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Au croisement des savoirs

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ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN QUEBEC CITIES: SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

Carole Lévesque, Édith Cloutier, Daniel Salée,
Suzanne Dugré and Julie Cunningham

Montréal 2009



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC



Réseau de recherche et de connaissances
relatives aux peuples autochtones
Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network

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ARUC - CURA

Les Autochtones et la ville au Québec: identité, mobilité, qualité de vie et gouvernance
Aboriginal Peoples in Québec Cities: Identity, Mobility, Quality of Life and Governance

Cahiers ODENA. Au croisement des savoirs

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At the forefront of social innovation, the ODENA Research Alliance provides alternative paths to understanding and responding to the individual and societal challenges faced by First Peoples living in Québec cities and towns. The ODENA research alliance brings together representatives of Aboriginal civil society and academic researchers engaged in a process of knowledge co-creation with a view to improving the quality of life of Aboriginal people in cities and renewing relations between First Peoples and other Québec citizens in a spirit of equality and mutual respect.

ODENA is a joint initiative of the DIALOG - Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network, and the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec; it is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Community-University Research Alliance, 2009-2014). New partnered and interdisciplinary research alliance, ODENA seeks to support the social, economic, political and cultural development of Aboriginal people in Québec cities and to recognize the value of the collective action of the Native friendship centres. This alliance focuses on ethical and socially sensitive research, the ongoing sharing of knowledge and the direct application of this knowledge in social reconstruction initiatives developed by the Aboriginal organizations concerned. Researchers and Aboriginal partners maintain four research and actions objectives:

- Produce an overall profile of the social, economic, cultural, political and legal situation of Aboriginal people in the cities in order to develop new indicators and new tools for planning action.
- Characterize and evaluate each Native friendship centre's practices and programs in order to develop a model for the offer of services and strengthen skills.
- Understand the current challenges in the areas of poverty, health, racism, discrimination, exclusion, inequality and insecurity in order to broaden and enhance social development interventions.
- Identify the conditions for a new form of citizen participation and recognize the value of Aboriginal collective action.



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Foreword

Highlights of the Launch Meeting

This document summarizes the presentations and discussions at the ODENA Research Alliance Launch Meeting held in Wendake at the Hôtel-Musée des Premières Nations on September 18 and 19, 2009. The gathering brought together more than thirty-five people from various academic milieus and the Québec Native friendship centre movement. The content of the presentations and discussions has been retranscribed. The text has been organized into sections corresponding to the various sessions of the meeting, and the flow of the discussions has been respected as much as possible.

Regarding Collaborative Research

- Collaborative research considers that reality is by definition complex, and consists of a multitude of interactions between a multitude of factors; so that it isn't a good idea to draw conclusions about an issue without taking this plurality, this diversity, into account.
- Collaboration between different milieus is mutually beneficial when it is pursued by partners who recognize one another's respective skills and knowledge: the learning can then transcend practices, sectors, methodologies and epistemologies.
- One of the responsibilities of the members of a CURA is to publicize important achievements of the project in which they are involved in order to promote partnered research.
- The decision to join a CURA is based on the conviction that research can support social change.

Regarding the Conditions Required for a CURA's Success

- A certain level of shared understanding between researchers and community organizations, as well as respect and an ability to listen, are some of the conditions required for a CURA's success.
- The fact of reflecting on and planning the dissemination methods from the start may help to reduce negative repercussions stemming from a misunderstanding of one another's expectations. The public character of the findings is also something that needs to be negotiated.
- For everyone to be able to fully adhere to the CURA and find their place in the project, there must be long-term objectives and a long-term research approach.
- It is essential that research topics be established jointly and that, through this process, the parties try to develop a common language.
- The CURA's operating mechanisms must support the principle that the interests of the Alliance's partners are equally important; in practice, this means especially that the research has to be helpful to, and can be used by, the centres.
- Everyone needs to understand the implications and consequences of the research. So all parties must agree with the decisions made, and enough time has to be allotted for this decision making.
- Information must circulate between researchers, centres and committees. Liaison and communication methods have to be set up.

Regarding the ODENA Alliance in Particular

- The concepts and vocabulary currently used to describe and talk about the identity of Aboriginal people in urban areas have proved to be inadequate. We need to work on defining concepts (such as diaspora; Aboriginal civil society) that more accurately represent urban realities.

- Many ODENA member researchers are specialists in urban issues, but we do need to ask questions about the meaning of the urban Aboriginal experience. There is no doubt that joint reflection would be especially helpful.
- Every year, the board of directors of the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) looks at the centres' needs, at questions and issues in the field that are still problematic. To stay on target and remain effective, it will be important for ODENA's planning to be linked to the Regroupement's strategic planning; or, at the very least, that the Regroupement's planning serve as a reference for the development of new research.
- Even though everyone is working on a common project, it is important that we don't confuse matters by denying the existence of know-how specific to First Nations, on the one hand, and academic knowledge, on the other. There is no point in denying these differences; what we need is to try to understand and explain them. That is the basis of intercultural relations and the intercultural approach.
- We also need to ask ourselves about the roles and functions of mediation, training and transmission: who will carry out these roles in the various stages of conveying the information? How will this be done? For whom? For what purposes?
- What actions should be taken using the knowledge that is co-produced? "Now what?" is undoubtedly the main challenge in knowledge mobilization. New communication tools and methods will have to be developed, and new learning approaches will have to be tested and implemented. We will have to innovate, to be creative.
- Written text is only one of the many possible ways of transmitting knowledge: sound, music, visual arts and theatre are also means of mobilizing knowledge and know-how.

Regarding the Researchers' Role

- There are a number of ways of looking at the researchers' role on the team. Some people feel that objectivity is the best way of supporting militancy, while other researchers believe that their very presence in the ODENA Alliance itself testifies to a clearer position in terms of social engagement.
- The co-directors do not intend to impose any guidelines on this subject; everyone is free to adopt their own stances on this issue.

Regarding the Linking of the CURA with the Centres' Action

- One of the main challenges will be to link the CURA with the Regroupement's and the centres' action.
- We should take a pro-active approach to current dossiers.
- The centres need to have convincing data available to them: this is a core objective.
- The centres' needs for information must be distinguished from those that could have an influence on the public scene. The products intended for the friendship centre movement will differ from those that are targeted to the outside world. There must nonetheless be a clear conceptualization of internal strategies and practices, or the effectiveness of public representations could be compromised.
- We must also develop means of continually following up on current dossiers.



First Session Morning of September 18th 2009

1.1 Opening

The opening remarks were given by Oscar Kistabish, president of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. With considerable wisdom, Mr. Kistabish described the different challenges of the partnership approach by talking about the knowledge associated with the production of moccasins and shoes both of which require the application of specific know-how and offer users various advantages. Being partners can mean working together side by side with the aim of getting to know and better understanding one another; and it is up to us to see how we are going to achieve this.

All the participants were then given the opportunity to introduce themselves. The co-directors stressed, among other things, that this meeting was not only the outcome of several years of discussion but also the starting point for a new project poised for development and growth through the efforts of all the participants.



