Institut nordique du Québec
Together for the North

FORUM REPORT

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON INDIGENOUS ECOSYSTEMS AND RESEARCH

Centre Nikanite/UQAC, Chicoutimi, October 4 and 5, 2023

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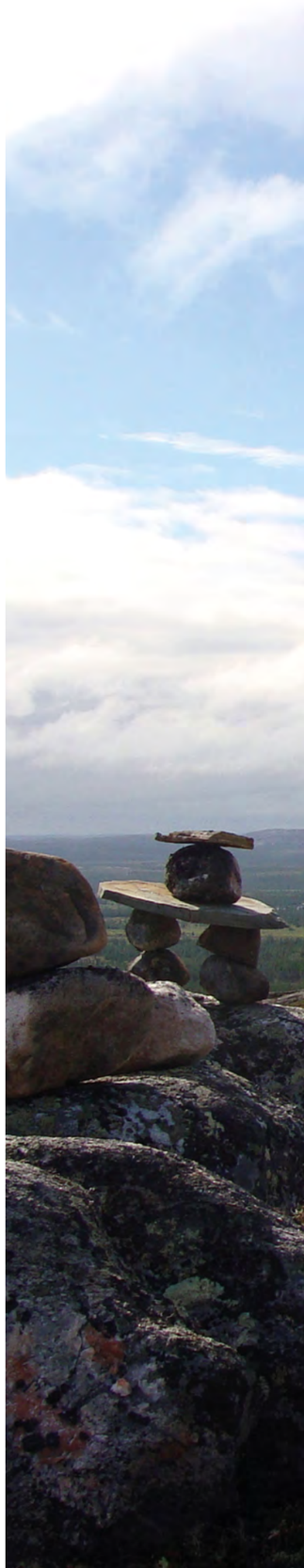


Introduction

“ I remember the elders, including my grandmother, used to say Tshishennuat: the poles would be inverted. The North Pole would become the South Pole and the South Pole would become the North Pole.

I wonder now whether they were referring to climate change?”

— Maryse Grégoire-Vollant[1]

[1] Quote from Forum.

Background

In March 2017, Institut nordique du Québec held its inaugural forum on the aspirations and research needs of the First Peoples[2]. It was an opportunity to identify the research priorities of Indigenous nations in the North with a view to developing INQ’s scientific program. These key considerations for northern Indigenous nations are included in each of INQ’s five research priorities:

Among the priority themes addressed in 2017, the Committee targeted the theme of climate change for its second forum, held in October 2023. The First Peoples who occupy the northern regions are front-line witnesses to rapid changes with significant consequences on their way of life. These changes are altering ecosystems, endangering not only the physical safety of northern residents, but also their food, cultural, and linguistic security. Climate change is also creating consequences that are affecting social aspects such as health and education. The territory and its resources are central to the issues facing northern Indigenous communities today. Research into climate change must therefore take into account the human dimension, as it is crucial to adapt to these changes, not only for the sake of biodiversity, but also for the present and future well-being of communities in the North.

[2] *Report on the Forum on the Research Needs of First Peoples,* Institut nordique du Québec, 2018. Available online at https://inq.ulaval.ca/sites/default/files/2023-11/rapport-forum-premiers-peuples-en.pdf

Research in Indigenous Settings

As we were preparing for the Forum, it became clear that our goal was not to question First Peoples about their research needs, but rather to highlight the projects they were conducting themselves. In light of these projects, we wanted to discuss how research can support communities in achieving their goals. The Committee members therefore focused on community-led initiatives, co-construction projects, and the dialogue these projects spark between communities and academics.

In recent years, Indigenous nations and communities have been coordinating and implementing pivotal projects, developing tools and building their capacity to take action. To support informed decision-making, research must be rooted in the social, economic, cultural, and political considerations of Indigenous communities.

Objectives of the Forum

1. **Create a collaborative space for Indigenous research specialists.** This inter-community and inter-national exchange enabled participants to mobilize their knowledge, share their perspectives on research, and discuss ways to better manage research with First Peoples. In addition to providing opportunities for networking, these exchanges also served as a platform to learn more about projects initiated by other communities and to draw inspiration from them, as well as to meet with the next generation of Indigenous researchers.

2. **Promote interaction between key players in research from the Indigenous and academic communities.** The participants' openness and willingness to listen to one another sparked constructive exchanges as stakeholders shared their respective realities, aspirations, and expectations with regard to research and the contributions it can make. Representatives from the research communities and Indigenous communities sat down together to come up with innovative models.

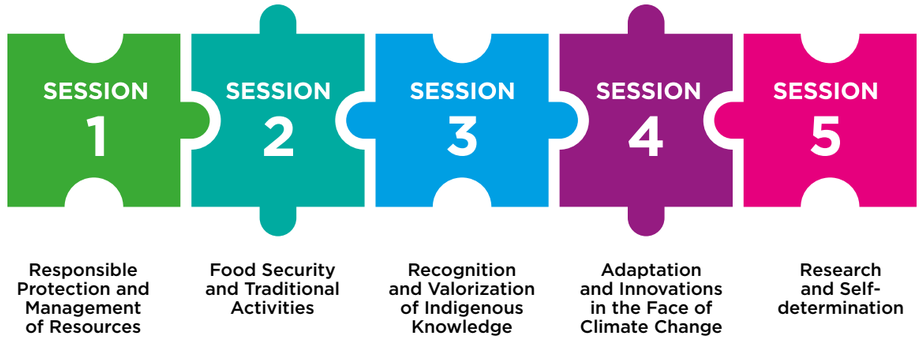
3. **Revisit the ethical principles and guidelines for research** in northern settings, including the *Research Guidelines* document (INQ, 2017)[3]. **La Boîte Rouge VIF** led a workshop to gather information that will serve to upgrade and promote the existing guidelines more widely (See appendix for workshop report).

"The people from the East, the people from the West and from the North: we're all here today. We've come from all over. We have to be able to walk on our land again without danger, like we did before. It's important to find solutions, to listen to one another, to ask questions, and to have discussions, for our children."

— Alice Germain

[3] *Research Guidelines*, Basile et al. INQ 2017
Available at: https://inq.ulaval.ca/sites/default/files/2023-11/lignes_directrices_recherche_en.pdf

Five Forum Sessions



This report summarizes the discussions that took place over the two days of the Forum:

> Front and centre during the discussions were the questions of how and why to conduct research in northern Indigenous communities, as opposed to what research should be about (The information to this effect contained in the 2018 report is still highly relevant.)

