

Accompagnement tool

for teaching
First Nations and Inuit students
enrolled in vocational training



Institut national
des mines

Québec



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BIOGRAPHY OF FRANK POLSON

Born in Haileybury, Ontario, in 1952, Frank Polson lives in the Anishinabe community of Long Point First Nations in Winneway, Abitibi-Témiscamingue. An internationally renowned painter, his art calls attention to the culture and emblems of the Anishinabe.

His contemporary works reflect tradition; they are alive, colourful and marked by humanism. Concerned about their future, Frank Polson regularly shares his experiences with young people, encouraging them to choose a healthy lifestyle that leaves room for discovery.

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INTRODUCTION

Document objectives and intended readership

This document is the result of a research project on vocational training in programs of study leading to a trade in the mining sector for First Nations and Inuit students. The main objective of this document is to provide a tool that presents culturally sensitive strategies, concrete practices and ways to implement them that encourage these students to persevere in their studies and achieve success. This tool is also intended to guide the vocational training centre's team in adopting these educational strategies and practices, and to inspire them to approach their implementation in a spirit of discovery and innovation. The strategies and practices presented are not prescribed, and do not have to be carried out in any predetermined order. The sequence is neither linear nor temporal, which makes it possible to go back and forth from one to another.



Good to know!

Perseverance

Perseverance is not success.

The concept of perseverance encompasses, holistically, the improvement of living conditions and of the physical, psychological (mental), emotional and spiritual well-being of each student. For the Nations, the concept of student perseverance may have several meanings (steadfastness, persistence, tenacity, continued efforts). Although generally used as the opposite of "quitting or interrupting studies," it is not limited to this usage. A broader definition must be added to this understanding to encompass the student's school and life experiences, which give them the knowledge that can help them adapt to their new realities and continue their training.



Good to know!

Success

First Nations and Inuit see success as an ongoing process that is more like a road which the student gradually travels by persevering. Thus, when they succeed, in their eyes, it also means that they are persevering, according to the understanding of perseverance in mainstream society, and that they are committed to their training project.

Research has also identified the following aspects:

- Success has a collective aspect.
- It is not defined based solely on the results of ministerial examinations or evaluations but, all the same, the number of diplomas earned does appear to be a source of motivation for some students.
- It concerns individual and collective growth and also affects the balance between the four dimensions of a human being (intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual).
- Success involves the development of culture, language, identity and the sense of belonging to a group.
- It also concerns the development of a network of social relationships (enabling support for collective well-being).

From this point of view, therefore, it involves providing tools for teachers, who form the main intended readership of this document, to use in their daily interactions with students and to provide resources to support them. The tool is also intended for resource teachers, education consultants, professionals and practitioners, including psychosocial workers, who work with First Nations and Inuit students, for administrative team members and for professionals who work for First Nations and Inuit organizations that support the training and employment of these students.

More specifically, this accompaniment tool is mainly intended for:

Teachers

These are staff members who teach the contents of the programs of study and constitute the main users of this tool.

Non-teaching professionals

These are members of the educational and complementary services teams in vocational training, namely, the resource teachers, liaison agents, social service workers, education consultants, academic advisers, recreation technicians, etc. (see, in particular, Beaudoin et al. 2021). These professionals are committed to working with students. They are also part of the intended readership for this document in which they will find several tools and resources that they can use on a daily basis.

Members of the administrative team

This group consists of the director of the vocational training centre (VTC) and the assistant directors who support them. Although these persons are not among the main intended readership, they are involved given their influence and educational role with regard to teachers, including pedagogical supervision, school organization and human resources management.

School teams or centre teams

This group consists of the entire intended readership. The term thus refers to the teachers, non-teaching professionals and members of the administrative team.

First Nations and Inuit organizations that are partners in educational success

- The Regional Adult Education Centres (RAEC)
- The First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ) and its Employment and Training Service Centres (ETSCs)
- Centres d'amitié autochtone (Native Friendship Centres)
- All of the First Nations and Inuit educational or training organizations and their governing bodies (band councils, town halls, other service centres, etc.)

The emergence and relevance of the project

The economic, social and political context in Québec that influences the training and employment of First Nations and Inuit is complex and has been undergoing a major transformation over the last several decades, particularly in the job market in the mining sector. In fact, the current job market is in full expansion and its development brings different possibilities in training and employment for members of First Nations and Inuit communities who sometimes live near the job sites. For example, there are various agreements that provide a framework for relationships between the Nations, governments and organizations that explore the territories or exploit natural resources, in order to promote the training and employment of First Nations and Inuit in this sector. Thus, these communities are highly sought after to fill jobs in the mining sector where there is a shortage of workers and where a wide variety of jobs are being created. The First Nations and Inuit are in an interesting position because their population is young and that demographic is exploding and ready to enter the job market in the Québec mining sector, especially in remote areas where the sites are more numerous (FNHRDCQ 2019).

That having been said, most of the time, the leap into vocational training involves a radical cultural, linguistic, social and career change: a transition between community life and urban life, to a VTC that is very unfamiliar and sometimes overwhelming, with the goal of getting a job in the mining sector, which is enormous in comparison with the industries that are familiar to the First Nations and Inuit. For everyone, these shifts in their ways of life, work and training raise major questions of identity and culture in terms of their place in Québec society, their citizen participation and community engagement, their vision of economic prosperity and last, but not least, their well-being as members of a wider society.

In addition, this situation gives rise to difficulties with regard to student perseverance (Québec 2022; FNHRDCQ 2019; RCAAQ 2022). Consequently, VTCs must take into account the challenges that these students face and that interfere with their chances for success and personal fulfillment.

In VTCs, the involvement of teachers can vary because some of them feel helpless or less comfortable dealing with numerous factors that can affect their feeling of professional competency. Several also ask themselves about the elements of knowledge that need to be acquired, the link to be created with a First Nations or Inuit student, how to guide the student through their project, the educational practices to be adapted, the support to offer or the cultural safety interventions and actions to be implemented with students in order to improve their perseverance.

On a broader scale, these students' low rate of perseverance in vocational training is also raised and reported by First Nations and Inuit educational organizations and by regional, provincial and national authorities. Published inquiry commission reports, analyses, briefs and other documents (see the Appendix for a list of these documents) emphasize this pressing need to consider the vocational training situations of First Nations and Inuit students (TRC 2015; CERP 2019; MMIWG 2019). These different documents that have appeared in recent decades have framed the parameters for relationships between people, organizations and nations, in a way that has not always been satisfactory to the parties concerned. This period has been marked by major social, economic and political changes that have had an impact on the people in Québec in general (and in the rest of the world as well) and the evolution of different currents of thought have led to an awareness of the necessity of changing, adapting and taking a different look at the other.

All of these elements point to the importance of studying and analyzing the perseverance of First Nations and Inuit students enrolled in vocational training, in accordance with different aspects (training conditions, stakeholders in educational institutions, etc.) To do so, the research team started by looking at contexts and individuals, and developing better knowledge and a more acute understanding of the experiences of these vocational training students and those of the teachers in the VTCs that welcome them. This step was completed through an extensive review of the literature on this subject, a series of interviews with the key stakeholders and the re-analysis of the secondary data from previous research. The second step consisted of comparing the analyses of the statements made with those of experts and professionals in institutions and fields targeting the vocational training of First Nations and Inuit students, those of university researchers working on similar projects and those of partners and organizations in educational and adult education institutions (see the Appendix for the methodological details mentioned in this paragraph).