Jo-Ann Toulouse; Josée Goulet; Édith Cloutier;
Carole Lévesque; Peter Levesque



Frédéric Lesemann; Tanya Sirois; Amélie Lainé;
Brett Pineau



The Assembly



The Assembly

1.2 The DIALOG Network: Its Role in the CURA

The project for creation of the ODENA Research Alliance emerged in the context of the DIALOG Research and Knowledge Network Relating to Aboriginal Peoples; the Alliance is based on the ties forged since 2004 between researchers and Aboriginal partners from the Native friendship centre movement. The Alliance developed through discussions, consultation and activities held in the DIALOG context. Out of these discussions came the concept for this particular project, which has resulted from the pooling of researchers' and Aboriginal collaborators' knowledge and expertise. Not every research alliance (CURA) has been launched on such solid foundations. In tracing the steps that led to the birth of the ODENA Alliance, co-director Carole Lévesque underscored how closely this project exemplified DIALOG's vision, mission and commitment; one of the key elements of this mission is in fact to foster a better understanding of the historical, social, economic and political realities of the Aboriginal world, of contemporary issues and of relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by focusing on joint knowledge building and encouraging the taking into account of Aboriginal peoples' own needs, perspectives and approaches in regard to research and public policies.

1.3 Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ): Its Role in the CURA

The Regroupement also described its vision and mandate by talking about the animals chosen to symbolize its activities. Its objective is to act with an eye on the long term, like the eagle, the bird that flies the highest and, from these heights, clearly fixes its destinations. The tortoise represents Mother Earth, illustrating the idea of everyone's rootedness in the communities, a vision that allows the Regroupement to meet the needs of the people concerned. The baby Canada geese symbolize Aboriginal youth; for a number of years now, given the demographic importance of young people within the Aboriginal population, the Regroupement has recognized the role of young people and has reflected this in both its programming and governance structure. Testifying to this is the youth council and the seats reserved for young people at the provincial and national levels. These choices are consistent with the Regroupement's vision to the effect that one cannot expect young people to change the world if they are not given the means to match their convictions. Finally, the otter is a symbol of the Regroupement as a place of concerted action. This curious and communicative animal always seems ready to act and interact. In this way, the Regroupement is representing itself as a place for discussing and sharing the good practices developed in the various Native friendship centres.

Co-director Édith Cloutier also explained that the Regroupement supports not only already-established friendship centres but also urban Aboriginal communities that have mobilized in places like Chicoutimi and Trois-Rivières. The next step in this regard will be to examine the possibilities of setting up a new Native friendship centre in each of these cities.



The Assembly

1.4 Learning about and Sharing Experiences from Elsewhere

To vary the content at the gathering and to put ODENA into the context of the ends and objectives of the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) Program, the co-directors invited Peter Levesque—director of Knowledge Mobilization Works, a member of DIALOG's advisory committee and a former SSHRC program officer closely associated with the creation of the CURA program—to recount his experiences in this field and to act as an observer and commentator during this first day. With a similar aim, Marie-Hélène Méthé — executive director —responsible for the regions Chantier de l'économie sociale (Social Economy Workshop)—was also invited to share her experiences as a partner in UQAM's Social Economy CURA and to participate in the discussions.

1.5 The Importance of Collaboration

Reality is complex! That was the premise underlying the CURA program's creation from the outset. Once we recognize that any social phenomenon cannot be studied in isolation, that we need to reconstruct the interactions between numerous factors in order to understand and clearly define a given situation, we realize that we cannot work alone or conduct research without consulting and collaborating with others, without forming partnerships.

But the question inevitably arises as to why it is important to collaborate, if we consider the constraints associated with community resources. So it is vital that everyone can reap the benefits of collaboration: researchers, community groups, industry, government, students, etc. The aim of the CURAs is thus to bring all these people together, to build bridges and make connections. Today, after countless discussions on the potential "risks" involved in research partnerships, the program has become something of a compromise between science and integration of the community viewpoint. All the threads have come together, but the program is still fragile due to continuing resistance from the academic sector: the CURA program is often criticized for its spin-offs being more social than scientific.

This resistance underscores the need for all members of a CURA to publicize the important achievements of the project with which they are connected. Today, after 10 years, the CURA program has borne fruit: there are now partnerships, links and students that have been trained to recognize the importance of doing community-based research. What is essential now is to publicize their work and give it the visibility that is needed. In other words, we have to be able to mobilize this kind of knowledge produced by unconventional, more classic methods. This is still a real challenge, because the CURA program has been in existence for eleven years now but is often treated by funding agencies and universities as if it were a new program, as if its merits were still unproven. Such a reaction is in a way understandable, as the research.



**PETER LEVESQUE,
DIRECTOR, KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION WORKS**

1.6 The Experience of the Chantier de l'économie sociale (Social Economy Workshop)

The Chantier de l'économie sociale (CES, or Social Economy Workshop) is a national organization that has been in operation for ten years. UQAM's Social Economy CURA (known by its French acronym, ARUC-ÉS) also completed its tenth year of operation in 2009 and is currently preparing a report on its activities. In looking back, we can say that the context has changed in the community sector, as many young researchers have now chosen to work in this field, which was not the case in the beginning. In terms of the partnership experience itself, there are several important points to emphasize. The first is that there has to be at least a minimum of shared understanding between researchers and representatives of community organizations, of mutual recognition. This means that everyone is willing to sit down together to clearly define the project objectives. Even if the different sides have different imperatives, it is important that everyone be on the same page at the same time.



Another important point is the need to listen and to respect the other person's knowledge. It is crucial to continually be aware of what the other person is saying or not saying. Nor must one forget to establish the dissemination strategies from the start. One can of course change some of the decisions made later on, but the overall guidelines on disseminating the various findings, knowledge and experiences must be explicit. Linking the needs of practitioners and researchers (through joint products, for example) is a constant challenge. Similarly, mechanisms must be developed for disseminating and transferring knowledge on both sides. One comment addressed to researchers in particular is that they need to realize that people in the field have their own intelligence and know-how. It is only by recognizing that fact that both sides can respect one another and work together in a collective undertaking.

**MARIE-HÉLÈNE MÉTHÉ,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REGIONS
CHANTIER DE L'ÉCONOMIE SOCIALE**



Konrad Sioui, Grand Chief of Wendake; Édith Cloutier; Carole Lévesque; Daniel Coderre, director general of INRS



Édith Cloutier; Josée Goulet; Philip Etapp; Amélie Lainé; Tanya Sirois

1.7 First Discussion Session

After these presentations, the participants were invited to share their concerns, questions and viewpoints. The discussions in this first session have been grouped into four categories: 1) concerns about the research topics and themes; 2) discussions about the approach that led to the creation of the ODENA Alliance; 3) concerns about the partnership; and 4) suggestions made by the Regroupement.

Regarding the Research Topics

Some researchers quickly stressed that they had enjoyed the time spent on the introduction and how the Alliance's development and work had been put into context, but that they were concerned with the importance of pinpointing the research objectives from the start, with developing a research strategy and quickly identifying the topics to be studied. The co-directors replied that although they were aware of the interest of getting right into the research itself as soon as possible, the crucial work of building the partnership project as a whole had to be done before the actual research could begin. They also noted that the initial proposal had already clearly set out the foundations of the research. Discussion then continued on the research topics. Several questions considered the possibility of developing new research topics.

▪ Researchers' Perceptions

Some researchers said they were uneasy about the introductory remarks that emphasized the existence of barriers between the academic world and the community sector (people in the field). Do these barriers really exist, or are such warnings missing the point that we are simply talking about different experiences? This fear led some people to wonder how the emergence of new research topics should be managed. Are there tools or mechanisms for mediating differences of opinion resulting from differing interests?

