

## **New tool for First Nations Communities' recognition and appreciation: the creation phase begins**

**The partnership with the First Nations Adult Education School Council (FNAESC) has reached a new milestone: the research team is beginning the process of creating and testing a new skills assessment and recognition tool designed for and by First Nations peoples.**

Work on the project "Improving Skills for Success Through the Realities and Cultural Values of First Nations Communities" reached a new milestone in September 2025: the research team is now engaged in the creation and testing phase of a new skills assessment and recognition tool designed for and by First Nations communities.

This action research project, supported by Employment and Social Development Canada, is the result of a partnership between the First Nations Adult Education School Council (FNAESC) and l'Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA). It should also be noted that the research conducted in the First Nations communities participating in this project was carried out by members of those respective communities.

### **Successful data collection**

Over the past few months, our research team has conducted several data collection exercises in the communities of Opitciwan (Atikamekw), Gesgapegiag (Mi'gmaq), Kanehsatà:ke (Mohawk), Pessamit (Innu) and Unamen Shipu (Innu), as well as at the Mamik Center in Roberval.

This data was collected following the facilitation of Our Strong Skills (OSS) workshops. A total of 40 people participated in the OSS workshops held between March and September 2024. The Our Strong Skills tool enables adults to value and recognize their strong generic skills. Its use provided a positive framework for reflection for members of First Nations communities participating in the research project.

During the data collection periods, the 40 participants were encouraged to take on the role of co-researchers. They were asked to reflect on their experience and draw on the NCF workshops to help the research team define the parameters of a new tool.

In group discussions initiated by the research team, these individuals were asked to: 1) identify elements of the NCF approach that could be used as inspiration for creating a new tool; and 2) determine how these elements could be adapted to best reflect the specific realities, values, and traditions of First Nations.

## **Creating and testing a new tool**

The next steps for the research team are to create a new tool—whose mechanisms and articulations will best reflect the realities, and cultural and traditional specificities of First Nations—and to test this tool with the First Nations communities that inspired its creation.

The team is already busy analyzing the data collected over the past few months in order to define a recognition approach that is consistent with the realities of the participating First Nations. The data analyzed to date demonstrates the importance that First Nations members place on recognizing their inner strengths.

For now, this data suggests that these strengths can be understood as easily transferable “skills” that are useful in everyday life. That said, it also reveals the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous conceptions of the skills considered useful for life.

## **Redefining the concepts of skill and recognition**

There are now two main objectives to be achieved: first, to create a tool that reflects First Nations peoples' vision of recognition; and second, to define what First Nations peoples refer to as “a skill.”

Achieving these objectives will also require reflection on First Nations peoples' vision of valuing their inner strengths, recognizing that these strengths, which belong to the individual, are often used for the good of the community.

Ultimately, this work should enable the research team to develop a balanced and more comprehensive understanding of what can be called “skill” for First Nations communities. Used as part of an approach inspired by the two-eyed seeing approach (Etuaptmumk in the Mi'kmaq language) initiated by Mi'kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, this renewed understanding would promote the establishment of parallels between the visions of competence of non-Indigenous peoples and First Nations.

## **Work to come**

In the coming weeks, the research team will work on creating a new tool for promotion and recognition. Data collected since the spring has already provided the framework for this tool. Now, this collection of activities must be assembled into a coherent and functional whole that is consistent with the realities, and cultural and traditional specificities of First Nations.

Identifying the skills considered useful for First Nations communities is another task that the research team must complete in the coming weeks. Several members of the participating communities have been interviewed on this subject.

The individuals consulted were selected for their scientific, professional, or experiential expertise in relation to the objectives of our research project. They were also consulted for their insight into the aspirations and priorities of their communities (social, political, cultural, or traditional expertise). These individuals came from sectors such as education, employability, health and social services, economics, politics, and governance. These First Nations members were teachers, practitioners, community, social, and economic actors, local elected officials, and individuals recognized as guardians or custodians of knowledge and wisdom relevant to First Nations life (elders, wise men and women, spiritual leaders, etc.).

Ultimately, the research team will have a vast set of data, which, once analyzed and compiled, will form a reference framework presenting skills that are useful for everyday life in a First Nations context.

Once this new tool and reference framework, adapted to the realities of First Nations communities, are complete, the research team will be able to test them with members of all the communities already involved in the research project.