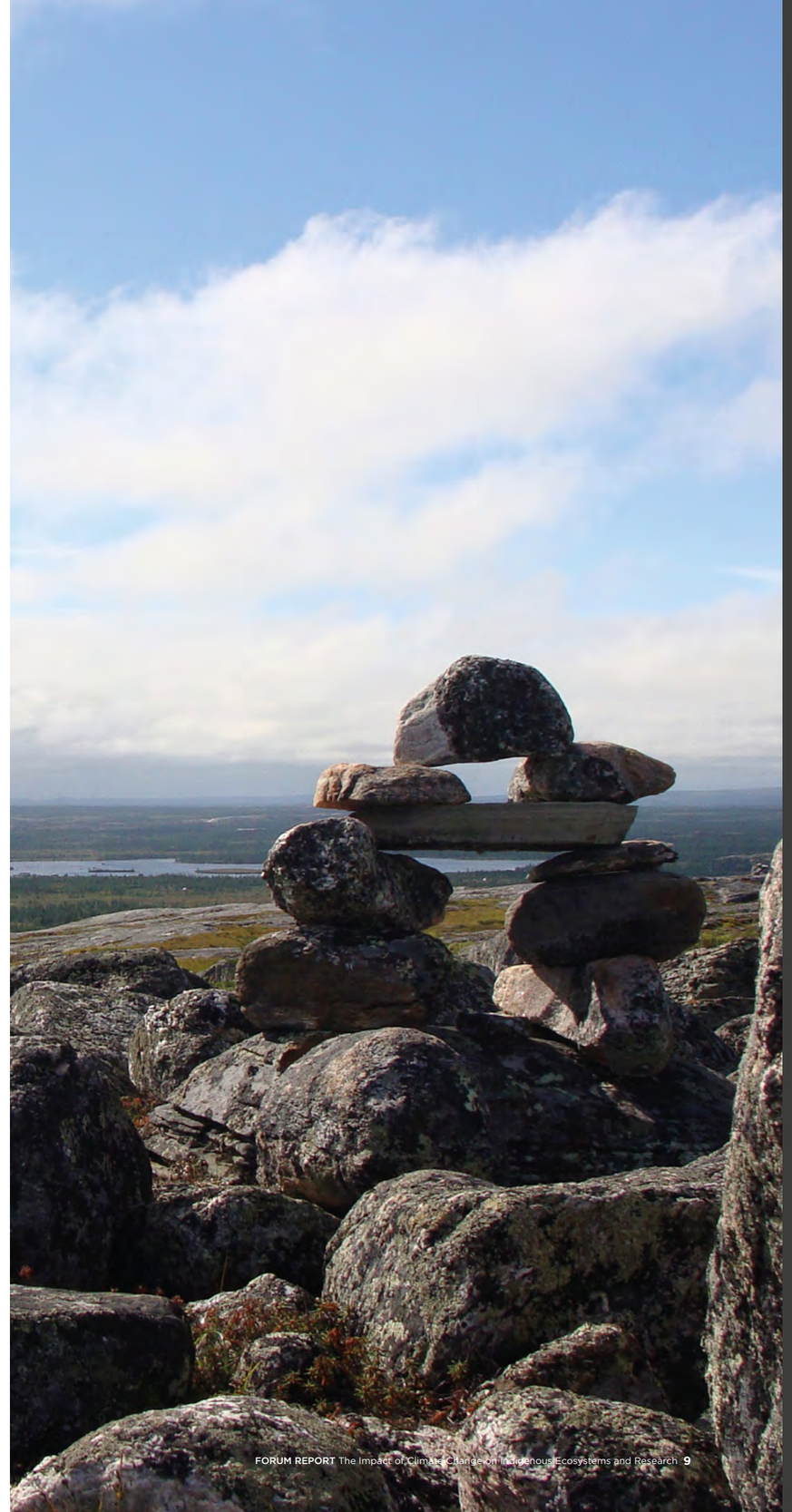
> Most of the presentations were given by Indigenous speakers who talked about the projects underway in their community or nation (Nunavik, Eeyou Istchee, Nitassinan) from their personal perspective, be it Cree, Inuit, Naskapi, or Innu.

> Due to a lack of Abenaki and Atikamekw participants, these two nations, who also share Québec's northern territories, were not represented.

> Simultaneous French–English interpretation was available for the duration of the two-day event.

> The quotes cited in this report were made by Forum participants, who validated them for the purposes of this report.

> The members of the First Peoples' Committee, as well as a number of other people who attended the Forum, proofread this document.



Session 1

Responsible Protection and Management of Resources

André Michel
Atlantic Salmon, Canada Goose, and Caribou

Nadia Saganash
Wildlife management in Eeyou Istchee

These presentations shone a spotlight on Indigenous perspectives of the land and its resources. As voiced by many of the Indigenous representatives, the land is much more than a place of subsistence; it is linked to history, culture, language, well-being, and spirituality. An effective management model must take all of these aspects into account while being rooted in traditional ways of governance.

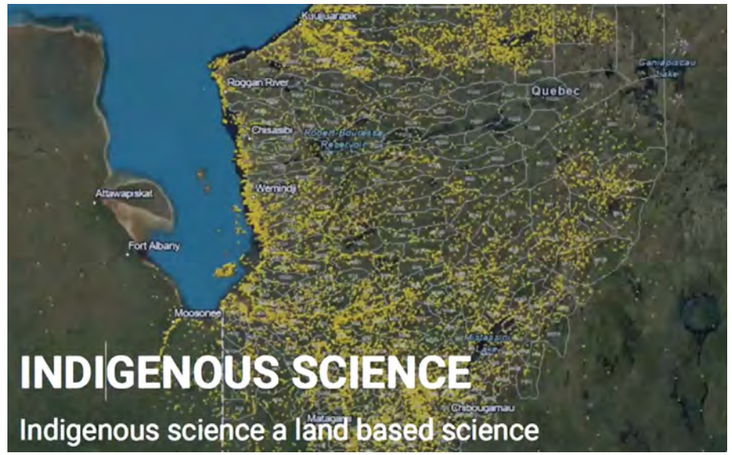
Experts on the Land They Occupy

The presenters spoke about the importance of knowledge-holders in their communities, including tallymen (*Kiniwhapmakinch in Cree*) or Land Guardians, depending on the nation, as well as elders, hunters, fishers, and trappers. As occupants of the land and with their wealth of knowledge about wildlife, these stewards are tasked with managing the land and the way wildlife resources are harvested. Traditionally, they would determine when, where, and the number of animals that could be harvested. They would strive to maintain a balance between the needs of families and the availability of resources, as well as the equitable sharing of those resources. Their knowledge covers aspects ranging from the geography and morphology of the land and natural and physical phenomena to animal behaviours, habitats, and migratory cycles.