▪ Perceptions from the Community Sector

The Regroupement emphasized that new research topics could just as well be suggested by practitioners and people at the centres, and not just researchers. Every year, people at the centres participate in strategic planning sessions where many new potential research topics are identified. Is there a possibility of linking the research programming with the RCAAQ's strategic planning process?

▪ The Experience of the Chantier de l'économie sociale

Marie-Hélène Méthé had some information to offer on these two questions. Right from the stage of the letter of intent, the Chantier de l'économie sociale had identified the research topics that it felt were important. These topics had in fact been chosen on the basis of the Chantier's 27 existing projects in a variety of areas such as housing, community housing, local and regional development, CPEs (Early Childhood Centres) and daycares, etc. These projects had to a degree shaped the research orientations, in that this research had to be useful to the Chantier from the outset. In respect to "new" research topics, these had been adopted jointly, on a case-by-case basis. The Chantier had also developed tools (guides) to inform the general public about some of the issues that had arisen along the way; these guides are available on the Internet.

In terms of linking planning and research programming, this didn't really happen in the case of the Chantier de l'économie sociale during the first phase of the ARUC-ÉS (Social Economy CURA), as the initial research had resulted from projects that were already under way. On

the other hand, the Chantier clearly had specific expectations about the researchers' work. For example, it was very important that the social economy, as a concept and as a social movement, become widely recognized in the universities. The CURA in a way became a vehicle for the construction of the social economy as a full-fledged research area. With the researchers' help, the social economy, which was until then seen as "collectivist," achieved some degree of legitimacy. There was also the need to conceptualize and define the problems and issues identified in the Chantier's work. In response to these needs, the activities of the researchers and the people at the Chantier were well coordinated from the start. In the CURA's second phase, strategic planning and research programming had become more closely linked. In retrospective, the people at the Chantier can see that the fact of learning to work together gradually influenced the partners' activities in their respective milieus: the social economy approach fosters a questioning of the idea—and ideology—of development, so that projects that embody this approach are necessarily dynamic in nature.

Regarding the Reasons that Led to the Creation of the ODENA Alliance

■ The Regroupement's Comments

After observing the nature of the remarks that had been expressed on both sides, the Regroupement's representatives felt that it might be a good idea to look back at the reasons that had prompted their decision to become a partner in this research alliance.

First point: In Western Canada, Aboriginal people's presence in cities dates back to the 1950s. This particular context has generated considerable development in research fields and social mobilization movements in recent years.

Second point: The situation in Québec is different, precisely because Aboriginal people's presence in urban areas is a more recent phenomenon than in the West. Whereas the number of research projects in the communities, especially Cree and Inuit communities, has continued to grow since the 1950s, the development of relations between the research sector and the urban milieu is more recent, and this means that there is only limited knowledge on urban realities. To summarize the state of these new relations, we only need to look at the ties that have existed for the past four years between the Regroupement and the DIALOG network. There has as yet been no characterization of the temporal and spatial aspects of this urban reality, as the urban concerns are not the same as the communities' concerns. So there is a clear need to fill these gaps in information.

Third point: Native friendship centres see themselves as agents of change and feel that research and the development of new knowledge on the urban milieu will help to support such social change.

Fourth point: The RCAAQ views this Alliance as a learning opportunity for everyone: a place for discussions between people with different skills, knowledge and viewpoints. The research sector isn't just an infrastructure [like a CURA]; it is also made up of people.

The Regroupement also emphasized that researchers need to understand other contextual information about research relating to Aboriginal peoples, as this will necessarily influence the way that ODENA operates. In the past, research was done **ON** Aboriginal people. Even though this is no longer acceptable today, traces of this past remain, which is why some people in the centres were reluctant to join ODENA. The fact that some communities' contributions to research projects had sometimes hurt them, especially by hindering their

claims, and even tainting the legitimacy of these claims, has affected people's perceptions about research. Because of this history, the ODENA participants will clearly have to work on building new relations of trust between everyone.

Regarding the Partnership

▪ The Friendship Centres' Points of View

A common language. Some of the centres' representatives have already participated in research projects. Their experience has varied, but they share concerns about several aspects, especially the difficulty of understanding academic language. Many of them said that they felt that it was important to develop a common language so that researchers and people in the centres could interpret research findings in the same way.

Usefulness of the research. The centres' priorities must be seen as just as important as academic research priorities. This means that researchers shouldn't be the only ones in charge of the carrying out of the various research projects; it is important that participants from the centres also help to identify the topics to be studied. To achieve this objective, each centre may need to designate a resource person to ensure that the research is helpful to the centres and can actually be used by them. The benefits of the research must be equally shared; for example, the writing of a thesis is not in itself useful to people in the field. So some facets or publications must be oriented to the needs and learning methods of the research participants. The studies that are carried out need to become tools that support the centres' action, so that these tools can demonstrate the proposals that the studies are advancing. Researchers have to understand that they need the collaborators from the centres and vice versa.

Intellectual property. Another important concern is the ownership of data and findings: this cannot be the researchers' responsibility alone, and the public nature of research results sometimes has to be negotiated. The implications and consequences of the research must also be understood by both parties.

Communication and circulation of information. If a particular centre is participating in a study, the CURA's leadership needs to be aware of everything that is happening, which means that the information has to circulate.

▪ The Researchers' Points of View

Overall, the researchers stressed that they shared the centres' concerns; these concerns were mentioned a number of times. The researchers emphasized that in any truly partnership-oriented research project, there must inevitably be negotiations; decision making will necessarily mean that people have to take the context and specific cases into account. But some research findings cannot be made public, since the milieu isn't always ready for change. Several researchers felt that a situation of this kind could be negotiated. But they did agree that research findings cannot strictly belong to one or the other party but rather belong to the collectivity as a whole.

Suggestions made by the Regroupement

▪ The Emergence of an Aboriginal Middle Class in Québec

The discussion on this issue, which was also explored in talking about an Aboriginal diaspora, is linked to the observation that the concepts currently used to examine issues of identity for Aboriginal people in urban areas are inadequate. On the one hand, there is the

feeling of belonging to the community of origin that in one way or another necessarily influences “urban” Aboriginal people’s sense of identity; on the other hand, and this dimension is often neglected on a conceptual level, “urban” Aboriginal people identify with something else that is intimately linked to their trajectories in cities. The interaction of these two facets, that is, the fact that Aboriginal people living in cities are able to effectively understand the way of life in the communities and the lifestyle of the “dominant” or Québécois culture, means that these “urbanites” seem to be in a good position to effect change on the level of First Nations as a whole and on the level of the communities (reserves). It is from this perspective that the Regroupement is considering using the terms “middle classes” or “diaspora” to talk about the identity, long-term vision, role and work of Aboriginal people in Québec cities. Too often, in discourses, scholars still point to the opposition between tradition and contemporaneity to discuss and understand the identity of Aboriginal people in cities. But the reality is a phenomenon that is richer and far more complex.

