The story of a successful partnership between Aboriginal leaders, practitioners and researchers engaged in a knowledge coproduction approach: The creation, implementation and achievements of the ODENA Research Alliance

Carole Lévesque
Professor, Institut national de la recherche scientifique. Co-director of the ODENA Research Alliance
carole.levesque@ucs.inrs.ca

Édith Cloutier
Director, Val-d'Or Friendship Centre. Co-director of the ODENA Research Alliance /edith.cloutier@caavd.ca

Tanya Sirois
Executive Director, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec
tanya.sirois@rcaaq.info

Ioana Radu
Doctoral Candidate, Concordia University
oanarw@gmail.com

Rolando Labrana
Research Assistant, INRS, Centre Urbanisation Culture Société /
rolando.labrana@ucs.inrs.ca

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, research partnerships between universities and Aboriginal organisations and communities[1] have flourished across both Québec and Canada (see especially Asselin and Basile 2012; Cook 2013; Hanson and Smylie 2006; Lachapelle and Puana 2012; Lévesque 2009; Lévesque, Apparicio et al. 2012; Smithers Graeme 2013). Whether they are inspired by the premises of collaborative or participatory research, emphasise the voices and knowledge of Aboriginal people themselves, aim for a well-grounded and situated understanding of Aboriginal realities, or seek to document Aboriginal approaches and perspectives in the areas of education, the environment or health, these partnerships necessarily lead to new joint research practices that often have tremendous potential for social change. It was in this context that the ODENA Research Alliance[2] (www.odena.ca) was set up in 2009,

thanks to a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) under the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program (www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/cura-aruc-fra.aspx).

Bringing together representatives of ten organisations of the Québec Native Friendship Centres[3] movement, Aboriginal intellectuals from various backgrounds, researchers from seven universities as well as fifteen students, ODENA aimed, from the very beginning of its activities, to develop new knowledge bases derived from the meeting of scientific and Aboriginal knowledge, expertise, practices and cultures, in order to: 1) offer alternative and innovative avenues to understanding and responding to the individual and societal challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples in cities in the Province of Quebec (whether affiliated with First Nations, Métis

1. In Québec, the expression "Aboriginal community" refers to a place designated as an Indian reserve or northern Aboriginal village.
2. The term ODENA means "the city" in the Anishnabe language. The ODENA Research Alliance focuses on Aboriginal people in Québec cities. It has been headed, between 2009 and 2014, by the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), an umbrella organization for the Québec Native friendship centre movement, and Institut national de la recherche scientifique (Université du Québec).
3. Native Friendship Centres are community-based service organisations established in a number of Québec and Canadian cities. The first Native Friendship Centre was established in Winnipeg in 1951, and the first in Québec was the Chibougamau centre, created in 1969. There are now some 120 Friendship Centres across Canada, including 10 in Québec. Their activities are targeted to Aboriginal people living in urban areas. Initially, when Aboriginal people left their communities of origin (reserves), they very often found themselves isolated and without adequate services or support. Today, Native Friendship Centres have become "key catalysts of action and solidarity for urban Aboriginal people, places for learning and training, and meeting points where help is given in areas such as housing, health care, education, the fight against poverty, assistance with homework, and elder support" (Lévesque and Cloutier 2011) [*our translation*]. They act as incubators of social economy and human development, for the benefit of a growing Aboriginal population.

or Inuit); 2) support their social, economic, political and cultural development; and 3) highlight the collective action of the Native Friendship Centres.

To accomplish this, it was necessary to create an integrated and joint mediation, governance, and research structure. This strategic work preceded the actual establishment of ODENA, as the relationships between several researchers, leaders, and Aboriginal representatives concerned had been formed since 2005 and had developed on a number of occasions, in both the academic and Aboriginal milieus, before the grant was obtained in 2009. Thus, the ODENA Alliance is the result of an existing collaborative process, which led the members to jointly identify, well before they had decided on which research activities to undertake, the knowledge sharing issues, the ways in which the partnership would function and common values.

When the ODENA Alliance began its work, an important lack of knowledge existed in Québec regarding the Aboriginal population living either temporarily or permanently in the province's cities: a rapidly growing population whose needs and challenges are complex, varied, and increasing (Environics Institute 2010; Lévesque and Cloutier 2013). Even with some sectoral studies in the 1990s and 2000s, no overall assessment had yet to determine the scope of existing knowledge and little or no studies proposed concrete actions or interventions. The lack of knowledge was thus combined with a lack of tools

and mechanisms that would allow research findings reaching academics from various disciplines, as well as Aboriginal practitioners, actors, and decision makers. Even fewer studies incorporated Aboriginal knowledge, approaches, practices and perspectives into their design and methodology. Moreover, the human development, social reconstruction and decolonization initiatives launched over the preceding decades by the various Québec Native Friendship Centres, had not been characterised or given a summary description. Thus, it was important to document these initiatives, to define the practices that had facilitated their implementation, to recognize and value them at the local, regional, national and international levels, to draw lessons from them, and to identify avenues for future work and action.