> “To illustrate the scope of the knowledge held by our tallymen, here is a little anecdote from when studies were being conducted on the Rupert River diversion project. Walter Jolly, one of the tallymen affected by the project, met with a biologist who had come to his trapline to study sturgeon spawning. Mr. Jolly explained to him that he’d come at the wrong time, because the sturgeon weren’t yet ready to spawn. While the biologist was sceptical, Mr. Jolly insisted that the sturgeon would indeed spawn at that site, and promised to let him know when the time came. A few days later, the sturgeon began spawning, and Mr. Jolly called the biologist to let him know. Sure enough, when the biologist showed up, there were large numbers of sturgeon spawning there. The biologist was astounded, and wondered how Mr. Jolly could have known exactly when the spawning period would begin. The tallyman pointed to a bush and explained that when the leaves of that bush started to turn, it was a sign that the sturgeon were about to begin spawning.” (Nadia Saganash)

This knowledge is also tied to precise elements related to land occupancy: family hunting grounds and ceremonial, heritage, or burial sites, for example. It can be associated with life experiences, observations, learnings, or memories, and is linked to values. Sustainable and responsible land management hinges on all of this knowledge and expertise.

Land-based Values



This map shows Cree family traplines, while the yellow dots indicate sites occupied by the Cree over the years. The Cree have accumulated a wealth of knowledge about the land over generations that is impossible to quantify. As the Cree saying goes, "Behind every tree, there is a Cree." (Source: presentation by Nadia Saganash)

Land-based knowledge and practices are connected to values such as sharing, mutual aid, and respect. This results in specific knowledge including where, when, and what to hunt, and which part of the animal to use depending on one's needs, its medicinal properties, and other factors. The same is true for practices: how to skin an animal and use all its parts, harvesting only what you need, making tools, and connecting with your spirituality. For stakeholders, respect for animals requires a deep sense of humility and an acknowledgement of the intimate and sacred ties that bind humans to the land and the animals. Scientific research, including its methodologies and practices, must respect the nature of these ties.

> For a culture that revolves around an emblematic species like the caribou, as it does in Innu culture, the loss of ties to the land and the caribou is catastrophic." (André Michel)

When access to the land and its resources is restricted, the transmission of cultural, linguistic, and social values becomes an issue. This is a concern for many communities, who would like their young people to have access to more training programs. Fortunately, research can help promote this transfer of knowledge from the elders to younger people. For example, scientific teams could include in research programs an educational component that would allow youths to acquire hands-on and technical scientific knowledge they could subsequently employ for the benefit of their communities.

Traditional Forms of Governance

André Michel and Nadia Saganash stressed the importance of maintaining and revitalizing the traditional forms of governance that were dismissed by the colonial system and replaced with new, land management and monitoring structures. Projects such as Land Guardians programs and agreements like the *Compréhension commune sur Atiku (caribou)*, which are based on sharing, mutual aid, and respect, are a sign of the reappropriation of traditional forms of governance within highly concrete projects.

> For our nation [Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee], our decisions, our approach, the policies we put forward are always based on our traditional management system. Our tallymen are the pillars of this system, and they ensure its protection by carrying on their traditional activities, their land occupancy, and their deep knowledge. Without them and their knowledge, there are many things that could never have been accomplished." (Nadia Saganash)

Contemporary land decisions involve constant negotiations with various municipal, provincial, and federal authorities, who have different visions of land use and management. For example, sport hunting and recreational activities can be thorny subjects that expose very different conceptions. André Michel and Nadia Saganash stress the importance of incorporating Indigenous values at the political level, by adapting and applying laws and regulations, which can target concrete situations.

> To ensure sustainable development that takes into account Indigenous knowledge and values, we have to decolonize policies." (Nadia Saganash)

Session 2

Food Security and Traditional Activities

Léna Bureau
Co-constructing knowledge to preserve biocultural diversity[4]: Perspectives on participatory research into wildlife with northern Indigenous communities

Maryse Grégoire-Vollant et **Sabrina Tremblay**
The food system of Nitassinan(s)

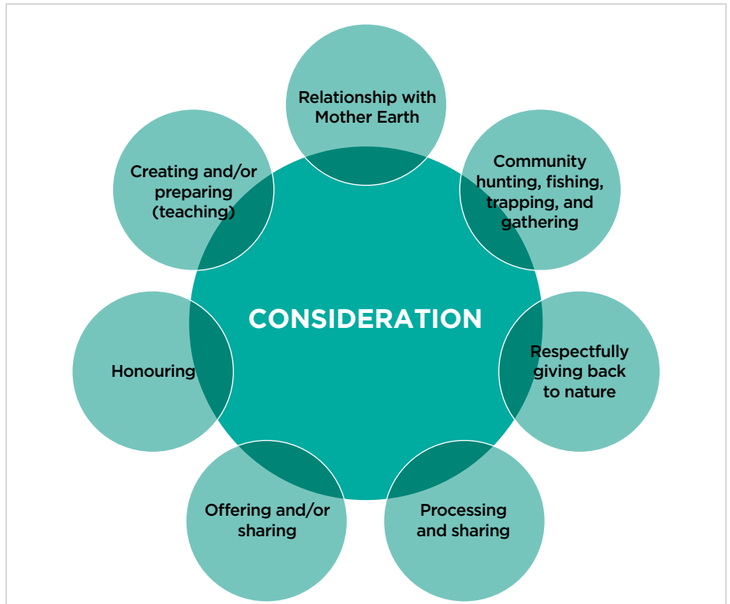
These two research projects examined local food systems, one in Eeyou Istchee and Nunavik, and the other on Nitassinan. Environmental changes are having a significant impact on the food security of northern communities for whom traditional country food is vital. It is interesting to note that these two presentations shone a light on methodological inconsistencies that can hinder the research process.

[4] See appendix for definition..

Local Food Systems

Local, or territorial, food systems are depicted at the centre of a circle surrounded by concepts of biodiversity and ecosystems, health, governance and social justice, and knowledge and cultural continuity.[5] These concepts, which are key to fully understanding the issues surrounding food and food security in Indigenous and northern communities, must be linked to the questions the communities themselves are asking. For example, how to ensure access to and availability of the resource, how to ensure suitability of food, how and why we eat it, and do we still want to eat it? The diagram below depicts an Innu vision of a territorial food system[6].

Concept of a Territorial Food System



Developed by student Maryse Grégoire Vollant as part of her research project, this model proposes an Innu version of the concept of a territorial food system. Here, the word "consideration" refers to Indigenous animism. The concept must address traditional and spiritual teachings. There is no lucrative intent; rather, it is seen as a form of bartering in which food is used to the full and in different forms: edible, artisanal, medicinal, and spiritual, such as the act of honouring the animal with a prayer to the Creator. Source: Maryse Grégoire Vollant

[5] See the WECLIFS Project (Wildlife, Environment Change, and Local Indigenous Food Systems) presented by Léna Bureau.
[6] See appendix for definition.

