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SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: SHARING OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS REALITIES AND OF WINNING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

CONTEXT

The presence of Aboriginal students at the Val-d'Or campus, both in CEGEP de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue and at the Université du Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), has been increasing since 2000 (Cornellier 2015). At UQAT, the majority of students are admitted on the basis of relevant experience and the institution wishes to assure their retention and success. Indeed, the 2009-2014 and 2015-2020 development plans describe clearly the will to strengthen partnerships with First Peoples.

The intention is to “contribute to skill development and the well-being of First Peoples” and “improve community relations” as well as “establish an academic structure [sic] for the training and research development for and with First Peoples” (Université du Québec in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 2015).

For its part, the CEGEP “reaffirms its commitment to support First Peoples in their efforts to increase the level of post-secondary education in the communities” by establishing “appropriate training and using pedagogy sensitive to First Peoples culture and traditions” (Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 2011, p. 12).

This commitment and involvement of both institutions in Aboriginal students' education brings about a definite need for development and dissemination of awareness tools and of appropriate and culturally reassuring educational strategies.

OBJECTIVE

The *Synergie Cégep-Université* project's objective was to disseminate, among the CEGEP and UQAT faculty members and student services, winning strategies for teaching students from First Peoples. The data collected from 36 professors, teachers and lecturers have identified strategies implemented by them and obtaining success with Aboriginal students. The 32 Aboriginal students, in turn, shared their realities and challenges, and transmitted their success strategies and needs. In this gathering of information, the participating faculty members also mentioned wanting to create more exchanges between experienced teachers and new ones, and thus, share experiences, strategies and successes of each (Cornellier, 2015). The *Synergie* project research officer and Service First Peoples (SPP, UQAT) and First Nations Services (SPN CEGEP) advisers have therefore collaborated to develop a tool that would allow the dissemination of such information.

PRACTICE NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Data collection

During data collection, professors, lecturers and teachers of CEGEP and UQAT expressed educational challenges about instructional pacing (more frequent stops and lack of time to cover the material) of evaluation and trust relationship to develop with students. According to one of the teachers interviewed, the first language of the majority of them





come with several fact sheets to clarify certain notions mentioned by the interveners, namely *Indian Time* and in *cultural safety* concepts, to begin. The Moodle site, on which the videos are available, also hosts additional documents on education and autochthonous communities as well as reflexive and additional information tools.

Interviews were so rich that the project expanded rapidly.

THE CREATION OF THE VIDEOS

To create the videos, the research officer and two consultants have identified students and faculty members, who participated or not in the collection of initial data, as well as students' service representatives wishing to take part in the video briefs project. These people were chosen based on their experience, on their diverse profiles, and also on themes that we wanted to present. Interviews were so rich that the project expanded rapidly; the number of video briefs has doubled since its beginning. The project managers first analyzed all interviews to determine the quotes that were relevant for addressing previously identified themes and other themes have also emerged. Editing was done on paper and then completed with a technician from the audiovi-

sual services. The English comments were translated, keywords were targeted to give impetus to the presentation, and the Moodle site was created. The remarkable professional end result is authentic and rather documentary where observations, perceptions, impressions and analysis, alternating from students of different profiles and CEGEP teachers and stakeholders and UQAT, overlap. Some video briefs are practical; others are more informative, while others lead to reflection through presentation of ideas, perspectives, and various cultural aspects.

The contents of the educational videos consist of three main components: Aboriginal students and their realities (their history, their challenges, their adaptation to a new environment, the pace and post-secondary requirements); teaching practices (winning strategies, the approach and availability, learning and challenges—particularly regarding language—, concept maps); and interculturalism (the perception of education of Aboriginal students, the importance of family and community, of belonging, the grieving process).