▪ **A Citizenship Role and Civil Society**

Along the same lines, the Regroupement reminded all the participants of its *raison d’être*: to re-accord a citizenship role to Aboriginal people living in cities. In spite of the *Indian Act*, which defines the conditions for Aboriginal status (who is or is not Indian), the Native friendship centre movement is in its own way helping to rebuild the communities. So the centres would like to see the emergence, in the context of ODENA, of a concept that has been completely voided in the communities (reserves): that of Aboriginal civil society. Because civil society is an agent of change, there is surely reason to think of ODENA’s collective action in these terms.



Second Session Afternoon of September 18th 2009

2.1 Opening

The afternoon activities began with a second presentation by Peter Levesque. This time, the emphasis was on knowledge mobilization and the challenges in this regard in both the academic and community milieus. Although this is a relatively new approach, there are already tools and new knowledge products that can inspire us. After this presentation, the discussions between the participants continued.



Janet Mark; Oscar Kistabish



The Assembly



Daniel Salée; Suzanne Dugré; Suzanne Manningham



The Assembly

2.2 Mobilizing Knowledge

Working in two worlds, the academic sector and the community milieu, I continually reflect on the circulation and transformation of information. Indeed, from the communities' viewpoint, a scientific article appearing in a peer-reviewed journal is probably not the tool that people in the communities had been avidly awaiting, especially after they had invested time and effort in a research project. In other words, it may be difficult to link a partnership-oriented research project and knowledge mobilization. But there are tools that offer some promising approaches and different ways of meeting these kinds of challenges. For example, the Ontario Centre for Mental Health has developed a guide describing various steps to follow to ensure that knowledge is mobilized. The Centre has also developed other tools such as a checklist on sharing knowledge.

Another approach is to ask the following questions to situate ourselves in the knowledge mobilization process: 1) What? (What's it about?); 2) So what? (What else does that help me to understand?); and 3) Now what? (What can I do with this new knowledge?) There are many elements to consider when we develop our research questions (What?): interests, needs, etc. Next we find a series of incentives that help us to move on to the next step (So what?): the search for meaning, analysis, interpretations, etc. Answering that question and following that step are often the parts of the work that academic researchers find most stimulating. Community partners, on the other hand, are more interested in "Now what?" And that's the main stumbling block: it's generally hard to come up with answers to "Now what?": to link theory and practice. Here again, we can look at a series of products and applications that will help us to get there: public policies, procedures, programs, individual skills, practices, etc.

Because the CURA program includes a knowledge mobilization facet, it is vital to reflect on the following question from the beginning to the end of the project: What will the Native friendship centres be able to do with this new knowledge?, especially in the context of steering committee or strategic planning meetings, for example, and at the same time to reflect on the strategies that will be used to turn knowledge into action, to have a positive impact on community partners' daily lives.

In short, ODENA participants have to be prepared to create new tools and communication methods, and to test out and develop different types of learning. Written text is only one of many possible ways of transmitting knowledge: sound, music, visual arts and theatre are all means of mobilizing and enhancing knowledge and making it useful for the community. Everyone needs to be aware that the research world is strongly oriented toward academic-type means of transmission and content, and that mechanisms have to be developed to move the "conversations" and "discussion" outside the academic framework.

PETER LEVESQUE
DIRECTEUR, KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION WORKS

2.3 Second Discussion Session

What Language Will We Use?

Researchers' Views

The question of the circulation of information and dissemination of knowledge is closely tied to the complexity of the language used to talk about issues and problems. Joint training sessions may help us to overcome this challenge. For example, participants from the centres will undoubtedly want to share what they have learned and their experiences in ODENA with their work colleagues. With this in mind, we could plan training sessions aimed at better communication between researchers and collaborators. Various strategies could be explored and we could take inspiration from experiences in contexts similar to that of our partnership.

Collaborators' Views

The prospect of participating in training sessions seems very important. Many of us are already starting to understand the ODENA Alliance's aims and purposes, but there's a big difference between that and being able to give a precise report on it all to colleagues at the centres. Will the objective be for everyone at the centres to understand ODENA? Will the people from the centres be the ones responsible for that task?

We also need to let the researchers know that the different centres' operating structures vary: researchers will thus have to adapt to a number of situations and contexts.

Regarding Everyone's Statuses and Roles

Researchers' Views

The discussion showed that the researchers had different views on everyone's statuses. Some felt that researchers and people in the field are all practitioners to one degree or another, and that the type of knowledge held by each is dynamic, and so are individuals' respective statuses. But other researchers emphasized that there are important differences: researchers and practitioners generally don't face the same realities, to the point that the specificities of each milieu have to be explained to the other. The need to explain who we are and how we see things is the basis of intercultural relations and the intercultural approach. After explaining who we are and why we see things one way rather than another, we can start to negotiate.

Collaborators' Views

There are some clear differences between researchers and practitioners. Some knowledge and know-how are indeed distinctive to First Nations. So there is a risk of misunderstanding if we start from the assumption that the two worlds aren't different. There are many examples: we only need to consider this first day of the ODENA launch meeting where, from the centres' perspective, there is a gap between the two sides. The people from the Regroupement and the centres know exactly when and in what context a division arose. One simple example is that when people from the centres talk about the communities, they automatically refer to the reserves. There are also differences in knowledge, in ways of seeing and thinking. At the centres, we are not only practitioners but also specialists in Aboriginal issues. We can't lose sight of that.



Grand Chief Konrad Sioui, Wendake, during the launching.



Josée Goulet; Amélie Lainé

Third Session Morning of September 19th 2009

3.1 Opening

On the morning of September 19, it had been agreed that the floor would be opened to the representatives of the Native friendship centres. To vary the means of communicating the realities that the centres are dealing with, the co-directors began the session by showing the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre's corporate video, made for the Centre's 35th anniversary.

The video introduces the Centre's director, Édith Cloutier, board members—including Janet Mark and Oscar Kistabish—and many VDNFC practitioners and staff. In the video, other Aboriginal people, regulars at the Centre—young and old—explain why they come there and what it offers them. Everyone agreed that, overall, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre is “an incubator for the Aboriginal leaders of tomorrow.” This twenty-minute DVD, with its touching content and high-quality production, especially on the level of its music, very effectively presents the Centre's mission and activities. After the video, representatives of the Regroupement and each of the centres in turn presented their respective organizations.



Édith Cloutier; Carole Lévesque



The audience during the launching.



The audience during the launching.



Patricia Auclair; Christine Jean

3.2 Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec

The Regroupement is the voice of the Québec Native friendship centre movement on the provincial, national and international scenes. It is also a catalyst for the mission shared by the seven Québec Native friendship centres and two urban Aboriginal communities in the process of mobilization in Chicoutimi (Saguenay) and Trois-Rivières; although there is as yet no physical place, no actual Native friendship centre in these urban areas, the Regroupement chose to include these two communities this year. The RCAAQ's mission is to militate for the interests of Aboriginal people in urban areas and support the centres' actions. On a more concrete level, this means that the Regroupement puts forward autonomous and independent initiatives in order to influence public policy decisions so that they will have an impact on the lives and living conditions of Aboriginal people dealing with urban realities.

For the past several years, the Regroupement has been investing a great deal of energy and resources in developing a "youth" sector; this choice is intrinsically linked to the needs that we face and the services likely to meet these needs. Rising demand from the "youth" clientele is in part due to the province-wide explosion in First Nations populations, which is a well-documented fact. The growing demand is also linked to status issues: with the changes in people's official Indian status that have stemmed from legal decisions, as in the recent case of the McIvor decision, a growing pool of young people is putting pressure on the services provided. Because of this, the centres have to be pro-active and dynamic. The new social economy orientation that the movement has taken in recent years is among the strategies being developed in this regard.

