potential barriers to their social and professional integration,
- Present a practical intervention model for the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers and provide examples,
- Provide concrete research results for all actors involved in the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers,
- Provide practical and accessible tools to all actors for strengthening the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers and, eventually, their retention,
- Facilitate the implementation of actions in collaboration with all actors involved with Indigenous workers in the integration process.

On which data is this book based?

This book is first and foremost the result of several years of experience in Indigenous environments or with Indigenous people, including among the Cree, Inuit, Innu, Atikamekw, Anishinabeg and Huron-Wendat. More specifically, it reports the results of two research projects, one in an Indigenous organization and the other in an industrial environment in Quebec where Indigenous workers are hired. During these research projects,⁴ professionals involved at all hierarchical levels in the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers were met or consulted, in particular: senior executives, managers, line managers, team leaders, colleagues and mentors of Indigenous workers, employment and integration advisors, and consultants working with Indigenous workers, in particular professional counselors or psychotherapists. Indigenous organizations also participated or initiated parts of the research or were consulted to compare and validate data. In short, almost 160 people, including more than 50 Indigenous workers, were met for the purpose of understanding their realities in their social and professional integration process and in the development of tools to support them. Finally, several collaborators working in the industrial sector contributed to drafting this book; they reviewed it, suggested modifications and provided many examples inspired by their experience with Indigenous workers. As a result, the proposed intervention model is based on both theoretical and practical data. However, the primary intention was to propose a model that emerged from the needs and expectations of Indigenous workers. As such, this book was primarily written based on their experiences.

The research from which the data originated has taken into account major methodological considerations⁵ related to research with Indigenous people, since it directly involved dozens of Indigenous workers. It is in this context that methods were planned: they respect and are consistent with various research protocols involving Indigenous people⁶. In addition, specific parameters were set, including obtaining authorization from Indigenous authorities, consultation, collaboration and concertation with Indigenous individuals and organizations (researchers, consultants, professionals) from the onset of the research and throughout the process, the establishment of a protocol to integrate Indigenous

women into the research, and the reciprocity of benefits resulting from the research through sharing results. Added to these considerations are the perspective of openness and data analysis in a way that includes reflection with Indigenous people to allow the emergence of new and creative ideas, to better respond to the needs of the communities, to remain close to the actual field environment, and to avoid being locked into a framework that only reflects the visions inherited from the colonizers and from the dominant society.

Finally, the proposed intervention model is not an attempt to generalize the realities encountered by Indigenous workers during their social and professional integration or by organizations. Rather, we emphasize that **all realities are unique and specific to individuals and environments**. As such, the objective of the intervention model and its value is to propose a framework that can be adapted to a variety of situations. The suggested strategies can be applied partially or completely. The purpose for organizations, large and small, is to take a first step to initiate the movement, which can also be done gradually or partially.



Each community has its own specific history, spirituality, traditions, ways of relating to the land, language and gastronomy, even.

– FNHRDCQ, 2019, p. 15



How is the book divided?

The **first part** of the book presents and explains the terms used to talk about Indigenous cultures (section 1), the foundations to be adopted for a successful social and professional integration project (section 2), Indigenous worker's values, cultural characteristics and perceptions of life and work (section 3) and finally, the barriers to social and professional integration faced by Indigenous workers (section 4).

The **second part** focusses entirely on presenting an intervention model for the social and professional integration of Indigenous workers. It is divided into four sections: plan (section 1), ensure cultural safety (section 2), support (section 3) and train (section 4).

Finally, four questionnaires (paper and online) corresponding to each aspect of the model are presented in the **third** and last **part**. These questionnaires provide the opportunity to evaluate, to some extent, the adequacy between the strategies proposed in this book and those proposed within one's organization.

Examples are provided for each section.

Enjoy your reading!