Organization of the document

This document is divided into three sections.



Section 1 focuses on the knowledge of risk and vulnerability factors, and of protection and success factors for First Nations and Inuit students that affect their perseverance in vocational training.



Section 2, the heart of the accompaniment tool, focuses on the six courses of action that encourage student perseverance: raising one's awareness, becoming informed, knowing and understanding the student, establishing a relationship with the student, guiding the student on their life journey, adapting their educational practices, accompanying the student and helping the student feel culturally safe.



Section 3 offers reflection tools to orient teachers in implementing the practices and strategies proposed in each of the courses of action.

1

**Knowledge of risk and
vulnerability factors, and of
protection and success factors
associated with student
perseverance**

Knowledge of risk and vulnerability factors, and of protection and success factors

The culturally sensitive strategies, concrete practices and ways to implement them presented in this document are based on the essential knowledge and recognition of risk and vulnerability factors, and of protection and success factors that have a favourable or unfavourable influence on the student's pathway. The risk and vulnerability factors lessen the probability that a student will persevere and succeed while the protection and success factors increase the chances that the student will persevere.

Protection and success factors

These are the attributes (strengths, supportive environment, personal resources, knowledge and skills, attitudes, etc.) that contribute to the creation or reinforcement of favourable personal, academic, family or other conditions for students and that have a beneficial effect on their perseverance.

Risk and vulnerability factors

These are the attributes (external circumstances, immediate environment, weaknesses, etc.) that contribute to the creation or worsening of unfavourable personal, academic, family or other conditions for students and that have a detrimental effect on their perseverance.



The strength and number of a student's protection and success factors contribute to "shielding" them and have beneficial effects on the success and perseverance of that student. On the other hand, if the combined risk and vulnerability factors outnumber or outweigh the protection and success factors, this will create pressure and negatively impact the student's academic perseverance.

Better knowledge and a more acute understanding of these factors guide teachers in their choice of instructional strategies for First Nations and Inuit students from the point of view of their perseverance. These factors, presented on the following pages, are the result of field interviews, the authors' experiences and the literature review completed beforehand (see, among others, Manningham et al. 2011; Blanchet-Cohen et al. 2015; Lévesque and Polèse 2015; RCAAQ 2015; Chichekian and Bragoli-Barzan 2020; Dubeau et al. 2020; Mareschal and Denault 2020; Joncas et al. 2022). The factors are presented in three components: personal, pedagogical and institutional. It should be noted that these components overlap and that factors placed in one component are not specific to that component alone.

Protection and success factors

Personal component

Cultural rootedness supports student success. This means that the student is surrounded by a strong family and community that cultivate strong values, beliefs and cultural identity.

The opportunity for the student **to affirm their cultural identity** and be proud of it promotes their success.

Interest in the trade motivates the student to pursue their training pathway so that they can work in that trade.

Past experiences solidify the student's resilience when facing challenges encountered on their pathway.

The **presence of graduates who are role models** becomes a source of inspiration for students in training.

The student's strong **motivation** to embark on their program of study favours their success and leads them to want to become a model for their community, their children or their family, for example.

The presence and support of **community resource persons** in the fields of education and training who provide the student with reliable support and a feeling of safety also promote success.

Pedagogical component

The adoption of **academic inclusion** practices, notably thanks to the consideration and incorporation of the student's ideas, beliefs, values, etc., reinforces their sense of identity and the self-esteem required to pursue the training.

Adaptation of the teaching and the **pedagogy** to the characteristics, especially the cultural characteristics, of the First Nations and Inuit enables a better response to their needs.

The teacher's adoption of a **teaching philosophy** that takes into account different skills and knowledge promotes student perseverance.

The **appreciation and inclusion of the unique characteristics, knowledge, skills and viewpoints of the First Nations and Inuit** may foster a sense of cultural safety and pride that encourages the student to persevere.

The **educational relationship** between teacher and student is a key contributor to the student's perseverance in vocational training.

Institutional component

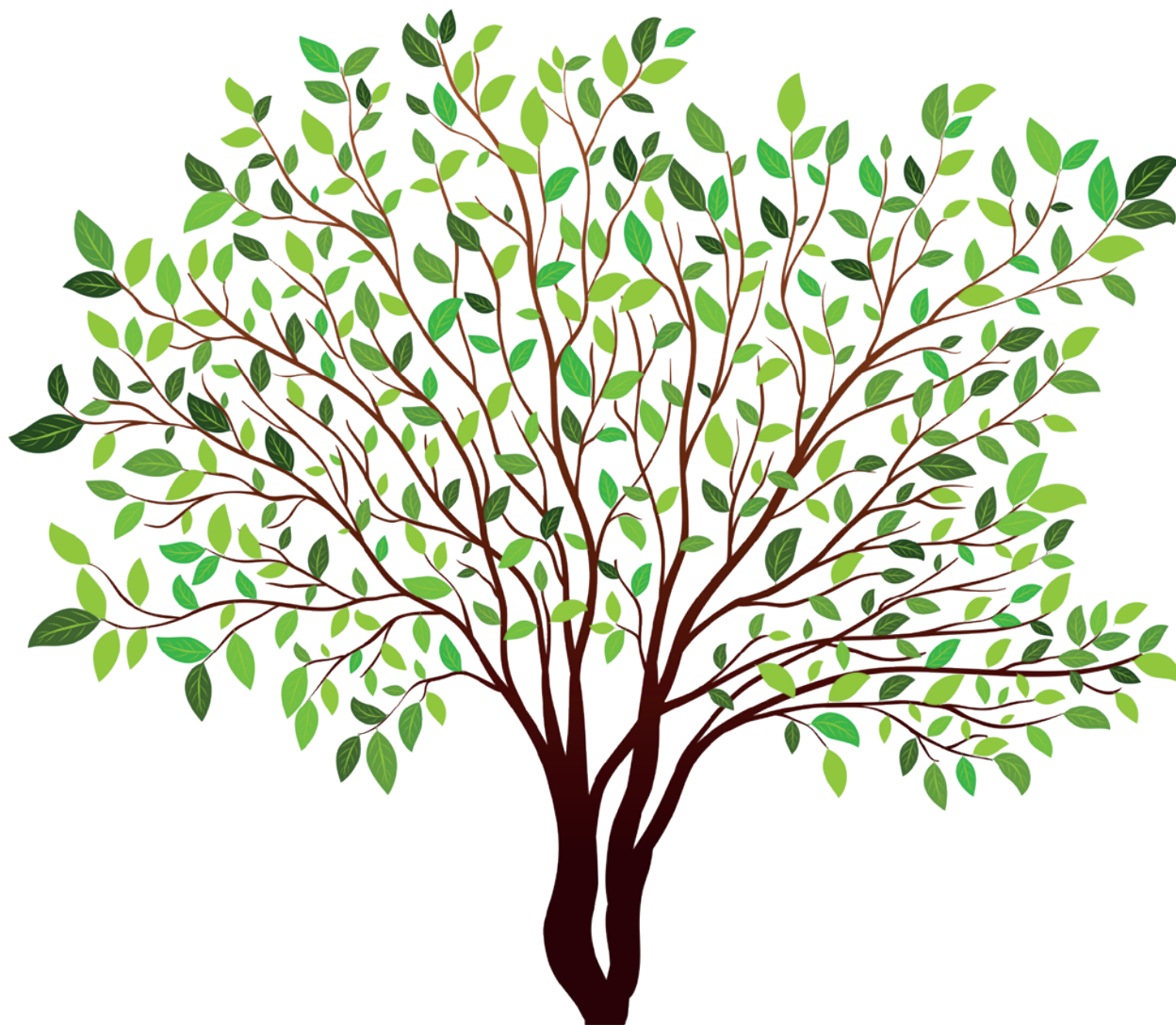
The implementation of **measures for transition into vocational training** helps the student prepare for the changes that are to come.