If the earlier collaborations had enabled academic and Aboriginal partners to share, discuss and exchange different types of knowledge during study or training days, talking circles and workshops and seminars, the creation of a new alliance would now call for an increased pace of activities, including forging constructive relations and a new epistemic environment where ideas and questions could be jointly debated, and developed. Conditions also needed to be created that would further these relations in the long-term, as well as the partners' agreement on a process that would allow the ethical and respectful nature of the partnership to be preserved in all circumstances. Therefore, it was important that the existing colla-

borative relationships be transformed into bonds of knowledge coproduction and co-creation. In addition, the Alliance members also shared other concerns, such as a common will to work together, a desire to enter into relations of reciprocity and mutual trust, and a genuine wish to enjoy collegial and amicable relations.

The ODENA Alliance was thus built on solid and well-established foundations. But despite this particular and, in a way favorable context, it was still important for us to develop a governance structure that would clearly be joint in nature but also dynamic and flexible in order to meet the requirements of the partnership, face the challenges and obstacles unavoidable in any partnership experience, and fulfil our commitments in the areas of research and knowledge mobilisation, as proposed and encouraged under the SSHRCCURA program. In the next few pages, we will present an overview of our vision and governance structure. We will then give two examples of knowledge co-creation projects carried out under the aegis of ODENA: 1) the Québec-wide provincial survey of 1,000 urban Aboriginal people; and 2) the scientific watch and monitoring project at the Minowé Clinic.

Each of these projects resulted from a specific combination of knowledge, research questions and expertise of the Alliance members. Each was also organised differently given the nature of the knowledge issues identified, the partnership approaches implemented, the leadership exercised, the members

concerned, the relevant disciplines and expertise, the methods used and the impacts. There is clearly no magic formula for a partnered knowledge coproduction research project in an Aboriginal context (or indeed in any other context). One must often innovate, overcome certain obstacles, re-examine established approaches, constantly meet new challenges, and even change one's strategy along the way. Nor is there one single model that applies in every situation (Lechner 2013; Lévesque 2012). Each of the projects implemented under the ODENA Alliance has in fact evolved in its own way, even though certain common founding principles were shared by all participants.

1. A SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND COMMON PRINCIPLES

Between 2009 and 2014, the ODENA Research Alliance brought together nearly 50 people from various academic disciplines, with diverse expertise and experiences, and with different types of knowledge. It was therefore crucial, right from the start, to create conditions that would encourage the expression of everyone's points of view, aspirations and concerns in regard to the partnership's governance and operation. During the 2009 ODENA start-up general assembly,[4] a temporary working committee was set up to define a charter of values and determine the governance bodies that would provide a solid foundation for future activities. This working committee met on several occasions in the first year in order to present an operating structure that would rally all participants. From the onset, it was decided that all representative bodies of the ODENA Alliance would be equal and joint in nature (in terms of both academic and Aboriginal representation) and would participate in decision making at all operational levels of the partnership, from the leadership jointly shared between an academic leader and an Aboriginal leader, to the composition of the different committees It was also agreed that an Aboriginal elder and an Aboriginal youth representative would sit on the Steering Committee, which replaced the temporary working committee in the second year and became the decision-

making body for the Alliance in the areas of ethics, research, training and knowledge mobilisation. In this regard, the concern of Aboriginal partners was to ensure that the voice of all segments of the Aboriginal population in Québec cities could be heard through these representatives. For the researchers it was important that a seat on the Steering Committee also be reserved for a student.

This governance structure reflected the composition and diversity of the Alliance, and was an expression of the importance given to the development of trust, even before undertaking the actual research work. This planning step proved to be essential to identify the respective expectations of researchers and Aboriginal partners, to clarify member status and roles, to determine research needs and approaches, and to decide mechanisms and tools likely to ensure cohesion, liaison and communication within the Alliance. It also allowed the identification of common values on which the ethical responsibility of the Alliance was based and that reflected the desire of the participants for equality and harmony on all occasions.

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4. A record of this founding general assembly is available in French- (Lévesque, Cloutier et al. 2009a) and English (Lévesque, Cloutier et al. 2009b). Both documents are available online: www.odena.ca

These values are as follows:

Respect	Respect is based on the full recognition of each individual's knowledge and expertise, be it scientific knowledge, Aboriginal knowledge, spiritual knowledge or experiential knowledge.
Equity	Equity is manifested in the importance of taking into account and valuing the respective contribution of each individual to the collective production by jointly signing, for example, works accomplished, whether in the form of research documents, collections of texts, presentations or even scientific articles.
Sharing	Sharing emphasizes the importance of pooling everyone's experiences and expertise, and of increasing the opportunities for meeting and exchange by creating favorable conditions encouraging a space for everyone to speak, in both the academic and Aboriginal milieus.
Reciprocity	Reciprocity translates in belonging to a collective project, where the benefits are collective and have an impact in both the academic and Aboriginal milieus and take different written or oral forms, unlike a solely individual appropriation.
Trust	Trust is evidenced in adherence to a joint infrastructure and in the desire to preserve the quality of the relations and ties formed through the activities and initiatives implemented.