Developing Indigenous Frameworks

The researchers highlighted the importance of developing conceptual frameworks that are tailored to the sociocultural context and that reflect the concerns of the communities, to avoid the *de facto* application of Western conceptual frameworks, an approach that is often perceived as perpetuating a balance of power within which the "minority" system is always forced to adapt to the dominant system.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are different: they reflect their own relationship to reality, to a value system, and to the construction of knowledge. This knowledge can be created, transmitted, and validated differently. Research should contribute to developing useful and relevant frameworks for communities, in other words, frameworks that are based on the concrete questions communities are asking and on their own knowledge systems.

> "When we talk about numbers, I often stress to non-Indigenous and other students that numbers are abstract. An Indigenous approach will always be more meaningful because it is connected to their interpretation. It is important to note, also, that the learning method is different, too. You learn how to clean a partridge. And if you can do it alone after that, then it's like a passing grade." (Maryse Grégoire-Vollant)

Co-constructing Knowledge

During this session, participants raised the issue of the researcher's position and their ability to recognize the knowledge system within which they work. To overcome these differences, several elements were highlighted, including drawing on different methodological approaches from the natural, social, and Indigenous sciences, which are defined by connectivity, holism[7], and relationality[8], among other things. Emphasis was placed on the researcher's engagement and on the relationship between the various Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders: the research team, community stakeholders, participants, and collaborators. It was also recommended that university stakeholders learn to adopt a posture of humility, one that supports the communities, when it comes to navigating the administrative aspects of projects.

[7] See appendix for definition.
[8] See appendix for definition.

Session 3

Recognition and Valorization of Indigenous Knowledge

Glenda Sandy
As long as our lungs have breath, our stories carry on: Inuit community voices, leading the change in tuberculosis (TB) care

Julie Rock, Christine Couture
The land: Site and source of learning for First Peoples

Presented by two Indigenous researchers, this session raised the issues of cultural safeguarding and the Indigenization[9] of services, through two research projects, one on health and the other on education. Through their personal experiences, they transposed on the research environment some of the issues they encountered in their respective fields of expertise.

[9] See appendix for definition.

The Perspective of Indigenous Researchers

The Indigenous researchers[10] expressed a critical view of research and its foundations, pointing out that it constitutes an environment that can feel culturally unsafe for the Indigenous Peoples who take part in it. They would like to see the notion of cultural safety become a mandatory frame of reference for research in Indigenous settings. With their knowledge of both the university and Indigenous environments, they often find themselves in a position not only to identify areas of divergence, but also to build bridges. In other words, they are able to combine these two areas of expertise to create programs or projects to support community development. Throughout their educational and professional careers, the notion that research must contribute to the well-being of their community has always been central.

> “It is a way for me to use my experience growing up as a Naskapi in Northern Québec. The realities that I have seen, they are similar to the issues that are faced in Nunavik. And I think we can say the same for all Indigenous communities, we have this common thread that the foundation our system was built upon was meant to destroy us.” (Glenda Sandy)

[10] Glenda Sandy, Julie Rock, Maryse Vollant-Grégoire, and Natasha MacDonald at other sessions

Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge

The recognition of Indigenous knowledge occurs on a number of levels. For example, recognition of Indigenous knowledge in the same way Western knowledge is recognized, recognition of knowledge holders, as well as recognition of the ways of learning and knowledge transmission. When all of these elements are recognized, only then is it possible to incorporate them and put them to use. For many Indigenous stakeholders, the goal is much more than the equivalence or efficacy of services and programs; it is also a matter of respect for the identity of the First Nations and Inuit, and of respect for their values.

In the areas of interest in this case—public health and education—there are major institutional barriers.[11] The Indigenization of services and programs must not be reduced merely to the inclusion of a handful of Indigenous "elements." The speakers stressed the importance of not generalizing Indigenous realities. Despite their shared history and experiences, in relation to colonization, for example, there are as many realities and perspectives as there are nations and communities.

The two projects presented here demonstrate how research can be a factor in social transformation. They also show that these changes could be beneficial not only for Indigenous communities, but for society as a whole. For example, in healthcare, by promoting an approach centred on the patient and their needs rather than on the disease. And, in education, by drawing parallels between experiential learnings on the land and teaching nature study classes.

This illustration was developed after consulting with people in the Nunavik region in order to propose an Inuit model of health based on the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ). It depicts a cloudberry, or aqpik, with each seed representing one of the social determinants of health: family, identity, knowledge, community, land, food, economy, and services.[12]

> We have to incorporate our practices, our knowledge. We have to experience our identity within the programs. Only by indigenizing programs from a perspective of self-determination[13] will we achieve cultural safeguarding." (Julie Rock)

[11] Competency 15 (as yet not recognized by the provincial government) is an exhortation to the province of Québec to fulfil its duty and to integrate the recommendations issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry, and by the Viens Commission, not only for education, but in all areas affected by its calls to action. (https://cepn-fnec.ca/en/competence-15/)

[12] Fletcher, C., Riva, M., Lyonnais, M-C., Saunders, I., Baron, A., Lynch, M., Baron, M., (2021). *Definition of an Inuit cultural model and social determinants of health for Nunavik. Community Component. Nunavik Inuit Health Survey 2017 Qanuilirpitaa? How are we now?* Quebec: Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS) & Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ).

[13] See appendix for definition.

The importance of Relationships

The researchers stressed the importance of quality relationships in research, whether it is between members of the scientific team and participants or partners, or between Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues.

> When I work with non-Indigenous colleagues, we share ideas and have discussions. The way I present myself, my references, my examples are always a reflection of the vision I have of the world as a First Nations [member]." (Julie Rock)

To achieve a true collaboration, we promote the idea of an exchange of information and knowledge rather than a unilateral relationship that would benefit only the researcher, their team, or the university they represent. The questions "Who is this research for?" and "What purpose does this research serve?" are crucial.

> So there really is a huge power to involving people not just for the sake of research but also for capacity building or for giving back to the communities." (Glenda Sandy)

The presentation also touched on the researcher's responsibility to propose projects with the potential to improve the capacity of communities and presenting data in such a way that it can be used by decision-makers. When research does not serve the needs of the community, one must wonder whether it merely serves the needs of an individual. And yet, with regard to the values defined by IQ, for example, such research would be considered to be of no use.

> Working in a system that's extremely rigid and set in their ways, we need to set up collaborative movement in all aspects. And, yes, I do agree there is some movement and transformation happening, but it is like little drips. And we need a whole waterfall to be able to catch up [our tardiness in Indigenous research]." (Glenda Sandy)

Session 4

Adaptation and Innovations in the Face of Climate Change

Billy Shecanapish
Actions towards climate and energy transition

Henry May and Géraldine Gouin
Nunamit Takunnatut: Creating a system to monitor changes in wildlife using Inuit Ways and Knowledge

In this session, two community-led projects were presented: one for the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach and the other for Nunavik.