But this new social economy orientation is also linked to the need to ensure that the movement will continue and grow. If we want to accomplish the three facets of our mission—improving quality of life for Aboriginal people in urban areas; promoting Aboriginal culture in this milieu; and encouraging harmony and closer relations between different peoples—and given the context of budgetary uncertainty in which we find ourselves, the Regroupement and the centres must innovate and develop their own funding sources, which will sometimes be entirely autonomous and sometimes be designed to complement certain government measures.

The Regroupement carries out its mission without regard to its clientele's status, community of origin or place of residence. We have an open-door policy: that is how we help to increase our collective wealth, in emphasizing the importance of both human and economic capital.

JOSÉE GOULET
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RCAAQ



3.3 Cree Indian Centre of Chibougamau

The Cree Indian Centre of Chibougamou (CICC) was set up 40 years ago in response to the Cree population's growing need for shelter in the lac aux Dorés area. The town of Chibougamau's history is closely connected with that of the Cree, and the CICC has become something of a refuge, a gathering place and a place for "recharging one's batteries" on a number of levels. In this spirit of help and support, the CICC now offers workshops of all kinds to promote literacy, help new parents, and provide advice and services in other areas. The creation of the Cree village of Oujé-Bougoumou in the 1980s obviously helped to reduce the number of Aboriginal people in Chibougamau, but, as at other points in its history, the CICC adapted to this change. There are now two and sometimes three generations of Aboriginal people living in Chibougamau, as well as young families who want to pursue their education and have decided to stay in town.

The CICC is trying to better target its activities by providing specific services: to reduce school drop-out, it offers help with homework; to combat the effects of homelessness, it has free meal services. There is growing demand in this area, even though Cree institutions are providing more resources after the recent signing of agreements with the two levels of government. However, we have to remember that it is not individuals that have become rich, but rather institutions. There are also major psychosocial needs associated with the effects of Indian residential schools. The Cree communities have already taken action on this issue, but the CICC also has a role to play.

Another CICC achievement is its documentation centre, which recounts the region's rich history through photos and documents, now digitized. The centre's objective was to make this information available. The CICC also operates a very successful arts and crafts boutique and a 12-bed shelter service; this service is just as important as it was in the beginning, especially for medical reasons.

In sum, the CICC is involved and is being called upon in many activities, services and events, but its greatest challenge is still in helping to improve relations between the different communities living in the town. It is a known fact that the Cree are mostly English-speaking, whereas most of the non-Aboriginal population is French-speaking. This situation means that the CICC is constantly playing the role of a linguistic and cultural interpreter. Community and municipal organizations are increasingly beginning to see the CICC as a partner, alongside the communities of Oujé-Bougoumou and Mistissini, in the fields of education and health.

If there is one message that the CICC would like to convey to all the people of Chibougamau, it is that there isn't just one "race." The CICC's actions, writings, workshops and conversations testify to its struggle against racism. Chibougamau means "point where the waters meet," and the CICC acts as a meeting point for different peoples.

JO-ANN TOULOUSE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CICC



3.4 Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) is 35 years old; something like the CICC in Chibougamau, it developed as a meeting place. Before it was there, people were walking around the streets and going to parks. There were restaurants, of course, but people needed a place, a space where they could meet any time, without necessarily having to eat or drink something. That's why the VDNFC was created. People from that time have become grandparents like me, and their grandchildren now come to the VDNFC with them, as though they were going to their children's school to have a coffee. Of course it's a place where people talk and tell a lot of stories, but it's also a place that meets their needs by providing services; the Centre had to adapt to the major changes that occurred in the town of Val-d'Or, the region and the surrounding communities.

The VDNFC also had to adapt in the case, for example, of the reaching of an agreement on Indian residential schools. We need to remember that people who had been victims at these schools had been able to bury their memories so deeply that they were "okay" as long as nobody mentioned the subject. When public attention was focused on these painful memories, many people relived the traumatic events. The Centre had to, and still has to, offer psychosocial intervention services, advice on managing compensation payments, etc.

The VDNFC's services complement all the services offered in the town. Aboriginal people who come to or are passing through an urban area often don't feel comfortable with the services offered and prefer to turn to the centres. That's why Native friendship centres also need to provide resources and information about old age pension plans, for example. As things change, these types of needs arise, needs that we would never have thought of but are nonetheless very important because Aboriginal people coming to urban areas are often completely unfamiliar with the Canadian social system.

The VDNFC also offers many services for young people, as its mandate includes monitoring children's development from early childhood onwards. It has had to focus a great deal on youth, as some young people find themselves in very difficult situations because their parents are caught between two worlds, as it were, in searching for a better quality of life, and the children suffer the consequences of living in this transitional state. The VDNFC helps young people to feel better, to be less at the mercy of these sometimes disadvantaged situations, and helps to prepare children for school with its head start program.

The VDNFC also has to deal with other challenges. Housing is a very important one in Val-d'Or. In the face of this situation, the Centre now has to act as a promoter of housing for First Nations people instead of waiting for the town to come up with a solution to the housing shortage. So the VDNFC is also planning projects to compensate for the lack of housing. Another phenomenon that the VDNFC has to deal with is homelessness, which has become a major problem. The Centre has to be prepared to take people in and offer them a safe place. The VDNFC has also expanded its daycare to meet the growing need and is acting as a developer in the building of an Aboriginal business centre, a single location that will offer a training centre, entrepreneurial advice, human resources offices and economic and community development offices.

OSCAR KISTABISH
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, VDNFC

Iwould like to share with you how I've come to occupy this position at the VDNFC, as I feel that my journey can help people to understand the role that this organization can play in the lives of Aboriginal people in the region.

I first came to the VDNFC to become the director of the Aboriginal Head Start Program (AHSP) and oversee its implementation at the VDNFC and Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre; some ten years later, the program is, by the way, still operating in both centres. After a few years, I left the VDNFC to work at Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT). For the very first time in my life, I was going to work in a non-Aboriginal organization, with all the changes that this implies on the level of organizational culture.

When I came to UQAT, I was asked to join various committees. I very quickly found that these activities were clearly not something that I enjoyed. I wanted to be involved in an organization where I wasn't the only one with Aboriginal concerns. When I had the opportunity to go back to the VDNFC as a board member, I didn't hesitate for a second: with all my heart, I wanted to be a full-fledged member of a group of people with whom I shared common interests. I've been on the board for four years, including two years as vice-president, and I can say that my involvement in this organization has met my expectations and is allowing me to make a concrete contribution to Aboriginal peoples' lives.

In regard to the issues dealt with and the Centre's organization, teamwork and administration, the VDNFC is divided into three areas: economic development, social development and community development. The VDNFC's approach is holistic and aimed at all age groups. Like the Regroupement, the VDNFC welcomes anyone, without regard to status or origin; if anyone needs help in Val-d'Or, whatever their problems, the VDNFC will mobilize its resources to help them. That is why, after 35 years of existence, the VDNFC is so important to the lives of Aboriginal people in the region.