Once the governance structure and charter of values had been defined, there was still a need to develop the tools and mechanisms that would allow these different parameters to be concretely embodied and for our common principles to be expressed in specific actions and initiatives. How then do you make sure that this common vision can be verified in the choice of future actions and activities in the context of such a broad research alliance? The Steering Committee played a major role in this regard by making the decision to support only research projects and public dissemination activities that necessarily brought together researchers, Aboriginal representatives or intellectuals, and students. Whether in the case of a university seminar, a training day in an Aboriginal organization, a knowledge sharing workshop or the participation of an ODENA delegation to a national or international scientific conference, the presence of the three main groups of actors was essential to the intellectual and financial involvement of the Alliance. In our view, equity, sharing, and reciprocity must be embodied on all fronts to avoid reproducing divisions between Québec society and Aboriginal societies, between researchers and other knowledge holders.[5]

Rather than curtailing the activities of members, the implementation of this provision led to some 40 distinct events held over a five-year period and to more than 200 presentations or contributions of various kinds. Overall, these activities reached more than a thousand people and mobilised, in one capacity or another—organiser, commentator, facilitator, mentor, speaker, expert, researcher, student, resource person—almost all the members of the Alliance. Similarly, the sectoral grants obtained by the members out of the general funding envelope could only be allocated if the team included both researchers and Aboriginal partners. The request for financial assistance could come from either researchers or partners, but in all cases had to reflect convergence and collaboration between the academic and Aboriginal milieus and had to be consistent with the common scientific programming.

5. This represents a small contribution to a much larger social phenomenon, but it is likely to bear fruit over the longer term and to help change attitudes and mentalities, especially in universities where elitist behaviours still too often predominate over socially engaged research initiatives with an objective of solidarity.

The ODENA Alliance also innovated by setting up collective research projects in parallel with the sectoral research activities. There is a large distinction to be made in this regard. The aim of the collective projects was to coproduce knowledge regarding federative, interdisciplinary and interinstitutional issues, in contrast to the sectoral projects that focused on a specific theme. The collective projects mobilised several dozen people over a number of years on issues jointly identified by the researchers and partners. The impact of these projects was the creation of knowledge bases which became reference tools for all Alliance members (an example of such a project will be given in the next section). The sectoral projects were in turn developed by teams of at least three individuals and expressly targeted public policy issues such as poverty, community justice, health, homelessness, racism, security and education. This resulted in reflection or analysis papers which recorded various types of knowledge and approaches, and were made available to all members.

By committing ODENA to a path where collective knowledge sharing initiatives went hand-in-hand with sectoral initiatives, the values shared by the Alliance members were reflected in the scientific programming, in the choice of an integrated knowledge coproduction approach, in the identification of the issues to be studied and in the nature of the anticipated impacts. It was indeed essential that the research topics chosen could be linked to societal challenges. It was also essential that the new knowledge be based on an equal relationship between the participants and that these initiatives also cover the entire spectrum of the partnership experience. We did not in fact separate the research activities from its other underlying activities and that ensure both its scientific and social relevance. The creation of new data and their processing and analysis were carried out in synchronicity with, and were complementary to, the dissemination, transmission and reciprocal learning activities.

In the area of community-partnered research there is often the hope that the results obtained can meet the needs identified by the partners or practitioners (to use the terms employed in academic discourse). This way of understanding the partnership, where some participants have research skills and others, research needs, did not suit the Alliance members, as it points to a relationship that is more instrumental and mechanical than constructive and organic.

Aboriginal partners may of course want to learn more about a particular research topic or research sector—just as researchers do—but their concerns are also linked to their practices, experiences, knowledge, skills and aspirations. In our view, reducing the Aboriginal contribution to the question of their needs for knowledge which researchers are being called upon to meet introduces an unequal dimension into the relationship and, indeed, a hierarchy in the relations that people entertain with the sphere of knowledge, whether scientific or other.

By linking research questions and societal challenges, that is, challenges reflecting the problems and issues that the partners are faced with in the context of their work, researchers are able to clarify their research questions and renew them in light of the concrete realities and manifestations that they hope to circumscribe, while also increasing the social and citizen impact of their work. At this point the terms of the relationship change as the researchers come to recognise that their partners also hold knowledge and are able to identify collective avenues for solutions to the challenges that they face. Moreover, by combining research activities and knowledge transmission mechanisms, partners become part of a dynamic and interactive relationship. In an additional measure, this relationship focuses on the high points of the research: the implementation, analysis steps, dissemination, transmission and mobilisation in the relevant areas, both academic and Aboriginal. These are the bases on which the two following examples rest.

2. An unprecedented provincial survey of the Aboriginal population in Québec cities

2.1 Context

As previously stated in this document, the Aboriginal population in Quebec cities, despite a marked growth since the early 1990s, had received little attention from researchers prior to the creation of the ODENA Alliance. More specifically, most of the existing studies had concerned the city of Montréal and, to a lesser extent, the city of Val-d'Or (see Dugré and Thomas 2012; Jaccoud and Brassard 2003; Laplante and Potvin 1991; Lévesque 2003; Montpetit 1989). The project to conduct a provincial survey of a representative sample of the Aboriginal population had been discussed from the start by ODENA members, and the Steering Committee quickly assumed the responsibility for the survey's characterisation and implementation. Not only had such a survey, at such a scale, never been conducted in Québec, but the lack of information on the living conditions of this population also made the work of local actors more difficult and made it harder for practitioners to effectively target their actions, expand their initiatives and more adequately respond to the growing and increasingly diverse needs of this population. From the perspective of actual research, this lack of data prevented exploring new ways of understanding and explaining the urban and citizen realities experienced by a growing proportion of the province's Aboriginal population.