The **accompaniment** and support provided to the student throughout their training pathway make it possible to ensure a personalized offer of services in accordance with the different contexts.

Openness to the **involvement of communities** in various aspects of the student's training path is a key to success.

Awareness training and **continuing professional development** offered to the centre team with the primary intention of informing them about the realities of First Nations and Inuit students, works in favour of perseverance.

The implementation of **cultural safety** practices intended to promote the student's well-being allows cultural spaces for dialogue, sharing, etc. to be created and favours perseverance.



Risk and vulnerability factors

Personal component

The **physical distance** separating them from their family and their community can sometimes make the student feel lonely and cut off. This can result in situations where the student feels helpless, such as when a loved one is having problems, situations that can have repercussions on the student themselves.

The **cultural shock** of having to deal with an unfamiliar culture can lead to thinking that others do not accept us.

The **relationship with the self** could pose a threat to their identity, because calling into question their identity, belonging, culture, etc. can frequently occur when they are in a culturally different group.

The **relationship with the trade** in the mining sector is not always accepted by First Nations and Inuit communities and can result in a lack of community support for the study plan.

The **relationship with their competencies and their capabilities** might make the student feel that they are unable to reach the goals they have set for themselves or to receive the support required to reach them.

The **difficulty in adapting** that the student could experience with regard to a new urban environment far away from their family and an educational institution that often appears intimidating and impersonal can have an impact on their behaviour and attendance. Some students blame their addictive behaviours on the stress, anxiety and strain of adapting to an unfamiliar setting, among other factors.

The **students' characteristics or traits** (shyness, fear of making a mistake, etc.) could hinder them on their training pathway.

The **balancing of studies and family responsibilities** can be complicated for certain students. This situation is especially true in a context of practical training that takes place on site/in school where the student has an atypical training schedule.

The **financial needs** are often greater than the funding resources available and this can drive students to find other sources of income.

The limitations on the amount of **time that they can devote to their studies** can slow down the learning process.

The **historical, political and social context** may cause certain students to be apprehensive with regard to their interpersonal and social relationships, and to even feel that they are being judged or rejected. From this stems a certain distrust that could prevent links from being created.

The social, cultural and historical **heritage** of parents and members of the community could interfere negatively with the building of a bond between the teacher and the student. The residential school experiences of members of the student's family could affect the student's perception of education and schooling.

The **racism and prejudice** directed at the student could create learning conditions that are not optimal.

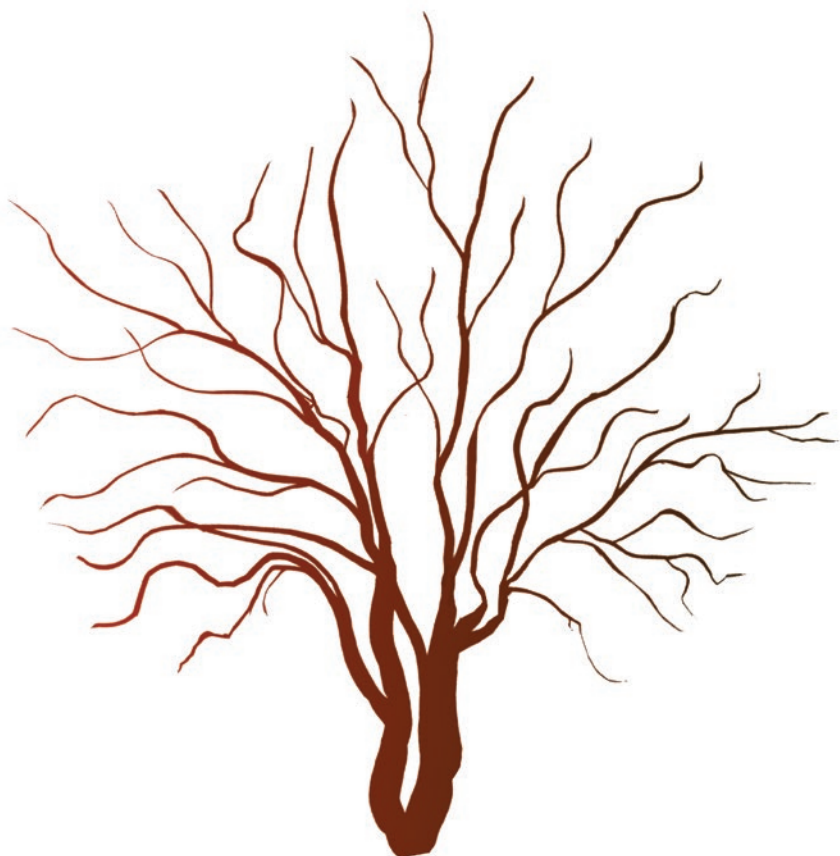
Pedagogical component

The **language of instruction** and communication is often a second or third language for First Nations and Inuit students, and this could result in a lack of understanding of the message and more difficulty in expressing themselves (needs, emotions, opinions).

The lack of adaptation of the **teaching methods** used by the teachers could make it difficult for the student to understand.

The **difficulties created by a fast-paced learning and training process** could cause students to experience cognitive overloads, become discouraged or feel academically and professionally incompetent.

Academic inclusion is not promoted and the training centres offer little training or information and, as a result, there is only partial inclusion.



When enrolling in vocational training, students run the risk of encountering **prerequisites** that they do not have.

Institutional component

The **representations of schools and social constructs** could create a distance between the practitioners and the student, which might exacerbate the impacts linked to the cultural difference and also reinforce stereotypes on both sides.

The **institutionalization of the training centre** could result in a lack of adaptability and flexibility in certain practices, especially administrative ones, or in an inadequate adaptation of the pedagogical and psychosocial services offered.

The **organization of the training** might be rigid and could lessen the possibilities of adapting it to the different learning paces of the student.

The student's lack of knowledge about the career possibilities in the mining sector due to a lack of **information and career guidance** could lead them to make academic choices that are less suited to their profile.

The student may have difficulty in recognizing the forms of **help and support** and this could result in a lack of support when they need it.