Research Designed to Equip Communities

The two projects that were presented centred on the testimonials of residents of the North, who are the first to report a host of changes: altered migratory routes, sick animals, thinning of the sea ice and snowpack, an increased number of forest fires and heatwaves, a drop in water levels, and sun-scorched vegetation. For example, the project known as *Nunamit Takunnatut*, which means "they are watching wildlife," was developed not only with a view to gathering data, but also as a means to provide tools to communities to help them improve their wildlife monitoring systems. Since this approach sees researchers play a support role, it requires that the parties agree in advance on the meaning of words, the ways to work together, and mutual expectations.

> "It's true that people often associate the word "monitoring" with "management." And sure, there was a fear that the point was to introduce quotas or impose restrictions. There was definitely that fear there." (Géraldine Gouin)

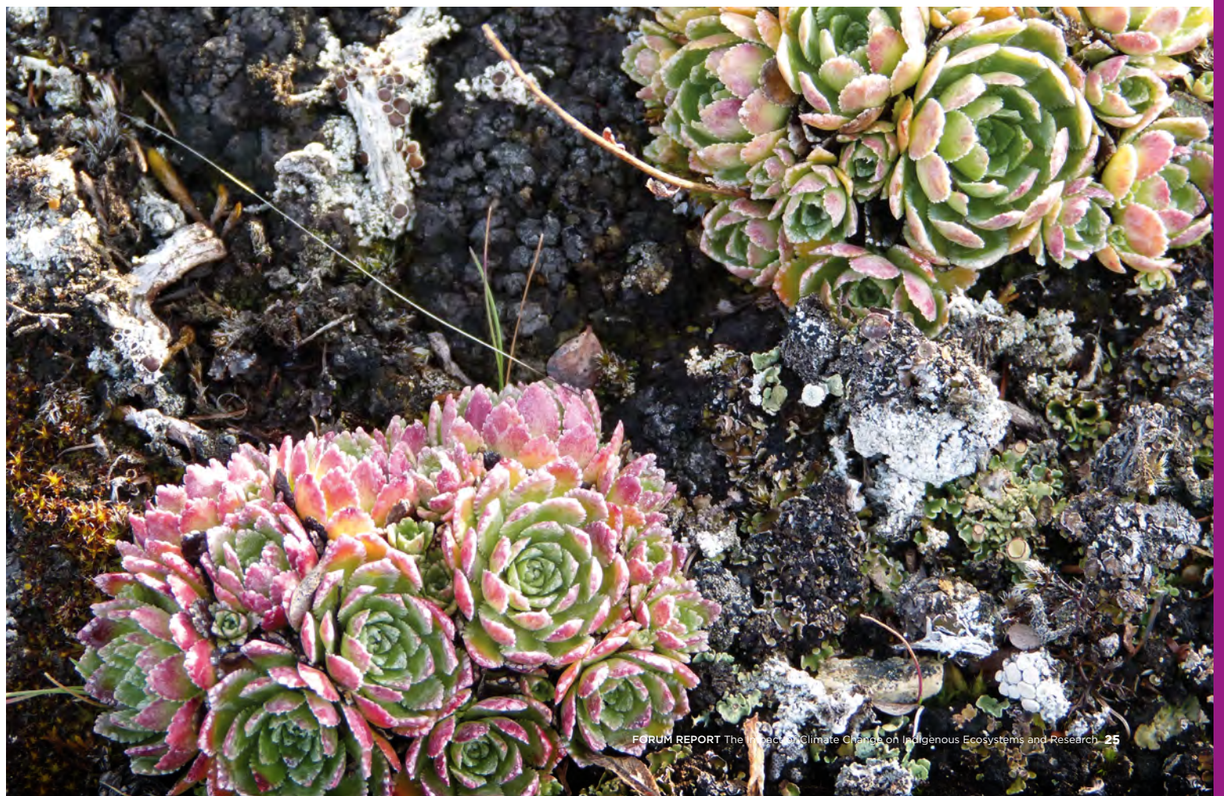
Obstacles to Indigenous Research

Among the structural challenges listed here, the biggest are funding and the requirements of funding agencies (complexity of applications, lack of flexibility, preliminary findings, scientific publications). Funding is often granted for relatively short periods, such as three years, which can limit the ability to develop sustainable projects and ensure the involvement and participation of community members. Some application forms are extremely complex and require very precise planning of activities, costs, and anticipated results. However, in northern environments, activities are often subject to change, travel is extremely costly, and results are not always as expected. What's more, the task of completing funding applications requires precise scientific knowledge and a specific vocabulary, which only the research team possesses. Lastly, this rigid planning can sometimes run counter to the consultation or dialogue process through which a research project can be co-constructed from the outset. Nevertheless, the speakers welcomed the initiatives of several granting agencies to allow greater flexibility and to modify their criteria for granting funds and monitoring projects. It was also suggested that grant programs be created that would enable exploratory phases to develop contacts and relationships in advance of the research itself.

> "In reality, when you're a researcher based in the south, you fill out your funding application and head north to validate your research questions. But when we do that, are we really listening to the community's needs? When the project is already drawn up and set out in our mind." (Géraldine Gouin)

Disseminating Results

This is an aspect that must be discussed from the very beginning of the project, and should in fact be the guiding principle, to ensure that research results are accessible and understandable to members of the communities concerned. If community members are to be truly engaged, they need to know the goal and usefulness of the research project. Plus, they need to be in agreement with the research team on the wording, scope, and relevance of the project. In wrapping up, the speakers invited researchers to develop dissemination formats that speak to community members, for example, video and audio interviews, posters, discussion workshops, and meetings with leaders. According to several participants, scientific articles are far from being a priority for communities, who are more interested in concrete results, i.e., decision-making and action.



Session 5

Research and Self-determination

Mona Belleau
Going beyond the consideration of First Peoples' aspirations:
For real engagement in co-construction

Dr Faiz Ahmad Khan
Roles for research in addressing health impacts of climate change on Indigenous Peoples: A critical discussion

Natasha MacDonald
Situating research in the Inuit context

These presentations offered a critical reflection on research in Indigenous settings, which cannot be fully understood without taking into account the broader historical context for First Peoples. Just like the work that needs to be undertaken in various spheres of society, research, too, must be de-colonized. A number of suggestions were made to help non-Indigenous researchers get started down this path.