After numerous discussions on the most appropriate methodological tool to employ, it was agreed that the survey would be structured around a semi-open questionnaire (rather than, for example, a single quantitative tool with closed questions) and would be addressed to Aboriginal people, both men and women, over 18 years of age. The survey was administered to the target population in urban areas where Friendship Centres are present and expanded its concept of residence to include long-term, short-term and transit contexts influenced by personal, family, work or study circumstances. From the onset, we were aiming for a sample of 500 to 750 people in order to obtain a large enough initial profile of the realities and living conditions of the population and a methodological representativeness for each of the cities targeted. Ultimately, thanks to the support and availability of the staff at the Friendship Centres and several other public organisations, 1,000 people were surveyed over a period of three years. The questionnaire included approximately a hundred main questions[6] and covered a wide range of topics and themes, such as: identity; mobility; marital and family status; housing and living conditions; schooling; traditional knowledge; occupational activities; ties with the land and communities of origin; relations with Aboriginal people and other citizens; and community life. These were jointly identified by researchers and Aboriginal partners during fifteen work sessions extending over a six-month period and involving several actors, including members of the Steering Committee, the survey scientific committee and participants from the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec and the various Friendship Centres.

Even the questionnaire design required several stages of definition, selection of variables, organisation of content and validation. We wanted to gather quantitative information, but also hear the people met share their concerns and aspirations. Before being conducted on a provincial scale, the questionnaire was tested on roughly a hundred people living in Val-d'Or and Sept-Îles. This first field test helped improve the content, rephrase some of the questions and add sub-questions of a qualitative type in several sections. For example, it wasn't enough to broach the issue of schooling without acknowledging traditional teachings; it wasn't enough to discuss the person's family, without considering its extended members; it wasn't enough to talk about urban living conditions without asking the person about his or her ties with Aboriginal communities and territories. In short, apart from the usual categories found in a sociological survey, we added other categories reflecting the shared realities, values, trajectories, heritages, experiences and visions existing within the Aboriginal world. This was in addition to the ethical procedures implemented to ensure both the anonymity and confidentiality of the

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6. To be sure to cover as many situations as possible (men, women, youth, elders, workers, students, entrepreneurs, unemployed persons, trainees, etc.), we introduced certain distinctions in the questionnaire based on a person's life trajectory or experience. Important documentation work was carried out in parallel in order to design not only the actual questionnaire but also the data entry and processing tools that would allow for in-depth analysis of the data collected.

data collected, including an information letter and a consent form. No problems were encountered in this regard during the provincial tour.

2.2 Conducting the survey

More than a hundred people from diverse backgrounds, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including professionals and practitioners, were mobilised throughout the course of the survey to ensure that it was carried out under the best possible conditions. Many of these people represented different Aboriginal organisations, as well as community or educational organisations interacting with Aboriginal populations in the context of their mandates. They all played an essential role in each of the cities or towns concerned by the survey and in the various locations visited. The staff at all of the Native Friendship Centres in Québec also played a major and significant role in organising field visits as well as providing resources, office space and their own communication networks to the team. But more than this, the different Centres created the appropriate environment for administering a large number of questionnaires by holding ongoing discussions with the team of interviewers and arranging for the participants to be accompanied when necessary. [7] As for the Regroupement, in addition to being involved in the design and validation of the questionnaire, also developed specific communication tools that proved indispensable in promoting the survey and channeling the interest that it generated across the province. Among these tools were public invitation posters, messages posted on social media and Aboriginal communication channels.

Although the questionnaire was mainly administered to Aboriginal people that frequented Friendship Centres, the survey also enabled us to gather data on people that did not have particular ties with the Centres. Through this methodological choice, we wanted to ensure that we were reaching as many urban Aboriginal people as possible so that we could document a wide range of experiences. The questionnaire had in fact been designed with this in mind.

2.3 Impacts

Throughout the data collection period, considerable importance was placed on monitoring and regular dissemination of information resulting from the survey or regarding its implementation. Presentation of the methodological and organisational characteristics used in the survey, during each field visit—more than 30 visits in twelve cities—was ongoing as part of the regular meetings held by the Regroupement with its board of directors or with the Centres under its banner, during the ODENA Alliance general assemblies and during seminars or colloquiums held in either the academic or Aboriginal milieu, or during national and international conferences where an ODENA Alliance delegation was present. Synthesis texts, fact sheets, posters and PowerPoint presentations, were regularly made available to the members during these meetings or online on the Alliance website (Labrana and Abitbol 2013; Labrana et al. 2014; www.odena.ca).

Data collection for this vast provincial survey ended in the spring of 2014. Since then, preliminary results have been brought to light and a more in-depth qualitative, statistical and spatial analysis is currently ongoing for each of the cities concerned as well as for the province. Sophisticated tools (analytical software such as SAS, SPSS and NVivo) have been developed to ensure an adequate and rigorous treatment of the quantitative and qualitative data, and to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the survey participants. Ultimately, these results will be reproduced in an interactive public atlas allowing for consultation through various electronic features, the choice of which will be the result of joint decisions. A tool will also be developed so that each Friendship Centre may access the relevant data; similarly, the Regroupement will have access to all the data. For the moment, the raw survey data are being stored in a relational database for processing and analysis. Publications resulting from this work, including the present text, will be acknowledged and will recognise the contributions of the various participants.