JANET MARK
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, VDNFC



3.5 Centre d'amitié autochtone de La Tuque

Like the two previous centres, the CAALT is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year as well. The CAALT also resembles the other two in the way its services are organized, but the difference is that it doesn't have the same resources. Because of this, the CAALT has focused on developing relations of trust and opportunities for partnerships with community organizations and businesses in order to offer appropriate services that respond to the needs of Aboriginal people in the region. So, even though the CAALT doesn't have the same potential to hire professionals in health care, human resources or community development, it has forged alliances that nonetheless enable it to respond to the needs of Aboriginal people in La Tuque and the surrounding areas.

On a personal level, I feel a special attachment to the CAALT, as several members of my family are founding members of the Centre. I've been working at the CAALT for a long time and I've seen young people start their careers and develop their skills in the context of summer jobs or special projects at the Centre. This has convinced me of the importance of creating projects involving young families. I want to emphasize the RCAAQ's major role in developing programs for youth. There are also special programs for elders, which are fortunately now popular with governments, thus increasing our capacity to fund a wider range of services for elders.

The CAALT has recently been reflecting especially on the situation of young people. In trying to help undereducated youth, who are encountering many obstacles, to re-enter the job market, the CAALT realized that, as an employer, it was itself limiting the achievement of this objective by being reluctant to hire these young people. So the CAALT developed a new mandate of starting to give these young people the opportunity to enter the job market and join a team: seven people with this profile now work at the CAALT. To help it to accomplish its mission, the CAALT has called on volunteers with considerable life experience to help young people and families.

In terms of promoting and preserving our culture, we have set up intergenerational workshops that encourage discussion and the circulation of knowledge to young people. In the future, the CAALT would also like to develop social economy projects, but it will be important for these initiatives to start from the basis of mobilizing people, so that these enterprises will have solid foundations.

This will be another new challenge for the CAALT.

CHRISTINE JEAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAALT



3.6 Native Friendship Centre of Montreal

The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM), set up in 1974, is an organization whose activities now largely focus on providing basic services and on the Youth Centre, where Jorge Herrera is the coordinator. The NFCM has a policy of non-discrimination, and some of the programs, including the Native Parajudicial Services, have been around for nearly 30 years. The City of Montréal was recently added to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS). The funding obtained through this federal strategy mainly covers housing and health, but the NFCM has many other needs that could be addressed by projects that include a research component.

Unemployment, social exclusion, specialized health care, mental health care, drug addiction, homelessness. are all phenomena that the NFCM clientele face, and the needs in these areas are glaring. That's why the NFCM is very enthusiastic about the idea of belonging to the CURA: it hopes to be able to work with the partners to develop empirical data analyses that could help to legitimize the NFCM's observations in the field and increase the credibility of its requests for funding and support from government agencies and other potential partner organizations.

BRETT PINEAU
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NFCM

The NFCM's mission is comparable to that of a community embassy in the urban milieu. It offers support services for the Aboriginal community and, in this mission, youth is an especially important clientele. Young people are a priority, as we have found that it is imperative that they develop confidence in themselves and the future. To do this, they have to be able to believe that there are indeed more and more choices and a range of opportunities available to them to help them improve their quality of life. We also have to realize that for Aboriginal youth who come to Montréal, suddenly finding themselves in the big city is an enormous change. The NFCM is there to help them overcome the obstacles they encounter by developing their capacities and encouraging them to participate in the projects and activities that we oversee.

One of these projects is fairly recent and focuses on the social economy. Through young people's efforts and creativity, projects are set up to encourage them to take initiatives. The NFCM also organizes activities promoting artistic creation and culture, like soapstone carving. The NFCM uses every means it can to implement projects that help young people to develop their skills and self-esteem through art and traditional teaching given by elders.

The NFCM also organizes job circles and workshops that teach clients how to write CVs, prepare for a job interview, etc. It supports single mothers who have to contact government agencies and sometimes need help to understand the procedures. In every case, the NFCM must both listen and intervene, especially, and regularly, with medical institutions. This work mobilizes a great deal of the Centre's resources and represents a growing challenge as we don't have enough services adapted to Aboriginal people's needs in official institutions.

For all these reasons, the NFCM is in the process of developing partnerships on a number of levels. Several young people from La Tuque and Kahnawake recently formed a delegation that went to Mexico to become more aware of and acquire new knowledge about social entrepreneurship. By being in such a context, they also learned to make contacts outside the community, take off their blinders and keep an eye out for any opportunities that might arise. On the organizational level, the NFCM is clearly caught between the growing demand for frontline services and community services on the one hand, and its limited resources on the other. It sees the CURA as a kind of springboard that will help it to better meet its objectives and take an innovative approach to implementing its mission.

JORGE HERRERA
YOUTH COORDINATOR, NFCM



3.7 Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre

Although I have only very recently been involved in the Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre (CEAAS), I am committed to working for the Centre's development. The CEAAS has experienced many difficulties in the past few years, but there has been a significant improvement. It must acquire new tools to adapt to change and ensure that its staff can learn to work together to overcome challenges. The CEAAS celebrated its 30th anniversary a few years ago.

This short text describes some of its activities.

"Since 1978, the Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre (CEAAS) has developed and offered services and programs to Aboriginal people in the Senneterre region: Crees, Algonquins and Atikamekw. Over the years, through its determination and community involvement, the Centre has worked to foster real interrelations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this region. The Centre's clientele mainly consists of the Aboriginal community of Senneterre, the Algonquin community of Lac-Simon, and the Cree communities of Waswanipi, Oujé-Bougoumou and Mistissini.

The Centre offers shelter services, health care liaison, support for education and preschool activities for children aged 0 to 5, an information and referral service, an Aboriginal languages translation and interpretation service, a soup kitchen, an interpretation centre, an immediate needs assistance service, a food bank, a help desk and a patient transportation service. It also offers cultural awareness, drug addiction awareness, counselling economic development and suicide prevention programs. The Centre also ensures that the Aboriginal community of Senneterre is represented in various institutions and issue tables.

Nottaway Migwam is a sociocultural activity with the goal of promoting intercultural relations. Cultural workshops offered in schools are designed to give all young people a better understanding of Aboriginal culture. The 'Retour aux sources' activity uses stays in the forest, camping and canoe excursions to help Aboriginal youth learn more about their ancestral culture."

The CEAAS is very optimistic about its involvement in this CURA project.

PHILIP ETAPP
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CEAAS



3.8 Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (CAAL) was incorporated in 2001. This means that it is only a very recently-established centre. The main reason for this is that Joliette has not been a traditional meeting point for Aboriginal people. But when the road to Saint-Michel-des-Saints was opened, an increasing number of Aboriginal people chose to settle in or pass through this locality.

The CAAL has a team of thirty-four people and numerous volunteers. Young families represent the largest group among its clientele. In terms of its activities, the CAAL works extensively in the community by offering awareness programs about Aboriginal realities in schools. It also has a program to help students with their homework. Because the CAAL's main clientele is young families, parents play an important role in the planning of the Centre's activities; these parents meet in an annual assembly to recommend mandates to the CAAL.

The CAAL also organizes cultural transmission activities, which it sometimes carries out on Aboriginal lands, near Manawan. It offers a housework service, which creates jobs for its clientele, and is involved in training activities as well. In short, it is a dynamic centre that is entirely funded by social economy projects due to the 1990 moratorium on the funding of new Native friendship centres: the CAAL does not have access to the basic funding available to the CICC, VDNFC or CAALT, for example.