History of Research in Indigenous Settings

The speakers encouraged researchers to become more aware of the impact of colonial history on Indigenous research in Canada, and of what could be termed the "vestiges of colonialism," or "new forms of colonialism." For decades, research (across all disciplines) has played a role in perpetuating and maintaining a system of domination (extractive research, folklorization of cultures, objectification of people, research to support colonial policies, and other aspects). Some research has harmed communities, and may still do so today, by perpetuating stereotypes about the First Nations and Inuit, which is why special attention must be paid to the words that are used.

> "My mom was an Inuktitut teacher and she used to say, 'Don't be lazy with your words; be very, very careful how you speak, because words have meaning.' We have to be careful when we say, 'our research,' or 'we' or 'I let them' or 'I allowed her' or 'I enabled this Indigenous person to do this because of that.' It denotes a certain level of power that we are not going to accept any longer." (Natasha MacDonald)

The idea that, in order to work together, we need to start from the same level of knowledge and recognition came up over and over again. Likewise, it can be offensive and frustrating for Indigenous Peoples to have to explain the weight of this recent past and its impact on their societies today and, in a way, to have to educate non-Indigenous Peoples about their realities. Clearly, the past does not carry the same weight for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Academics need to be aware of the history of research, its foundations, and the culture in which it is rooted.

Research and Politics

The speakers pointed to the link between research and politics, which is even greater in a context where power relationships persist. Research is never neutral; it's part of a system, part of a culture. It is supported by certain funding bodies and addresses questions that are not neutral either. This awareness is a necessary part of every project involving northern Indigenous communities, regardless of the field.

> Research is a political process to produce knowledge which state actors may rely upon to support their decisions or dismiss when it does not support their aims." (Marsden, Star & Smylie[14])

We need to build our capacity to link the traumas of this colonial history to the current political and social reality of First Peoples and understand how research contributes to maintaining or dismantling these old structures that remain obstacles to establishing reciprocity. For instance, the speakers deplored the fact that recent debates on the existence of systemic racism in Quebec society have diverted attention from the urgent needs of communities in terms of services and infrastructure.

[14] Quote cited in Dr. Faiz Ahmad Khan's presentation. Marsden, N., Star, L. & Smylie, J. "Nothing about us without us in writing: aligning the editorial policies of the Canadian Journal of Public Health with the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples". *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, vol. 111, p.822–825 (2020). (https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-020-00452-w)

Decolonization and Self-determination

The speakers pointed to the existence of numerous recommendations issued by various Indigenous organizations as a tool to help develop ethical and respectful research projects. They recalled the principle of the 4 Rs in Indigenous research: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Self-determination, as defined by Indigenous stakeholders, requires Indigenous agency[15] and the development of Indigenous decision-making and governance bodies that are in the best position to develop culturally appropriate and safe services.

> To me, reciprocity is the idea that the research benefits the community by contributing to our own agency. By agency, I mean self-determination: That we are the agents of our own lives and futures. That there is no paternalistic relationship where I allowed you to do this or I enable you to do that. Agency means we can do it on our own and we are working towards that." (Natasha MacDonald)

For research to make a real contribution to the well-being of communities, it must be aligned with their aspirations and play an active role in bringing about beneficial change by providing communities with practical resources.

> We need to take possession of a system, to shape it to our needs, and put it to work for our realities." (Melissa Saganash)

[15] See appendix for definition

Workshop on Research Guidelines

One year after the first INQ forum, held in Val-d'Or in 2017, the First Peoples' Committee, under the guidance of Suzy Basile, published a document entitled *Research Guidelines*. It was designed as a reference tool for researchers and students involved in conducting research north of the 49th parallel. It also serves as a guide for developing ethical and respectful practices surrounding research in northern and Indigenous settings. While, over the past six years, the principles of ethics and respect have become better understood (research protocols) and more clearly regulated (more stringent requirements from funding agencies in this regard), it is crucial to continue these discussions. Applying these principles is complex and delicate, both at the individual and institutional level. It is always pertinent to question oneself about these principles and how they are put into practice, as well as potential obstacles to overcome. During the workshop on Day 2 of the Forum, La Boîte Rouge VIF suggested drawing up a thematic inventory around these issues. The workshop attracted 31 participants[16], who were divided into four discussion tables. During the Forum, 86 words and concepts were gathered and put forward. Participants were tasked with selecting, classifying, and discussing these concepts. A summary of the workshops is available on the INQ website. The data gathered will serve to enhance and improve the *Research Guidelines*.

[16] A number of participants had to leave the Forum in the early afternoon and were unable to attend the workshop.

Observations

The discussions that took place over the two days confirmed that a dialogue has been firmly established. Representatives from universities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous), communities, and funding agencies talked about the realities of their work, the obstacles they face in their professional environments, and their expectations surrounding research. The Forum highlighted the importance of continuing to organize events that enable people to meet, exchange ideas, and engage in dialogue in a variety of settings including universities, and also on the territories of the different nations.

Cross-cutting Elements

Numerous elements were cited in each of the sessions. Following is a recap of the cross-cutting elements:

> **Develop frames of reference specific to Indigenous contexts.** Researchers must play a role in developing frames of reference that are local and specific to the realities they encounter.

> **Contextualize research in all its various dimensions:** geographical, territorial, social, cultural, political, spiritual, and others. Take an interest in and take into account the priority issues for communities and/or nations.

> **Practice interdisciplinarity.** Take inspiration from approaches rooted in basic, social, and Indigenous sciences.

> **Respect the temporality and resources of communities.** The availability of the people involved (collaboration or participation) may vary. Numerous people may be involved, and their priorities, particularly in relation to their lifestyle, may differ from those of the research team. Furthermore, some services and equipment may not be available, which can cause delays.

> **Involve and include community members at different stages** and in different aspects of the projects (surveys, inventories, interviews, etc.) so they have a say in defining the research objective and how the research is conducted (what to look for, where to look, and how to look).

> **Ensure mutual comprehension at every stage of the project.** Agree on the meaning of words and how the research will be used. Tailor your language and vocabulary to your audience.

> **Practice reflexivity**[17]**.** Regardless of the discipline, develop critical thinking about your methodologies and examine your own biases and position in the research. Reflect on the way research data is collected and whether this method could be perceived as a form of extraction. What is the impact (positive or negative) of this research on the community or communities concerned?

> **Develop sincere communication with partners, as equals.** Pay special attention to communication codes and sociocultural differences.

> **Transfer and share knowledge.** Include the hiring and training of local resources in funding applications and the research process (participate in training, share scientific knowledge and lessons learned).

> **Help boost local expertise.** Consider how research helps to improve community members' ability to act and/or make decisions.

> **Promote local knowledge** and that of knowledge-holders, as well as traditional forms of governance.

[17] See appendix for definition.