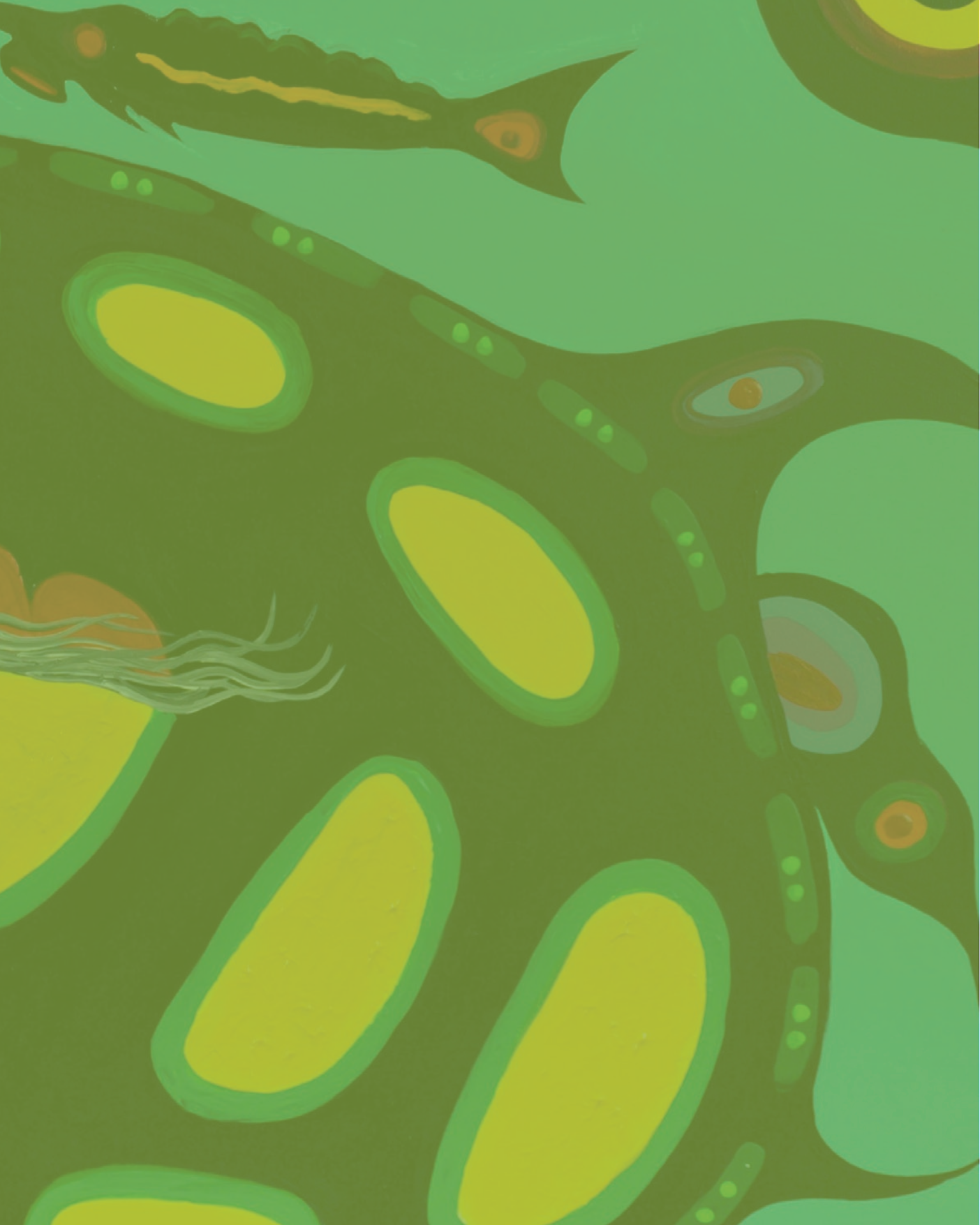
The **educational path** of a First Nation or Inuit student is different and the student risks starting their training with academic gaps to fill.



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of organic, flowing shapes in various shades of green and yellow. These shapes, which resemble cells or fluid motion, are set against a darker green backdrop. A large, white circle containing a green number '2' is positioned in the upper center of the page.

2

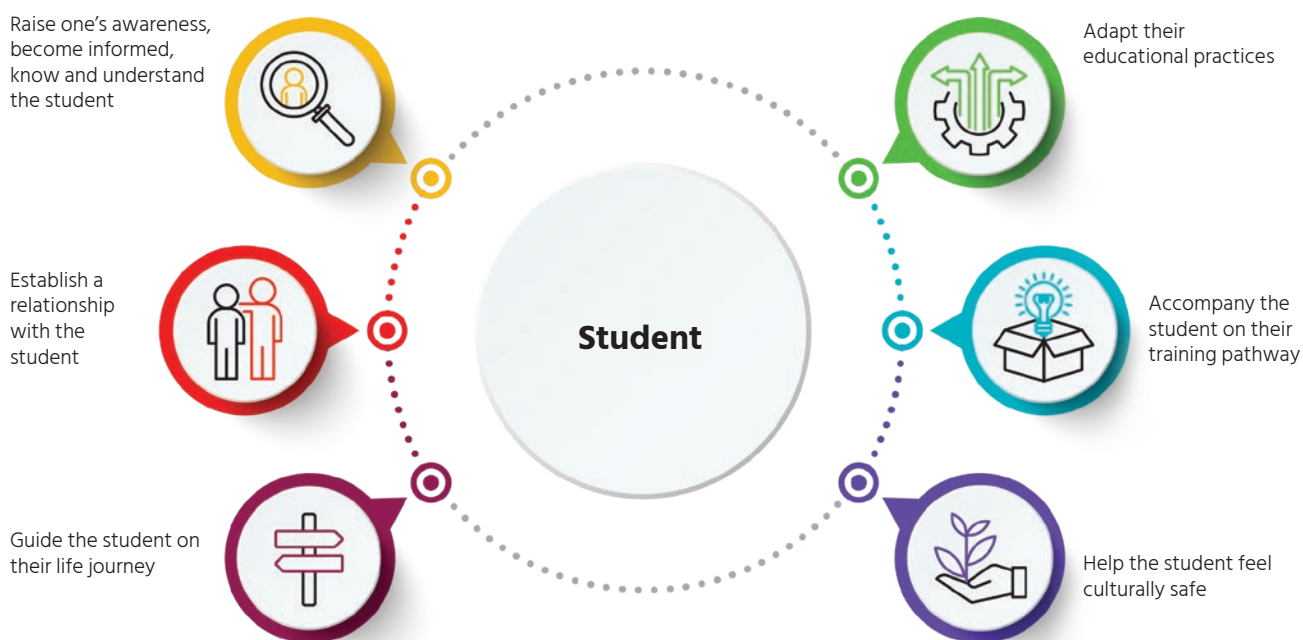
Strategies promoting the perseverance of vocational training students



Strategies promoting the perseverance of vocational training students

The risk and vulnerability factors, and the protection and success factors presented in **Section 1** lay the groundwork for strategies and practices that can promote student perseverance.

Aimed at contributing to student perseverance, **Section 2** proposes concrete strategies and practices that could be implemented by teachers as well as by the administrators of training centres. These strategies and practices are presented in the form of six courses of action.





Despite the link and logic that exist between each of these courses of action, some could have more influence or weight than others, depending on the student's situation, and affect the other courses of action. Furthermore, taken separately, each of the courses of action has an impact on the student and their environments (personal, family, school, etc.).

In order to contribute positively to student perseverance, it is advisable to adopt several practices and strategies in each of the courses of action. Even though the ultimate objective is the implementation of the most strategies and practices possible, the reality in the field and experience suggest that teachers and centre administrators should adopt new strategies and practices gradually. To help with a greater appropriation of practices and strategies, tools are available in **Section 3**.



Course of action

Raise one's awareness, become informed, know and understand the student

Foundations of the course of action

1 What does “Raise one's awareness, become informed, know and understand the student” mean?

Raise one's awareness and become informed

The teacher who raises their awareness is open to welcoming new information. They are receptive and show interest in knowing a little more.

The teacher who becomes informed looks for information to broaden their knowledge and more detailed content about First Nations and Inuit students. They document this by gathering resources, consulting them, asking people questions, browsing websites, etc.

“Raise one's awareness” and “become informed” are the first steps to take, an introduction that allows the teacher to get a first idea of the students' realities and eventually become involved in a process.