AMÉLIE LAINÉ
PROGRAM COORDINATOR, RCAAQ



3.9 Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles (CAASI) is the most recently-formed Native friendship centre: it opened its doors just under two years ago. We mentioned earlier the diverse urban contexts in which Native friendship centres operate, and that of Sept-Îles is unique in that the Innu community that is found there includes one group living in the town and another living outside.

But aside from this specificity, Sept-Îles is a meeting point for Innu from the surrounding communities who come to the town in search of services. It should be noted that a number of people want to leave their communities to increase their opportunities. Recent studies have shown that 7,000 people could benefit from the services the CAASI offers, even though it is still in its start-up phase. In the current context of the municipality of Sept-Îles, there is a crucial need for a place where young people can feel at home. This is a need that the CAASI must respond to.

JOSÉE LEBLANC
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAASI



3.10 Third Discussion Session

As in the earlier sessions, the participants were also invited to share their concerns, questions and viewpoints. Because this was the meeting's third and last discussion session, the participants focused on a number of subjects, including topics that had been touched on earlier.

Reviewing the Initial Research Programming

In October 2008, shortly before the application for funding was submitted in the CURA competition, a meeting had been held right here in Wendake to discuss the parameters, orientations, communication strategies and needs expressed by people in the centres as well as observations about the current situation. In this meeting, agreement was reached on some of the research issues. First, it was agreed that there would be an initial overall profile, a state of the Aboriginal population dealing with urban realities, as it were, and of the spatial dispersion of this population across Québec, in the urban areas where the friendship centres were located and in other urban areas where the Aboriginal population was beginning to mobilize.

Secondly, it was agreed that there would be a mapping of each centre's clientele and services offered, including a historical profile of the centres' services. Case studies for each centre could also be produced afterwards. The history of the institutionalization of the centres was also of considerable interest. Some of the centres' presentations noted the fact that they were working in partnership with other organizations. One of ODENA's objectives is to sort out these administrative and institutional complexities and trace the centres' ties with municipal, local or regional organizations. To date, this type of information has not been compiled or analyzed. During this preliminary meeting, it was also decided that a longitudinal study of the urban population would be carried out using semi-structured interviews (500) with various population samples.

Linking the CURA with Issues of Concern to the RCAAQ and the Centres

Questions were also asked about the needs studies under way in the various centres: would they be ended? Would they be integrated into the CURA? The co-directors explained that the needs studies will continue to be carried out in the same way as before: the CURA will not replace these initiatives. Instead, the CURA should be seen as complementing these studies so that the questions stemming from these needs studies can be explored more deeply. It was however agreed that information relating to these various studies will need to circulate among the CURA members. The project of producing a liaison newsletter to ensure the continual circulation of information was identified. This will be the task of the coordination committee.

The Regroupement is currently developing dossiers to combat poverty and social exclusion and improve public health province-wide; in the fight against racism and discrimination, the work is also being carried out internationally. The mobilization of knowledge encourages the linking of research activities and field practices; we should not be afraid to innovate in this regard, while keeping our objectives in mind. This could also mean seizing the opportunities presented by public events to highlight some of the research orientations on these issues, for example, during the annual public health gathering organized by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) or the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre's annual anti-racism day. These events could be used as opportunities to draft information documents or organize discussion workshops.

The friendship centres reiterated the urgency of launching research projects on priority concerns, especially since the researchers have shown interest in issues such as housing, poverty, elders, school drop-out, single mothers, etc. When the centres make presentations during parliamentary commissions, public consultations or awareness campaigns, they need the tools that are produced by research. And it is the same thing when they make funding applications: the centres are often refused funding due to a lack of precise data. The CURA should help to remedy this situation.

Regarding Militancy and the Researcher's Role

▪ **The Researchers' Question**

After hearing the centres' and the Regroupement's presentations and the directors' emphasis on seizing opportunities to highlight research on particular topics, a question was raised about the researchers' role in terms of militancy. Will the research be "sponsored"? Will there be guidelines or a committee responsible for deciding on this matter or will everyone be able to follow whatever line of action they believe in?

▪ **The Directors' Answer**

It was first clearly expressed that there would be no question of sponsorship; it is instead a matter of convergence—timing—between actual requests and research activities. If the CURA takes a position on how the research is used, it will then have to keep a close eye on what happens in the real world. That is the consequence of an open perspective.

Secondly, the Regroupement certainly doesn't expect the researchers and the CURA to become instruments of militancy. That is a matter for the Regroupement and the various friendship centres; it is part of their mission. The researchers will have to take a personal stance on this issue because militancy is a personal matter. In order to reassure anyone concerned about being constrained by the CURA in this, there is a need to be clear. The existence of an alliance is an opportunity to develop tools and data that can be used in the actions, and demands. The research, which will be rigorously conducted, will be there to reinforce the credibility of the demands, and to support the centres.

▪ **Additional Comments from the Researchers**

On the matter of objectivity, and in light of the Regroupement's answer, other researchers said that they agreed that the best way for researchers to support militant actions is indeed to help to advance knowledge by producing credible data obtained from solid research practices. They stressed the importance of being aware of the tensions that might exist but that it is possible to support militancy while conducting conscientious and rigorous research work.

Other researchers wished to share their own views on the issue of militancy. Some said that they had chosen to become associated with the CURA in order to be able to in fact directly or indirectly participate in the social movement of the Native friendship centres. In this regard, some wondered about the need for ODENA to arrive at a common and explicit position on militancy. Aside from the production of new knowledge, would there also be facets specifically concerned with questions of ethics and epistemology? These dimensions clearly play a part in the development of the social movement of Aboriginal people in urban areas.

Other researchers wanted to go back to the idea of a partnership. They felt that the key activity in a partnership is co-producing knowledge. From this perspective, carrying out traditional data collection is not consistent with the way that they define their role in research.

In order to publicize this approach, one would need to set up workshops that emphasize dialogue. By stressing the encounter, the meeting, it will then be possible to come up with something innovative and to truly co-produce knowledge.

Regarding the Strengthening of Practices

Some researchers wanted to look at the question of strengthening practices and to make some suggestions. The Native friendship centre movement has over the years necessarily developed practices that reflect its expertise. To support these practices, it would certainly be interesting to see how all the research work done in the area of community development might help the Native friendship centres to increase their effectiveness in their various fields of action. And here it is not a question of denying that the friendship centres have different areas of expertise, but it would be surprising if their practices were so radically different from what is being done in other fields and if there were no lessons to be learned. In a CURA project like ODENA, it can be important to keep an open mind to other initiatives that could enhance what is currently being done in the field.

This suggestion is in a way linked to the nature and scope of the knowledge mobilization initiatives that will result from the CURA. What will be useful internally, that is, useful to the centres in carrying out their action, and what might be helpful externally, for example, in the RCAAQ's representation efforts, will not necessarily be the same kinds of things. The clearer and more relevant the information produced internally, regarding practices, program implementation and the centres' vision, is, the more effective external actions targeted to governments or other bodies will be. It is important that everyone be aware of these differences in scale.

Points of Information on the Team of Researchers

The friendship centres' representatives wanted to learn more about the process involved in selecting the team of researchers. Why are there no Aboriginal researchers? Without questioning the competence of the researchers on the current team, they noted that it would be desirable, in the context of this CURA, that the Aboriginal perspective not only be "studied," but that it also imbue the analyses.