Some of these preliminary results have already enabled us either to confirm certain already known trends or to identify several new realities. For example, we found that in the sample comprised of more than 82% members of First Nations,[8] the majority of the Aboriginal population in the cities and towns studied were women (65%). It was also a

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7. Measures had in fact been taken from the very beginning of the survey to plan for the possibility that some of the people to whom the questionnaire was being administered might need special support.

8. The sample contains a small proportion of Métis individuals (6%), as well as a small proportion of Inuit (4%). The remaining 8% includes people with multiple identities.

young population (with 40% of the individuals under 30 years of age). Of the 1,000 people surveyed, a small proportion (17%) owns a single-family home, with the most widespread form of housing being an apartment. In terms of languages, the mother tongue of more than 60% of the sample is an Aboriginal language; and this language is still largely spoken by the families living in urban areas (Labrana et al. 2014).

Aside from this socio-demographic information, one of the main sections of the survey as we have already mentioned concerned the mobility patterns of the Aboriginal population. A topic that Québec researchers had given little consideration to date, but that particularly interested the CURA Aboriginal partners. In general, it is believed that for the most part Aboriginal people in cities come from communities/reserves. The results brought to light have allowed us to qualify this observation and to see differently the ties and interaction dynamics between communities and cities. Indeed for far too long, communities and cities were seen in a distinct and even opposing fashion, as though a geographical, social and cultural boundary existed between these two worlds.

Our survey has opened up new avenues of understanding on this subject. For example, 29% of the sample grew up, between 0 and 18 years of age, in both a community and an urban area.[9] So, we are seeing the emergence of characte-

ristics of a way of life that is not only linked to the reserve or, on the contrary, to the city, but is effectively in symbiosis between these spaces and the places that one finds there. Although there are some variations in this combination of "reserve vs. city" in the different locations where the survey was carried out, the fact remains that, on the provincial level, it can be seen in nearly a third of the cases studied. An identical proportion was also found for people that had been born and had lived, between the ages of 0 and 18, in an urban area.[10] Ultimately, only two fifths of the people questioned (42%) had lived out their childhood and adolescence in an Aboriginal community exclusively.

In line with this new picture of the mobility patterns of Aboriginal people in Québec cities—an analysis of which will enable us to document the phenomenon in greater depth over the next few months—another aspect is worth mentioning, as we round out this part of the article. We observed another little known phenomenon, which has been briefly identified in the Canadian scientific literature but has not yet been studied in Québec. It is a form of residential or work alternating between a city and a reserve. This form of alternating means that a person may reside in an Aboriginal community and work in a city, or vice versa, when the person's home is in the city and he or she works in the community. This form of alternating may be daily, weekly, or even monthly. In certain cities, up to 25% of the individuals met practised this form of mobility. It is no

longer a marginal situation, but is instead the reflection of a new social and economic configuration, the manifestations and consequences of which need to be more closely examined in the near future.

3. Implementation of a scientific watch at the Minowé Clinic

3.1 Context

This second example of a knowledge co-construction approach under the aegis of ODENA is quite different from the survey, in that it is an intervention project to which a scientific watch was added and that it was implemented at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. In this instance, the researchers were partners in the context of a local initiative headed and managed by an Aboriginal organisation. The Minowé Clinic was created in 2011 in response to a need expressed by many Aboriginal people in the region to have access to culturally appropriate psychosocial and health care services: in other words, services that take into account their particular cultural, social, economic as well as historical circumstances. Too often, these circumstances are not known to the practitioners involved and are not considered when making a diagnosis or assessing a situation. The types of interactions between practitioners and Aboriginal peoples may also be affected by misunderstandings, given the different cultural markers and cultural codes.

9.   In order for us to quantitatively record this combination of community vs. city, we specified that the participant must have lived for at least nine years in one or the other location between the ages of 0 and 18.

10. In this case, the person must have lived in an urban area for at least fifteen years between the ages of 0 and 18.

Although many health and social services programs are now based, right from their very definition, on a broad acceptance of the role of social and economic determinants in deteriorations or improvements in an individual's physical or mental state of health, much still remains to be done in this area, when working with Aboriginal people both on reserves and in cities.

It is well known that the living conditions and the health status of Aboriginal peoples rank far below those of the Canadian population: a higher incidence of chronic illnesses; major psychosocial problems; obesity; legacy of residential schools; intergenerational trauma; and a lower life expectancy (CCDP 2013). Right from birth, Aboriginal children are exposed to greater health risks in all current categories (MacDonald and Wilson 2013; Smylie and Adomako 2009). In urban areas, the situation becomes more complex, as health problems are combined with other major difficulties: lack of appropriate care and resources; social isolation; increasing level of child placement; overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in both the homeless and prison populations; insalubrious and unsafe housing conditions; food insecurity; repeated situations of racism and discrimination; chronic unemployment. It has also been confirmed that many Aboriginal people do not trust the Québec or Canadian health care system, a situation that leads to other serious problems, including delayed diagnosis, more complex treatments, lack of support, lack of follow-up or preventive measures (Martin and Diotte 2010, 2011). Such a situation had been observed in the field in Val-d'Or since at least the early 2000s, and had gradually led to the adoption of concrete measures relating to health and social services.