Know and understand

The teacher who knows has learned information and reviewed content about First Nations and Inuit students. The teacher has amassed knowledge about the characteristics of these students and also about the existence and nature of historical, cultural, linguistic, political, educational and other elements and perspectives that pertain to these students and that the teacher can reinvest in their practice. Even though learning is part of a process, the teacher who knows has a clear idea of and identifies different issues, realities and perspectives that they can use and reinvest in their teaching.

“Know” is an additional step that engages the teacher in a process (a step on a new road) and enables them to begin a personal and then professional reshaping of their ideas, philosophies, practices, etc. As in all learning, there is no end to, or limit on, the knowledge to be acquired. When they are ready, each person develops the knowledge they need.

The teacher who understands clearly discerns in their mind the causes and consequences of the items of knowledge that they have learned. They intellectually grasp the meaningful connections between this knowledge and the reality experienced by First Nations and Inuit students as well as the implications with regard to their perseverance and become

aware of the repercussions of knowledge learned on teaching, education, students, etc. The teacher then properly represents the situation, reality or issues and can explain them. The teacher has incorporated knowledge, which enables them to work sensitively with the student. If the reshaping begins with the development of knowledge, it continues with the understanding of situations within a context and of the students in particular.

“Understand” is a never-ending process, even for a given educational situation in a circumscribed context, and one that requires patience. Understanding of First Nations and Inuit students by the teacher continues, little by little, throughout the teacher’s career.

2 Why is it important and relevant to become informed, know and understand the student?

First Nations and Inuit students are different. They come from a system that has other values, other cultural and linguistic references, a unique history, different views on education and teaching, etc.

Effective instruction for First Nations and Inuit students, that is to say, teaching that gets them interested and engaged on the intellectual and emotional levels, enables the creation of a meaningful educational relationship with the teacher and encourages them to persevere. The effectiveness of instruction rests precisely on the willingness of the teacher to raise their own awareness and become informed, on the development of new knowledge about the student and on the understanding of the situations in which the student lives.

Lastly, knowing the student and their characteristics (cultural, linguistic or personal) and understanding them in their relationship with others and themselves, leads the teacher to determine the risk and vulnerability factors as well as the protection and success factors. In turn, these factors lead to the identification of culturally relevant strategies to promote perseverance that are coherent and in tune with the students’ needs and expectations.

In short, knowing and understanding the student makes it possible to carry out actions and interventions that promote their perseverance.

Raising awareness of the realities of the First Nations and Inuit and becoming informed

If the teacher’s first step consists of raising their own awareness and becoming informed, their sincere commitment has a decisive impact on student perseverance. Furthermore, the teacher who becomes aware and informed has already demonstrated an interest in going further. They want to take a first look at the new realities being experienced by the student.

Teachers are motivated to raise their own awareness and become informed for a variety of reasons. The people interviewed for this study said that they were mainly motivated by the presence of First Nations and Inuit students in their cohort, their realization that they knew nothing about the situations and realities of these students, their feeling that they did not know these students and the instructional strategies that would work best, and the fact that they felt ill-equipped in their educational practices in general and in creating bonds with students.

One of the goals of this course of action is to identify questions and information that the teacher must seek out, consult, discover and learn about in order to know and understand students' realities. This process thus helps dispel the illusion that the effort required is too much or that the step to climb is too high.

Taking it further

The ideal situation would be for teachers to learn about First Nations and Inuit history and contemporary realities long before they are required to teach these students. Teachers would learn this history and become aware of these realities during their initial training or their ongoing professional development.

General information about First Nations and Inuit, and, more specifically, about students, is plentiful and can be found in multiple resources. For teachers who are beginning their learning journey, it is recommended that they start with information about the Nations and communities near their VTC as well as the territories and contexts (educational, social, economic, etc.) of these Nations and communities. To this end, the following pages contain suggestions for subjects to discover, divided into three parts: (1) the history of the First Nations and Inuit, (2) their cultural and linguistic characteristics and (3) their current realities.

There are important differences between the Nations and between the communities so it might be a good idea to start off by focusing on one Nation or community so as not to take on too much and get discouraged.

- What Nations and communities do the students in my cohort come from?
- On which First Nations or Inuit territory is the VTC located?
- What is the history of the First Nations or Inuit of this area and what are its characteristics?
- Etc.

That having been said, the way in which one raises their awareness and becomes informed is personal and varies considerably from one individual to another. Several resources and means are available and correspond to these individualized ways of learning. For example, teachers are invited to:

Read

- Books
- Documents from recent national and provincial inquiry commissions
- Documents written by First Nations and Inuit organizations such as the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones and the Human Resources Development Commission
- Etc.

Educate themselves

- Take a course in a post-secondary educational institution.
- Take online training sessions.
- Consult online pedagogical resources intended for educational institutions.
- Etc.

Connect

- Meet people and interact with them.
- Attend presentations, colloquia and conferences.
- Visit the communities.
- Have interviews with First Nations and Inuit organizations such as Friendship Centres and Indigenous tourism agencies.
- Etc.

Contemplate

- Exhibitions
- Arts
- Etc.

Listen and watch

- Podcasts
- Documentaries
- Etc.

Although all of these sources of information are relevant, one of the best sources is undoubtedly the students themselves. They are at the centre of the relationship and listening to them and observing them provides an opportunity for gathering some information about their respective cultures.

Most of the time, these first items of information gathered lead to discovering, on a broader scale, what the First Nations and Inuit in Québec have experienced (history), what the differences and similarities are between Nations, as well as the differences and similarities to mainstream society (characteristics, especially cultural and linguistic) and what they are experiencing today (current realities). In short, teachers who raise their own awareness and become informed end up being more knowledgeable and having a better understanding of First Nations and Inuit students, which, in turn, leads to better interventions that effectively foster student perseverance.

"I've always loved my culture. I like to talk about it with others and debunk prejudices." (Student)

Raise one's awareness: What information does one need to start their research and learning

More generally, the teacher can organize their research and learning into three phases: (1) the history of the First Nations and Inuit, (2) their cultural and linguistic characteristics and (3) their current realities.

Historical elements

Elements from the rectified history of the arrival of Europeans and the active role played by First Nations and Inuit during that era

Focus on:

- The relations between the peoples
- The agreements and treaties
- The *Indian Act*
- The new information that has been discovered

"I believe that a greater knowledge of history is needed in order for there to be more people with raised awareness." (Practitioner)

The history of education and schooling, including the traumatizing experience of the residential schools and the transgenerational trauma that still affects students

Focus on:

- Colonization, cultural genocide and their repercussions
- The history of education before the arrival of Europeans
- Schooling in the residential schools and its repercussions

Please note: The end goal of this part of the process is not to explain the information about the students' history, current realities or cultural and linguistic characteristics, but to determine what the teacher's first discoveries should focus on. Furthermore, they vary a lot from one person to another, depending on their experience and prior interest in these issues.

Cultural and linguistic characteristics

General information on the Nations and the communities: some cultural, linguistic, historic, geographic, etc. characteristics

Focus on:

- The characteristics of the communities and Nations in the vicinity of their VTC and those of the students in their cohort with regard to:
 - The land, especially its physical and symbolic characteristics

Taking it further



The elements linked to the land underpin the teachings, knowledge, skills and other content handed down within communities. These elements are the foundation for learning for several Nations. The land is also a symbol of much more (with nuances specific to each Nation) which constitutes a place of family, social and political (structure) meetings, and a place of teaching where the resources required for life are found (Deschênes 2022).