- **Disseminate knowledge using appropriate language and formats.** Consider broadcasting information in a format that is accessible to community members (not just articles, but also audio files, videos, illustrations, and other formats).
- **Participate in intergenerational networking.** Step up efforts to pair elders and youths, in order to promote the transmission and transfer of knowledge.
- **Adopt a strengths-based approach**[18] **rather than a problem-focused approach.**
- **Assist communities in the bureaucratic aspects of research** (writing funding applications, reporting measures, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING AGENCIES:

- **Make resources available to support communities and research teams** with administrative tasks such as grant applications and awarding, and reporting measures.
- **Continue to create programs that promote and facilitate the development of partnerships and collaborations** (funding of preliminary projects or exploratory phases).
- **Make programs more flexible** so they better reflect the realities of communities and research teams (who sometimes face considerable institutional constraints).
- **Review the validation processes for project stages.** There may be undue pressure to present results. According to the speakers, the very notion of "result" is sometimes relative. Seek instead to validate the stages that have been completed, and allow room for unanticipated results.

[18] See appendix for definition.

Appendices

A Few Definitions

The definitions proposed below are intended to introduce readers to certain concepts that we deem relevant. However, they are not official definitions, and we urge you to read up on these complex notions. See the endnotes for recommended readings.

Agency: In the social sciences, the term "agency" refers, in a broad sense, to the capacity of individuals to act independently and make choices that shape their lives and the social structures around them. Agency emphasizes the idea that individuals are not merely passive recipients of societal influences or structural forces but are active participants who can exercise their will, make decisions, and initiate actions.[19]

Self-determination: The term was first used in philosophy, education, and health. It refers to the determination of the mind or personal will over an object, or the determination, without constraint, of one's own destiny or course of action. The term subsequently gained legal and political traction, notably with the release of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which recognizes self-determination as a right by virtue of which Indigenous Peoples freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development (UNDRIP, 2007).[20]

Indigenization: This is a term that is widely used in the field of education (postsecondary and university), and it can be applied more broadly to institutional structures and to the design and delivery of programs and services. Indigenization is a complex living movement that aims for the cultural integrity of Indigenous Peoples in institutions through a respectful approach and relevant programs and services. More than just representing and incorporating the aspirations, symbols, and practices of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenization refers to the reframing of knowledge production and transmission from an Indigenous perspective. It also implies a process of decolonization.[21]

Biocultural diversity: This notion encompasses not only biological diversity, but also cultural and linguistic diversity. It can be described as how biological and cultural diversity have evolved together and adapted permanently over time. As a result, the values, beliefs, and worldviews people hold on biodiversity tend to be intertwined with ecosystem health, sustainable resource use, human well-being, and subsistence. Biocultural diversity also includes the diversity of places and the ways human groups inhabit them.[22]

Strengths (a strengths-based approach as opposed to a deficit-based focus): This positive approach is used increasingly in the health sector (medical, psychological, and social), and stands in contrast to an approach based on deficits, problems, and needs. A strengths-based approach has been proposed as being more helpful in understanding and promoting health and well-being in Indigenous contexts. This kind of approach takes into account social, cultural, and ecological factors that are in keeping with Indigenous philosophies of an overall view of health and good living (including notions of kindness, honesty, sharing, respect, wisdom, and harmony).[23]

[19] https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/53651 "Agency (Sociology)," Scholarly Community Encyclopedia (Accessed August 8, 2024)

[20] Lachapelle Y., Fontana-Lana B., Petitpierre G., Geurts H., Haelewyck M-C. (2022). "Autodétermination: historique, définitions et modèles conceptuels," *La nouvelle revue - Éducation et société inclusives* 2022/2 (N° 94), p. 25-42.

[21] Pidgeon, M. (2016). "More than a checklist: Meaningful Indigenous inclusion in higher education," Social Inclusion, 4(1), p. 77-91. (http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/si.v4i1.436); Gaudry, A. and Lorenz, D. (2018). "Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy," AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 143), p. 218–227; Tuck E. & Yang W., (2012). "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," Education & Society, 11) p. 1-40.; Wilson, K. (2018). Pulling Together: Foundations Guide. https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/

[22] UNESCO Canadian Commission "Reuniting Nature and Culture: The North American Declaration on Biocultural Diversity" [Blog] https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/11/north-american-declaration-on-biocultural-diversity) (Accessed May 15, 2024)

[23] First Nations Information Governance Centre, Strengths-Based Approaches to Indigenous Research and the Development of Well-Being Indicators, (Ottawa: 2020).June 2020, 37pp

Holism: This theory considers the human being as an interconnected whole that cannot be explained by its different parts. To acquire knowledge about a person or an entity (group, society, etc.), that person or entity must be approached as a whole, and not by studying each of its parts separately (trans.).[24] This approach is preferred in Indigenous research (particularly in health and education), as it aligns well with a holistic vision generally shared in Indigenous societies and cultures. According to this perspective, well-being, personal fulfilment, or success can be achieved by taking into account and seeking to strike a balance between physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects (trans).[25]

Reflexivity: In the social sciences, reflexivity refers to the position adopted by the researcher, with the intention of considering themselves as the object under analysis. Reflexivity is one's capacity to reflect on one's own activity, interests, or motivations; to be aware of one's own values, the social position one occupies, and the associated interests. Researchers must examine the significance of their positions within existing power relations (trans.).[26] Through this approach it is possible to go beyond the apparent neutrality of the scientific discourse and perceive our own biases or larger interests (financial, social, institutional, national) that escape us and that can influence our perceptions (trans.).[27]

[24] "Holisme," [online], Le Robert, (https://dictionnaire.lerobert.com/definition/holisme) (Accessed May 15, 2024)

[25] Bergeron O. and Direction du développement des individus et des communautés (2022) *Cadres des déterminants de la santé: caractéristiques et spécificités en contexte autochtone*, INSPQ (https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2888-determinants-sante-caracteristiques-autochtone.pdf) (available in French only)

[26] Levac, L., Mcmurtry, L., Stienstra, D., Baikie, G., Hanson C., and Mucina D., (2018) "Learning Across Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems and Intersectionality: Reconciling Social Science Research Approaches." Fact sheet drafted by Charland, N., 2018 XXX "Principles to Draw Together Intersectionality with Indigenous and Western Approaches to Knowledge Creation"

[27] Rui, S. "Réflexivité," [online], 2012. Les 100 mots de la sociologie, dans Sociologie, , (http://journals.openedition.org/sociologie/1584) (Accessed May 15, 2024); Demetriou E., Demory M., Pavie A. "Introduction: - La réflexivité dans et par la recherche." *Esprit Critique: Revue Internationale de Sociologie et de Sciences sociales*, 2020, 30 (1), p. 5-12. (https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03003622)

Relationality: Relationality is a key concept in Indigenous research as it aligns with Indigenous visions of being, knowing, and creating and transmitting knowledge. These notions are rooted in precise contexts, places, histories, memories, experiences, and relations. Relationships don't just shape Indigenous reality; they are Indigenous reality. This paradigm includes interpersonal, environmental, and even spiritual relationships (Wilson, 2008).[28] It is an approach based on the importance of relationships that implies a relation of mutual trust and respect between the research team and participants, meaning research is necessarily participatory. Furthermore, from a relationality perspective, research is part of an action that aims for the social transformation of Indigenous Peoples seeking to break from their colonial past (Hart, 2010).[29] This approach also endeavours to re-establish the relationship and goes hand in hand with reconciliation efforts.