During the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum in Mashteuiatsh in 2006, the Québec government and First Nations authorities had agreed to implement actions to reduce the health and social services discrepancies between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Quebec (APNQL 2007). One of the commitments made at the Forum by the Health and Social Services Minister was to establish a partnership with the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec to foster "the transfer of knowledge and expertise between the Friendship Centres and health and social services providers in the Québec system and to identify areas of complementarity in the services for Aboriginal people in urban areas" (Ouellette and Cloutier 2010: 7) [our translation]. It was in the wake of these commitments that the Minowé Clinic, which was in the planning phase, was implemented.

The main objective of this initiative was to renew the service offer in the region by emphasising culturally appropriate care, renewing the nature of the relationship between the patient and specialised staff, and creating a welcoming and supportive space for care on the premises of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. This was made possible through a partnership with the *Centre de santé et de services sociaux de la Vallée-de-l'Or* (Vallée-de-l'Or Health and Social Services Centre) and the *Centre jeunesse de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue* (Abitibi-Témiscamingue Youth Centre) (Ouellette and Cloutier 2010; Lainé and Lainé 2011). From the beginning, leadership and staff at the Friendship Centre (which was already an integral part of ODENA) wished to include ODENA researchers and students in their project in order to: monitor developments and achievements at the Clinic; expand the scope of the project by documenting similar experiences and initiatives at national and international levels; encourage the transfer and appropriation of knowledge in various milieus and with different types of clienteles; and to increase the project's impacts in both the Aboriginal world and scientific community. The scientific watch grouped these analytical elements into five main areas: statistical monitoring of interventions; knowledge documentation and synthesis; design of knowledge tools; dissemination; and transmission and appropriation of knowledge.

3.2 Conducting the scientific watch

These five scientific monitoring areas were carried out simultaneously starting in 2009 mutually sustaining and complementing one another. A team of five comprised of three Friendship Centre professionals and two researchers—occasionally assisted by students—interacted regularly in order to prepare reference documentation to monitor interventions taking place at the Clinic, to identify the Clinic's achievements and orientations, and to position the latter in relation to similar experiences in Québec, Canada or internationally. This interaction also allowed for dialogue to be maintained and for knowledge and skills to be shared during all stages of implementation at the Clinic.

• Statistical monitoring of interventions

In order to measure and evaluate the impact of the new service offer at the Clinic, data had to be compiled on a monthly and annual basis relating to the interventions carried out and construct a patient and, in some cases, family registry. Statistical files were used to record information based on current variables such as: type of intervention; gender; age; reason for consultation. These records were kept by the Friendship Centre staff and the researchers were responsible for processing and analysis.

• Knowledge documentation and synthesis

This component of the scientific watch aimed to gather the opinions and aspirations of the main partners: Aboriginal, government and academic; to document similar initiatives developed in the Aboriginal context in Canada or elsewhere; and to explore various approaches likely to inform the actions and decisions taken in terms of implementation. It was in this context that an initial discussion and knowledge sharing day was organised in 2009 in close collaboration with ODENA to: 1) assess the current situation of health and social services in the region; and 2) identify the needs of the Val-d'Or Aboriginal community in order to develop culturally appropriate services. The results of the presentations and discussions were reported on, summarised and analysed in an ODENA Alliance Cahier (Cloutier, Dugré et al. 2009) in order to keep a written record of the discussions and note the various partner expectations in this regard. It was on this occasion that the theme of social perinatal care emerged, which became one of the Clinic's leading orientations in the coming years. In addition to this first activity, researchers regularly met their Friendship Centre collaborators in order to effectively circumscribe empirical and theoretical advances that everyone could learn from. As of 2012, the team's concerns also converged on an approach that was still quite unknown in Québec, that

of cultural safety.[11] (see Lévesque and Radu 2014; Lévesque, Radu and Sokoloff 2014). The objective was to develop a documentary reference tool on the subject and build an analytical grid in order to define the Clinic's experience on a continuous scale. This was done and the information was shared during the regular meetings of researchers and Aboriginal partners.

• Design of knowledge tools

The information recorded was also processed and reproduced in various products to further its circulation and discussion. Factsheets, statistical profiles, case studies and PowerPoint presentations were gradually developed in order for results to be accessible and available. These tools also highlighted the results of other work carried out in the ODENA Alliance context, whether within the framework of the abovementioned provincial survey or that of another collective research project that led to the production of a new social and economic mapping of the Aboriginal population in Québec cities (Lévesque, Apparicio et al. 2011; Lévesque, Apparicio and Cloutier 2013).

• Dissemination and transfer

The fourth component of the scientific watch was to emphasise the Clinic's experience in a number of forums, whether in Aboriginal, government, or academic milieus. Between 2009 and 2014, approximately thirty talks or public pre-

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11. The notion of "cultural safety" was developed in New Zealand in the 1980s, in the context of nursing care for the Maori. Nursing educator Irihapeti Ramsden, a Maori herself, wrote extensively on the subject and publicized it internationally (Ramsden 2002). She documented this concept in her 2002 PhD thesis based on her own experience as a nurse and educator and in response to alarming concerns about Maori health and their dissatisfaction with health services that were considered to be culturally unsafe. According to the Health Council of Canada (2012), the aim of cultural safety is "building trust with Aboriginal patients [in] recognizing the role of socioeconomic conditions, history and politics in health." Cultural safety differs from cultural competency, the goal of which is instead to create "a health care environment that is free of racism and stereotypes, where Aboriginal people are treated with empathy, dignity and respect." A cultural safety approach in turn aims for real social change by proposing a re-examination of public policies targeted to Indigenous populations and a renewal of existing practices, in a perspective of decolonization and self-determination. The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, in collaboration with several ODENA Alliance researchers, made a firm commitment as of 2012 to work towards achieving culturally safe services, by focusing their action and intervention strategies in this direction and by launching an ongoing process of reflection and planning in this regard.