- The language (each word contains the description of knowledge; it carries both history and knowledge)
 - The narratives and legends specific to the cultural groups (the vehicles by which several items of knowledge are transferred)
 - History, from before colonization up to now
 - Knowledge and other perspectives
- The organization of families, the role of each member and the role of Elders
 - The structure and administrative organization of the communities of these Nations
 - General sociodemographic statistics and statistics on nearby communities (population, employment rate, graduation rate, languages spoken, etc.)

*"There are words that can't convey what we know. One word can mean many things."
(Student)*

Views on education, learning, academic perseverance, success and evaluation

Focus on:

- The differences and similarities between these views and those of Québec society
- Their impacts on teaching
- Holistic learning model
- Indigenous pedagogy

Taking it further



It is important to identify the differences in the characteristics of each Nation and not lump them together, despite what they have in common (CERP 2019).

Current realities

Current barriers to education and schooling

Focus on:

- The barriers in general for all First Nations and Inuit in urban settings
- The personal, family, social, cultural or educational barriers for First Nations and Inuit adults who enrol in vocational training

The life contexts of First Nations and Inuit in urban settings

Focus on:

- The realities of hypermobility
- The education of First Nations and Inuit within their communities compared to education in urban settings
- School transitions and their repercussions

Knowledge of the specific cultural characteristics of students and understanding of their previous and current pathway

More specifically, beyond the characteristics of the communities and Nations near the VTC and, on a broader scale, those of the First Nations and Inuit in Québec, the First Nations and Inuit students attending the VTC have their own cultural, linguistic and personal characteristics as a group and as individuals. Furthermore, given that their cultures and languages are different from those of mainstream society, that their realities and histories are unique, that they come from another setting that teachers often know little about and that they have different views and representations of education and learning, it is essential to create a portrait of each student, in accordance with their specific characteristics. Knowledge and understanding help teachers intervene in a targeted way and identify educational practices that work and foster perseverance. Teachers who are aware and who have informed themselves in general about the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the First Nations and Inuit can now concentrate on acquiring more specific knowledge about the students in their cohort.

Better knowledge and understanding of the student, their characteristics and their pathway

Better knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and personal characteristics of the student and their pathway encourages the development of a relationship of trust between the teacher and the student, while also developing the student's relationship of trust with the educational institution (course of action, "Establish a relationship with the student"). This better knowledge and keener understanding enables the teacher to:

- Guide the students better (course of action, "Guide the student on their life journey").
- Intervene more effectively and better construct or adapt educational practices (course of action, "Adapt their strategies and educational practices").
- Grasp more fully their students' needs and expectations and provide better accompaniment (course of action, "Accompany the student on their training pathway").
- Implement actions that ensure the students' cultural safety (course of action, "Help the student feel culturally safe").

Furthermore, knowledge and a better understanding of the student not only helps reinforce their strengths and talents, but also acts as a preventive measure by identifying weaknesses and difficulties, as well as signs of incomprehension, disengagement or dropping out. Thus, once the relationship has been established, the teacher has the time to intervene to stop a possible process of rupture between the student and their environment. It thus has a direct impact on the student's perseverance.

Taking it further



Indigenous pedagogy rests on the following principles: learning happens through participation, experimentation and observation; one looks for authentic learning experiences on the land; the Elders and Knowledge Keepers of the First Nations and Inuit have an important place; one promotes the enjoyment of learning and multisensory experiences; the teacher acts primarily as a guide; and, above all, the learning is aimed at the development of oneself throughout life (RCAAQ 2022) (also see the Appendix for a full explanation of this pedagogy).

To know the characteristics of the student and better understand the student

To know the characteristics of the First Nations and Inuit student and better understand them, the teacher is invited to question themselves using different reflective guidelines. To organize these reflections, it is suggested that each question be linked to the courses of action associated with the holistic view of the student and their environment.



Good to know!

The holistic view

The holistic view, inspired by several Nations, is based on the idea of a harmonization between the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the student and the belief that a single dimension cannot be developed independently without the other dimensions being involved. It applies just as much to education as to life in general. Equal value and importance are accorded to the four dimensions that are considered to be inseparable from the student, their family, their community, their land and even the world. These dimensions are interdependent elements that exist in relation to each other (CCL 2009).

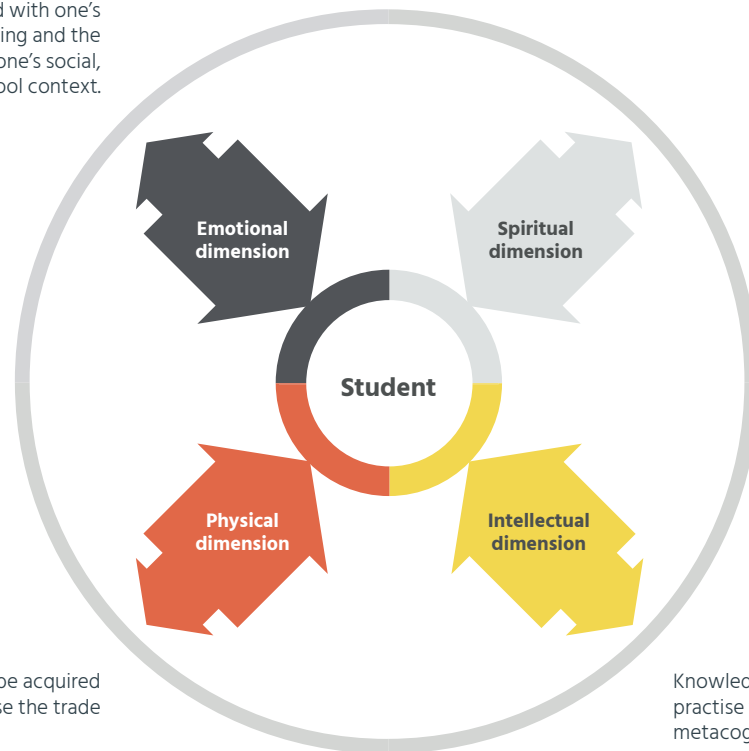
When applied to vocational training, the four dimensions of the holistic view inspired by First Nations can be expressed as “items of knowledge:” knowledge, know-how, knowing how to be and knowing how to become. Each of these types of knowledge is transformed into a learning objective:

- **Knowledge** corresponds to the knowledge to be acquired for practising the trade (**intellectual dimension**).
- **Know-how** corresponds to the skills to be maintained or acquired in order to practise the trade (**physical dimension**).
- **Knowing how to be** corresponds to the attitudes, like social skills, that are important to develop to undertake the training and to practise the trade, including the relationships to be maintained with one’s colleagues in a given setting and the emotions and feelings in one’s social, family and school contexts (**emotional dimension**).
- **Knowing how to become** corresponds to the meaning accorded to one’s life project and vocational training project (**spiritual dimension**).

Learning by a First Nations and Inuit student in vocational training

Knowing how to be or attitudes, like the social skills to be developed to complete the training and to practise the trade, including the relationships to be maintained with one's colleagues in a given setting and the emotions and feelings in one's social, family and school context.

The meaning that the person, their family and their community assigns to the training and life project and to the choice of trade.



The know-how or skills to be acquired in order to practise the trade

Knowledge to be learned to practise the trade, cognition and metacognition

The student's environment represents the interdependence between the four dimensions and the land, culture, language, history, tales, legends and items of knowledge (the grey circle in the background).