Territorial food systems (TFS)[30]: The concept of the territorial food system is one that has been in use for a number of years as a means to consider food systems from a more inclusive perspective. On one hand, it comprises the idea of a diet that is healthy, nutritious, and available to all, and that respects cultural and biological diversity, while, on the other hand, it takes into account the protection and preservation of the environment, the climate, soils, water, and biodiversity, and the notion of sustainable development.

[28] Wilson S., (2008) *Research is Ceremony. Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, Winnipeg, Fernwood.

[29] Hart, M. A. (2010) "Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm." *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*.

[30] AVISE, "Concilier respect des écosystèmes naturels et accès à l'alimentation," [online], June 2023.(http://www.avise.org/articles/alimentation-durable-et-systemes-alimentaires-territorialises (in French only)) (Accessed May 15, 2024)

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Press Review and Photos

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LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES ONT UN IMPACT DRAMATIQUE DANS LES COMMUNAUTÉS NORDIQUES

Par Carolyne Labrie, Le Quotidien 5 octobre 2023 à 14 h 40

Les communautés autochtones nordiques sont déjà frappées de plein fouet par les changements climatiques. « Il aura fallu que la fumée se rende cet été à Montréal, à Toronto et à New York pour venir mettre en pleine face aux communautés du Sud que les changements climatiques ont un impact. » Une phrase choc, dite sur un ton sans provocation par la responsable du comité des Premiers Peuples de l'Institut nordique du Québec, Melissa Saganash. La table était mise pour le forum qui se tient à l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC).

INSÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE

Ces bouleversements ont des conséquences directes sur l'alimentation des nations cries, innues et inuit, explique Melissa Saganash, qui est également la directrice générale adjointe du Grand conseil des Cris.

« Le caribou c'est vraiment ce qui est de plus frappant depuis quelques années. Nous perdons en quantité, mais aussi en qualité de nourriture. L'insécurité alimentaire est importante. »
— Melissa Saganash

Chez les Autochtones, la chasse n'est pas que sportive, elle est essentielle et elle permet de faire d'autres choix à l'épicerie. « Le coût de l'épicerie, on trouve ça cher ici, mais au Nord, c'est 12 $ un litre de lait. » Elle nous laisse imaginer le prix d'une livre de bœuf. Le troupeau de la rivière George a déjà compté plus de 820 000 bêtes. Entre 1993 et 2022, il est passé à 7200. « Lorsque le troupeau abondait et qu'il descendait en période migratoire, on le chassait jusqu'à Fermont et Schefferville », précise André Michel. Ce n'est plus du tout le cas.

Au cours des derniers mois, la communauté a réussi à convaincre le gouvernement du Québec de la laisser faire son propre inventaire de caribous et de saumon lors de la montaison.

L'Innu de Uashat mak Mani-utenam et biologiste, André Michel ainsi que Nadia Saganash,administratrice de la gestion de la faune du Grand conseil des cris. (Carolyne Labrie)

LA CONNEXION AVEC LE TERRITOIRE

Les Premières Nations souhaiteraient que les collaborations avec Québec ne soient pas qu'anecdotiques. « On a besoin de décoloniser les politiques pour une durabilité », exprime Nadia Saganash dans sa présentation *Wildlife management in Eeyou Istchee*.

Mélissa Saganash, responsable du comité des Premiers Peuples de l'Institut nordique duQuébec (INQ), ainsi que le directeur de l'institut, Jean-Éric Tremblay. (Rocket Lavoie / Le Quotidien)

Elle rappelle que les neuf communautés cries comptent environ 21 000 personnes sur les rives de la baie James et de la baie d'Hudson. « C'est un territoire occupé. Il y a plus de 300 territoires familiaux gérés par des maîtres de trappe. Toutes nos décisions sont prises selon ce système traditionnel. »

Il y a certes ces histoires, comme celle de Tommy Neeposh qui a suggéré à une bande d'ingénieurs allochtones de construire un tunnel sous un lac pour ne pas détruire un écosystème. Ou celle de Sanders Weitche qui a pris les commandes de la machinerie pour remodeler les berges d'un cours d'eau où la récolte avait diminué après la déviation de la rivière Rupert. « Il a dit aux ingénieurs d'Hydro-Québec de partir et de le laisser travailler. »

Mais ce que l'administratrice de la gestion de la faune du Grand conseil des cris expose c'est que ces gens « qui ont le savoir du *land* » peuvent devenir des références au Québec et que les communautés autochtones ont développé au fil des années une expertise et des projets structurants. « Cette connexion passe par le respect du territoire et des animaux. De prendre seulement ce dont nous avons besoin et de partager entre nous. »

À L'INSTITUT NORDIQUE DU QUÉBEC

Le travail de l'Institut nordique du Québec est de regrouper les experts et chercheurs québécois dans les secteurs de recherche nordique et arctique pour un développement durable du Nord. « L'institut permet de faire un tri et un match entre les communautés et les chercheurs », résume son directeur, Jean-Éric Tremblay.

Plusieurs recherches sont en branle et, puisqu'il faut regarder plusieurs angles en même temps, elles couvrent tous les champs : la santé, les sciences naturelles, les sciences sociales ou les infrastructures.

L'approche des chercheurs est bien différente qu'il y a quelques années, explique M. Tremblay. On se rend dans les communautés avec un esprit beaucoup plus collaboratif. « Autant pour elles que pour les étudiants, c'est beaucoup mieux. Avant, les jeunes chercheurs qui voulaient travailler dans le Nord se faisaient envoyer là sans préparation. Ce n'était bénéfique pour personne au final. » Le gouvernement québécois aurait surement à apprendre de l'Institut nordique et des chercheurs qui travaillent sur le terrain.

See article (in French only):
https://www.lequotidien.com/actualites/2023/10/05/leschangements-climatiques-ont-un-impact-dramatique-dans-les-communautesnordiques-44TKDLCOIVH6JIS3WDVZNLTPEE/

Group photo

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