sentations on the experience of the Minowé Clinic were given before a wide range of audiences: in the context of the ODENA activities on the national or international scene or during colloquiums, seminars or round tables organised in the Québec and Canadian scientific communities. Each of these presentations, by either Aboriginal leaders and practitioners or researchers and students, where applicable, was supported by documentation collected in the context of the scientific watch. Especially noteworthy in this regard was the presentation given during the May 2012 consultation carried out in Montréal by the Health Council of Canada, which led to a synthesis text published in December of the same year (CCS 2012). In this report, the Minowé Clinic was singled-out as one of the most exemplary practices in Canada in the area of cultural safety. This is in addition to the presentations in Toronto (2010), Vienna (2012) and Austin, Texas (2014), to name but a few. A series of presentations was also given in the context of the ongoing activities of the Regroupement at the provincial, regional and local levels. The information was widely circulated, both to promote the Clinic's successes and to identify lessons likely to inspire the development of clinics in other Québec Friendship Centres.

- **Transmission and appropriation of knowledge**

The last task of the scientific watch relates to the transmission and appropriation of knowledge and skills by the practitioners following the opening of the Clinic. These were activities of a wider scope and impact that can only take place after a certain amount of time has passed as the practices tested and implemented have to be collected, defined and documented over time, and appropriate transmission and evaluation mechanisms have to be designed. This part began in the spring of 2014 and has already resulted in a 7-hour intensive cultural safety training session offered at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre in the fall of 2014. This first experience will be followed by others and will include a training booklet and teaching guide in 2015.

3.3 IMPACTS

The relationship that developed between the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre professionals and the ODENA Alliance researchers in the context of this scientific watch can be described as a "win-win" situation. In fact, the results provided different solutions to shared concerns, for the simple reason that the expectations of the actors in the field differed from those of the researchers, as is, of course, perfectly legitimate.

The common objective here was to document the achievements of the Minowé Clinic while incorporating them within the major national and international trends in this regard. For the researchers, the challenge was to bring to light information that would inform both the procedures and approaches adopted, and the actions taken in the national and international Aboriginal contexts. For the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre professionals, the challenge was to take ownership of this information and to integrate it into the strategic and operational orientations of the Clinic. These challenges were overcome in different ways, so that the researchers' skills and knowledge were channeled into the production of various analysis and synthesis products—case study collections; thematic files; statistical profiles; research reports—whereas the Native Friendship Centre professionals' skills and knowledge helped to change the Centre's organisational culture. In general, if researchers are able to circumscribe, categorise and analyse the parameters of the desired changes required to "achieve the provision of culturally appropriate and culturally safe services, it is the actors in the field who hold the key to integrating these services into an approach aimed at social change over the short and medium term.

The example of the partnership forged in the context of the Minowé Clinic clearly shows the importance of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners working together, and, in this case, the importance of renewing the service offer in the health and social services field in order to strengthen the relationship between the members of the Val-d'Or urban Aboriginal community and the Québec health care system. The work undertaken within the scientific watch helped build bridges of knowledge between the local and the global, between interests located at the level of a city or of a Native Friendship Centre, including explanatory frameworks whose scope reaches a broader scale.

Conclusion

What lessons, in regard to the research ethics with Aboriginal peoples, can we draw from these two very different examples and, more broadly, from the ODENA partnership experience? There are indeed clearly many lessons. For the purposes of the present document, we have identified five: 1) the importance of creating consensus on knowledge sharing issues; 2) the need for collaboration on all levels; 3) the recognition of the skills and knowledge of all participants; 4) the necessity of mutual learning; and 5) a commitment towards a more just and equitable society.

• The importance of creating consensus on knowledge sharing issues

We are not the first to note (Cochran, Marshall and Gover 2008; Kidman 2007; Lachapelle and Puana 2012; Lafrenière, Diallo et al. 2005) that the relationship of collaboration between the academic and Aboriginal worlds must first be built around common issues and concerns. It is not "research" as such at the heart of this relationship; it is in fact "knowledge." The consensus created in the context of ODENA finds its source in knowledge sharing issues. In keeping with this perspective, it was people's relationships to knowledge, modulated differently depending on whether these individuals were researchers or Aboriginal leaders or intellectuals, which was given priority. A stance of this kind is directly in line with the questioning that has recently emerged regarding the knowledge society: a society based on different knowledge systems, whether it is scientific knowledge or, as in the present case, knowledge held by Aboriginal peoples (Lévesque 2009).

• The need for collaboration on all levels

The research activities in the context of the ODENA Alliance, which were essentially based on approaches aimed at knowledge coproduction and co-creation, were not isolated from other social dimensions related to knowledge: that is, its transmission, sharing, circulation, dissemination and mobilisation. All of these dimensions were activated simultaneously in order to cover the full spectrum of the various phases of knowledge creation. If the endeavour to create such knowledge is fundamental, so is its social and scientific integration. This way of working within ODENA led the members to explore several avenues of collaboration, as was the case with the scientific watch, which was carried out starting from the field of intervention, and not, as often tends to be done, from a strictly theoretical understanding of social phenomena.