The teacher develops knowledge and a better understanding of the student (arrows pointing to the student) and of their environment (arrows pointing to the outside), in all four dimensions.

The outcomes of the interviews conducted indicate that balance between these four dimensions favours perseverance because the student is thriving and improves their chances for academic success.

Therefore, in this context of teaching First Nations and Inuit students, the teacher's role in the development of the student's full potential also depends on the implementation of actions and interventions that help the students keep this balance between these dimensions. To achieve this, the teacher must know the students and the environment in which they are growing up well, which involves spending time with the students and talking about their goals with them. The reflection tool *"Development of knowledge and the portrait of the student,"* in **Section 3**, proposes a series of reflections on each of the dimensions that guides the teacher in their research and discoveries.

These questions and the student's reflections lead the student, supported and guided by the teacher and then independently, to write down their first goals and to define or refine their personal, academic and vocational plan. When shared, these goals help the teacher understand and guide the the student (course of action, "Guide the student on their life journey") and enable the teacher to draw a portrait of what could have an impact on the perseverance of each student, in accordance with each profile. The teacher's observations complete the information on which they base the adaptations of their interventions, their strategies and educational practices, especially those of a pedagogical nature.

Please note: This portrait of the student is drawn gradually, starting with their arrival at the VTC. Furthermore, a variant of this consists of proposing workshops or talking circles with a few students so that they feel more at ease expressing themselves.

This also allows the student to have a different type of contact with the teacher and vice versa in a context that provides the opportunity to create bonds and a relationship based on trust (course of action, "Establish a relationship with the student"). These interactions can make the student feel safe, especially culturally (course of action, "Help the student feel culturally safe") and important, which supports and encourages them while also improving their confidence in themselves as a student, a person and a future worker and colleague.

In short, it is important to stress that these reflections are dynamic and constantly evolving. They will have the tendency to change and progress over the months that the training lasts. Some students will acquire knowledge beyond that prescribed by the programs and will learn how to learn differently. Others will question themselves and will no longer be sure of their choices, and still others will develop new attitudes or increase their confidence in their competency. One thing that is certain, however, is that the teacher who knows and understands each student can help them stay balanced and hold fast to what is important to them, then provide guidance (course of action, "Guide the student on their life journey"). In short, the student's knowledge helps bolster their perseverance.

Taking it further



First Nations and Inuit students sometimes start off with lower self-esteem than other students. The difficult history of colonization and the cultural genocide that followed, the racism and discrimination that they and their families have endured or still endure today often explain most of the reasons behind this phenomenon. Society racializes, belittles, marginalizes and makes the people of the First Nations and Inuit more vulnerable, all of which results in making them feel less important and less competent (TRC 2015; CERP 2019). This situation affects the relationship between the institution and the student (also see course of action, “Establish a relationship with the student”) and may pose a challenge for the teacher when starting this process. This means that patience, caring and openness become absolutely essential attitudes.



Course of action

Establish a relationship with the student

Foundations of the course of action

1 What does “establish a relationship” mean?

Establishing a relationship with the student means going to meet them to develop a bond and eventually get to know and understand them better. Because relationships are built through the quality of interactions, communication, caring, support and sensitivity are essential.

For a teacher, establishing a relationship with the students also means developing a relationship in which, more than exchanging knowledge, there are two human beings who meet.

2 Why is it important and relevant to establish a relationship?

The creation of the relationship is certainly a major factor in the context of teaching First Nations and Inuit students because it enables the teacher to increase their knowledge of the students' environment. In addition, the bonds forged with the student create a strong foundation for their perseverance. In fact, the entire process is based on the relationship established, which makes it possible to take the following actions, among others:

- Respond to the student's needs.
- Bolster the student's self-esteem.
- Increase their knowledge of the other's characteristics, especially in relation to their culture and language.
- Promote discussions and network building.
- Strengthen the student's social and relational skills.
- Provide the student with a model so that they can develop relationships with other people.
- Contribute to a healthy and positive atmosphere in the group, as well as a sense of belonging.
- Contribute to increasing the success rate for students at the VTC.

Educational relationship

Educational relationship and trust

Trust is essential to developing a strong relationship. This bond of trust between the teacher and the student starts with a mutual commitment. It is then maintained by the quality of their interactions and the effort they put into enriching the relationship. The quality of the educational relationship and the bond of trust created between the First Nations or Inuit student and the school professionals, especially the teacher, contributes greatly to maintaining or stabilizing the student's school attendance (Presseau et al. 2006; Manningham et al. 2011) and to encouraging the student's perseverance (Côté 2019; Gauthier 2015; Mareschal and Denault 2020).

This element is essential; it was identified by several First Nations students in vocational training during the interviews that were conducted and reinforces the idea that developing a relationship leads the student to believe that they can succeed.

*"The relationship with the teacher played an very important role in helping us continue."
(Student)*

"The greatest quality [of a teacher], is the willingness to invest themselves. Someone who is interested in learning about each one of us." (Student)

Educational relationship in an intercultural context

When developing this relationship between a First Nations or Inuit student and the teacher, the intercultural dimension must be taken into account. This involves the recognition of the cultural specificities of the First Nations and Inuit. Aside from the educational context, the meeting with the other also means the discovery of the invisible characteristics of their culture, beyond what is explicit and visible. It is an act of reciprocal learning. To build a positive relationship of trust, there must be honesty, respect and the acceptance of differences.

In this context, respect for the uniqueness of each student and recognition of their differences is of the utmost importance. Likewise, it is an effective practice to have an meeting between two "human beings," as equals, before the meeting between student and teacher. To build this meaningful connection and, eventually, a bond of trust, the prioritized strategies are to:

- Take the time to show interest in the student in order to become informed of their needs, goals, expectations and current experiences.
- Listen carefully to the student.

Important: Vocational training teachers must be aware that the First Nations or Inuit student will not necessarily go to meet them spontaneously. It is the teacher who should be the one to initiate the creation of the relationship.

Next, to foster this relationship, the teacher must be aware that they see the world through their own unique and often thought to be universal cultural perspective first and that they must step back from this perspective to recentre themselves and focus their attention on the other's perspective. This process enables the teacher to create a learning environment where the student feels respected and welcomed. Adopting other perspectives is an equally engaging practice, especially that of "finding ways to incorporate holistic lifelong learning" (FNEC 2020, 1). In short, observation, listening, curiosity, an absence of prejudice and stereotypes will help the teacher take steps toward this goal.

In discovering the student's environment, the teacher understands, among other things, the importance of the close bonds between the student, their family and their community. The teacher understands that collaboration between the VTC and the family and community is necessary to ensure that the student transitions smoothly into their vocational training path and then moves toward success. Furthermore, the creation of an alliance between the VTC and the family and community benefits the students because the relationship between these stakeholders allows for the sharing of responsibilities and concerted efforts. It must be recognized that the student is "part of a greater and wider family and community that contribute to (their) lifelong learning journey" (FNEC 2020).

The relationship with the student is also built in social settings and meeting places. These spaces provide great opportunities for teachers to develop a healthy closeness to the students and get to know them better, while also reducing the distance between the cultures.