The co-directors agreed with this observation and said that they hoped that new Aboriginal doctoral students will join the CURA; there will certainly be procedures to facilitate Aboriginal students' inclusion in the project. In terms of Aboriginal researchers, one has to recognize that there are in fact very few in Québec at this time, for a variety of reasons. But it is hoped that this situation will change through the ODENA experience.

The Next Steps

Despite their good intentions, people are often extremely busy in their daily activities. To prevent these activities from taking over completely and undermining the CURA's progress, it is suggested that a working committee reflect on an action plan in several stages: short, medium and long-term.

Similarly, the Regroupement stressed that producing an overview of the current situation based on existing documentation has to be included in the timetables; and time must also be set aside for activities and workshops to familiarize the centres and researchers with this documentation. In order to act, we need more than just data.

The co-directors suggested that the working committee discuss various ways of linking research and the centres' action.

3.11 Decision on the Creation of a Working Committee

MANDATE

To ensure effective follow-up of CURA activities, the Assembly agreed to create a working committee whose mandate will be to:

- 1) Draft an overall action plan
- 2) Prepare a proposal for a governance structure

COMPOSITION

Since representing everyone's various statuses is one of the principles on which the ODENA Alliance is based, the working committee will be made up of researchers, representatives of the RCAAQ and the friendship centres, and one student. It was also agreed that the DIALOG network coordinator, Julie Cunningham, will participate in working committee meetings.

- **ÉDITH CLOUTIER**, Executive Director, VDNFC
- **JULIE CUNNINGHAM**, Coordinator, DIALOG
- **SUZANNE DUGRÉ**, Professor, UQAT
- **JOSÉE GOULET**, Executive Director, RCAAQ
- **JACQUES KURTNES**, Associate Professor, UQAC
- **CHRISTINE JEAN**, Executive Director, CAALT
- **XAVIER LELOUP**, Professor, INRS
- **CAROLE LÉVESQUE**, Professor, INRS and Director, DIALOG

KIM O'BOMSAWIN, Master's Student, UQAM



Appendix 1: Evaluation of the Activity

The Researchers: 7 Respondents

1 Overall organization

The respondents were unanimous in their satisfaction with the event's overall organization. Only one person claimed to be dissatisfied with the information communicated prior to the event.

2 *Did you have any particular expectations about this meeting? If so, please specify and indicate whether the meeting met these expectations.*

Three people said that they didn't have any expectations. Those who had expectations said that they wanted to: learn more about Aboriginal partners and their needs, identify the main research topics, understand the CURA's functioning, and adjust their respective expectations. Everyone said that the meeting had only partially met these expectations and that there was still work to be done.

3 *Do you think that everyone was able to speak openly and with confidence?*

The respondents generally expressed their satisfaction in this area. Some noted that the parties were able to speak in turn and that the meeting had been held in a climate of transparency, openness and respect. Others had hoped that people from the Centres would speak more, while emphasizing that the Centres' presentations had restored some balance to the meeting. Finally, having a discussion leader and working in small groups were suggested for the next meeting to make it less intimidating for people to speak.

4 *To ensure that all participants understand the orientations and purposes of the CURA project, would you like to have more information on certain areas (e.g. governance, objectives, funding, etc.)?*

Most of the concerns expressed here relate to the CURA's governance and overall functioning. Some people also had questions about the researchers' involvement (links between the researchers and the communities), while one respondent asked how people in the Centres will know who to contact for a particular research need. Another respondent said that the CURA's orientations and purposes will be defined and clarified during subsequent work sessions.

5 *After participating in this meeting, what role would you like to play in the ODENA CURA project? In what way?*

The answers varied from person to person: depending on the needs; by commenting on the projects and their orientations; by contributing to the research work or the field surveys. Some research topics were mentioned: helping Aboriginal children in Québec; housing; urban issues; mobility; poverty and insecurity; emergence of an Aboriginal middle class.

6 Overall assessment of the meeting

Strengths: The informal discussions that encouraged more personal contacts between researchers and partners; the collective discussion on the kind of project being set up; the pleasant atmosphere; the exceptional organization; the RCAAQ's presentation; the presentation on the Social Economy CURA; the friendship centres' presentations; the discussions on the CURA's orientations.

Weaknesses: A brief summary of the proposal would have helped to satisfy people who wanted to talk about the content right away; the researchers spoke too often; the delays; the overly "academic" discussions; people from the Centres didn't seem to be addressed in the discussions; not enough time was allotted to discussing the next stages; the Centres' presentations took a bit too long; two full days are needed the next time.

The Centres: 13 Respondents

1 Overall organization

Almost all the respondents said that they were satisfied with the overall organization of the event. Some people had “neutral” feelings, and only one person was dissatisfied with the information received prior to the event.

2 Did you have any particular expectations about this meeting? If so, please specify and indicate whether the meeting met these expectations.

All the respondents had expectations. Some people wondered how people were going to work together and about everyone’s responsibilities in the CURA; so they expected to obtain more information about the project, to learn more about the objectives and action plan. One respondent felt that this meeting had been the time and place to connect the work required to the CURA’s implementation (developing the research topics). Others expectations concerned the discussions with the researchers.

3 Do you think that everyone was able to speak openly and with confidence?

Most of the respondents said that they were satisfied. Although people were a bit shy at first, the friendly and professional atmosphere among the participants allowed people to express themselves freely. One respondent felt that it was very important for people to stand up and be counted. Nevertheless, a common vocabulary had to be found to facilitate discussion. It was also important to ask people who don’t usually say much to speak out and share their feelings. One respondent also felt that there were some differences in people’s vision of partnership, but acknowledged the openness of most participants. Small group discussions should be encouraged at subsequent meetings.

4 To ensure that all participants understand the orientations and purposes of the CURA project, would you like to have more information on certain areas (e.g. governance, objectives, funding, etc.)?

Several respondents wanted to have more information on the CURA’s funding, way of functioning and governance. One person wanted more information on the action plan and to have a follow-up of current projects. One respondent wanted to know whether the groups in Trois-Rivières and Chicoutimi will be approached, in saying that this would be relevant.

5 After participating in this meeting, what role would you like to play in the ODENA CURA project? In what way?

Several people mentioned their desire to be involved in all stages of the CURA project. One respondent hopes that all the friendship centres will respond in a dynamic manner. A number of research topics were highlighted: support for young people and elders to prevent them from losing their Aboriginal identity; Aboriginal social movements; the socioeconomic impact of a friendship centre in the urban dynamic; challenges faced by young people; the Aboriginal middle class; poverty and elders’ isolation, urban dynamics and intergenerational relations; tools to reduce negative impacts. One respondent stressed the importance of the Centres being partners on all levels and of working on a basis of consensus.

6 Overall assessment of the meeting

Strengths: The many resource persons present; the quality of the work done; the clear answers; the Power Point presentations; the very great differences between the actors; a well thought-out and extremely relevant project; the documentation; the launching of the project; the series of presentations by the Centres.

Weaknesses: The need for more discussion time; the way of gathering the comments; a meeting that was too theoretical; too short an introduction for such a complex subject; the lack of variety in the means of intervention (speaking in turn / round tables, small groups, etc.); the impression that the objective of starting out on the same shared bases and targeting common objectives had not been reached.



Appendix 2: Participants

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