• Recognition of the skills and knowledge of all participants

The appropriation of a collaborative project is the concern of all who agree to work together, and who know that they will have to innovate as they go along and sometimes even take a few steps back before starting again on more solid ground. It is on this level that the main challenges encountered within ODENA arose. Indeed, even if the idea of a part-nership and of collaboration was taken for granted, albeit hoped for, this needed to be embodied in concrete actions. For a few of the Alliance members, both researchers and actors, this was not entirely self-evident. For the researchers, the challenge laid in accepting (or refusing to accept, in some cases) the demands of working in continual interaction, as well as in recognising and valuing knowledge approaches other than the scientific one. For the local actors, the fear that their own knowledge and skills would not be respected, or that the researchers "were coming to tell us how to do our job" was expressed on several occasions. We did not try to resolve these difficulties or ignore them or pretend that they did not exist; instead, we encouraged the expression of these concerns so that they remained open and present, thus obliging us to continue our vigilance, and to maintain in all circumstances the consensus and trust that framed the Alliance. As we stressed at the beginning of this document, there is no ideal recipe for success or single way of working in partnership. One has to recognise that the relationship developed is sustained by both its achievements and its difficulties; it is forged over time, and is constantly evolving; it calls for innovation and creation, and requires that we recognise the differences in the voices engaged in the exchange—those of both the researchers from various disciplines and the collaborators and partners from the Aboriginal world:

In order to be effective, dialogue must fulfil two requirements. On the one hand, it must recognise the differences in the voices engaged in the discussion and not establish beforehand that one of them is the norm and that the other can be said to be a deviation or backwardness, or to be showing ill will. If one is unwilling to question one's own certainties and evidences or to temporarily see things from the other person's perspective—and be ready to acknowledge that, from this point of view, the other person is right—dialogue cannot take place. On the other hand, the dialogue cannot end in any satisfying way if the participants do not agree on a common formal framework for their discussion, if they do not agree on the type of arguments that are acceptable and on the very possibility of seeking truth and justice together. (Todorov 2008: 285) [our translation]

• The necessity of mutual learning

This common ground is built around shared knowledge issues and is as well a space for collaboration and learning. It is in this regard that the value of reciprocity that we emphasised from the beginning is best embodied. The impacts of joint projects must be able to satisfy everyone's expectations, as well as their respective needs to understand the phenomena under consideration. In the same way, it is quite legitimate that some of these impacts also have a collective scope that extends beyond the project itself. So, with the provincial survey, we attempted to lay the foundations for a new body of knowledge

relating to the Aboriginal population in Québec cities; and, in the case of the Minowé Clinic, we took every opportunity to promote this innovative project in order to raise awareness and ultimately affect policy regarding cultural safety in regards to health and social services targeted to Aboriginal peoples. This is why there cannot only be one type of impact or a single way of working. One needs to explore a number of different avenues as well as develop tools to create and re-create the conditions likely to foster partnership work.

• A commitment towards a more just and equitable society

Aside from the favorable views we share on knowledge, it is a broader commitment that defines the ODENA Alliance experience which has led us towards social transformation. Our contribution is a modest one, but it is important because through our continuous interaction, we have contributed to an increased visibility and recognition of Aboriginal realities and issues in order that their potential for change and achievement may be reflected in public policy and strategies geared towards the urban Aboriginal population, as well as territorial communities (reserves and Aboriginal Nordic villages). From a different point of view, we also participate in raising awareness within Quebec society, the academic community and media, by sharing our methods and joint productions. Also, the impact of our works and experiences are not solely reflected in Aboriginal contexts or regarding Aboriginal realities. They are manifested in many other knowledge or

study areas in the field of partnership research, knowledge coproduction and social innovation.

From a reconciliation perspective, the Alliance has created opportunities for harmonious relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people based on joint approaches and achievements. Finally, the scientific community operating within the vast sphere of community-partnered research, knowledge coproduction and social innovation can learn from the lessons and adapt the tools developed by the ODENA Research Alliance. Whether one is located within an Aboriginal context or not, the foundational values of respect, equity, sharing, reciprocity and trust are key to successful research collaborations.
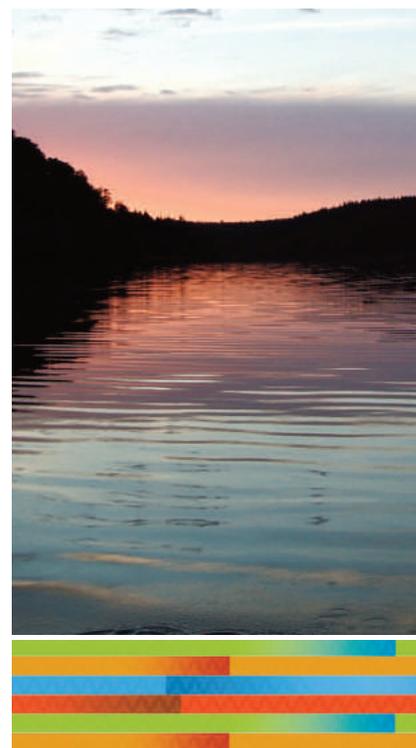
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