In addition, it was apparent in the written texts and the interviews conducted that placing First Nations and Inuit students in the same group has a positive effect on their motivation and well-being. In fact, several students mentioned that the creation of such a community in a group encourages them and makes them more comfortable, as illustrated by the following two examples:

"They [the students] are shy and have more difficulty expressing themselves." (Partner)

"What I liked about my course was that we were close to the teacher and that there was respect between us and the teacher." (Student)

"Respect is what's most important to them." (Teacher)

"The bond of trust is a game of snakes and ladders . . .; they (the students) are distrustful." (Teacher)

"When they are together, they feel better and that has a positive impact." (Non-teaching professional)

Two students, members of a group composed of non-Indigenous students, had decided to follow their academic path together and they reported that sharing a pathway had motivated them. Among other things, living several hundred kilometres away from their community, being there for each other encouraged them, helped them integrate into their setting and made them feel more confident, starting with the first day of classes and throughout their training path.

"I didn't want to have the competencies I had already acquired in another DVS recognized for this program. I preferred to take all the courses again and stay with my group." (Student)

A student preferred redoing their Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) in its entirety in order to make sure they stayed with their cohort, instead of having their acquired competences recognized and being granted credits for some of them in their current training program (the student has a DVS in a related program of study).

Taking it further



In order to foster the relationship with the student, the teachers (or non-teaching professionals) can encourage sharing and meeting in informal settings outside classes, such as during social activities.

In the programs offered at the secondary or post-secondary levels, the student must adapt more to a changing environment and adjust to the varied strategies of the teaching resources. On the other hand, in vocational training, there is a small number of teachers for each cohort. This situation has a positive impact on the training path because the same teachers are with the student more often. Closeness developed in this way makes the student feel more comfortable, as the bonds created become familiar more quickly.



Course of action

Guide the student on their life journey

Foundations of the course of action

1 What do “guide” and “life journey” mean?

Guiding is based on the courses of action that go beyond the training project. The teacher who guides the student helps them, through reflection, analysis and reciprocal questioning, situate their training project as part of their life project (and their family project).

The guidance provided by the teacher falls directly into the spiritual dimension of the holistic model (see the course of action, “Raise one’s awareness, become informed, know and understand the student”) but concerns the four interrelated dimensions. The teacher monitors the student as the latter searches for balance and harmony between these dimensions.

The teacher then acts as a mentor. The teacher listens to the student and asks them questions as they choose their path or as they continue along the path they have already chosen. It is therefore a matter of providing direction, supporting a vision and encouraging the student to continue working toward a change that the student decides for themselves. The teacher guides the student as they identify means to define their goals, within the framework of their project, which must be constantly recontextualized, objectivized and relativized in accordance with their current experiences. The teacher mobilizes the student’s capacity to act to make them an active player in their “destiny,” despite the barriers or structures that stand in their way, and reminds them that there is some leeway in the pursuit of this path.

Taking it further

The choices made by members of First Nations and Inuit communities are often collective. Along with their personal and career aspirations, these students carry the aspirations of their community and its development needs. For example, it is not unusual for a student to choose a trade based on the needs of their community.

The life journey refers to the stages and transitions that the student has experienced or will experience depending on all the decisions that have been or will be made; these stages and transitions also include their environment (family, social and academic setting, community, etc.). The interdependence of the components of their environment is at the core of the balance of this journey.

Throughout the course of their life journey, in which their training project takes place, the student will encounter events which will have an impact on their resources—physical, psychological, social, cultural, economic, spiritual, etc. These events constitute a source of learning throughout their life. In guiding the student, the teacher enables them to take stock of this learning and bolster their commitment to their project.

2 Why is it important and relevant to guide the student on their life journey?

At the VTC, the student is in an environment where First Nations and Inuit cultural references and reference points are rare. The student has to start from zero and build their own set of references and reference points. In this context, it can be more difficult for these students to find meaning in the direction they originally defined for their training path, which can affect their perseverance. Likewise, the relevance of guiding the student on their life journey is rooted in the importance of:

- Describing, with the student, what could have an effect on their perseverance (risk, vulnerability, success and protection factors) and finding strategies to deal with aspects that could have a detrimental effect on their training project
- Supporting them in their ongoing search for direction in relation to what they are experiencing, their choice of trade, their relationships with others, etc.
- Supporting them in their reflections on the meaning to be accorded to their new environment (not just the VTC but also the surroundings, urban centre, etc.)
- Putting the events that occur into perspective with the student in order to reduce stress and anticipate what is coming, based on what has already been experienced
- Supporting them in determining their short-, medium- and long-term vision (for their studies, their life, their choice of trade, etc.) in a context where this vision contributes to whetting the student's appetite for learning and pursuing their project
- Taking stock, with the student, of their situation, their continued progress toward their goals as well as the difficulties they encountered and the measures taken or to be taken to overcome these difficulties
- Developing the student's self-esteem or reframing distorted or untrue thoughts about their ability to act and thus leading them to understand that they can move forward and be successful and that they have the personal resources to do so
- Bolstering their academic motivation and, eventually, their perseverance

Attitudes to be reinforced to guide the student on their life journey

The guidance is founded on the relationship between the student and the teacher (course of action, “Establish a relationship with the student”), which develops due to the teacher’s awareness as well as their knowledge and understanding of the student (course of action, “Raise one’s awareness, become informed, know and understand the student”). It is unlikely that the teacher could guide the student without having understood the student’s aspirations, goals or visions and, above all, without having previously created a relationship based on trust.

Furthermore, in mainstream society, even if some teachers decide to assume the role of guiding students, it is less present and less formalized in the school. Instead, the student is left to their own thoughts that they keep to themselves, unless they approach the teachers. First Nations and Inuit perceive teachers differently. The teacher is an integral part of the student’s “circle,” meaning that the teacher is not at the top (superior in terms of hierarchy or decision-maker), the bottom (inferior or unimportant to the student’s progress) or on the sidelines of the circle (as an observer, for example). The teacher is on the same level as the student, equal to them, acting as a keeper of knowledge among other keepers of other knowledge (the other students), and is a learner as well. The relationship is one of reciprocity, not one of expert to learner; both sides acquire learning, regardless of whether this learning contributes to their personal or professional development or facilitates interactions with students and colleagues in general.

From this standpoint, there is no limit to the learning the teacher can acquire. “Instead of being at the centre of student learning, this viewpoint requires teachers to have the humility needed to see themselves among a group of actors occupying a special place in a child’s lifelong learning. These actors include elders, parents, extended family, the community as a whole, and even the land” (FNEC 2020, 2). That is to say that, even when exercising their role as a guide, the teacher does not place themselves in a hierarchical relationship where there is a power relation between the student and them.

Taking it further



The First Nations Education Council identifies a teacher as a learner rather than an expert, and one who must themselves engage in a continuous learning process. Thus, teachers are called upon to know and respect First Nations and Inuit learners and then to work with them in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces (FNEC 2020).

For Québec teachers, this vision demands a change of attitude on their part. The first—suggested in the course of action, “Raise one’s awareness, become informed, know and understand the student”—is cultural consciousness. The second is cultural humility. The teacher who is culturally humble looks at their own culture with a critical eye and seeks to understand the students, their reactions and their cultures with respect and to recognize that the balance of power between them cannot be anything but equal (Tervalon 1998).

*“If I could change something in my experience, it would be not to rely on simply telling them to speak up if they needed help.”
(Teacher)*

Taking it further



For some professionals, the teacher's role as a guide broadens to also encompass that of a cultural mediator. The cultural mediator (Zakhartchouk 2006) supports the student's transitions between environments or cultures. For teachers with First Nation and Inuit students in VTCs, it would be a case of facilitating the "navigation" between cultures by guiding the students between their first culture (that of their Nation and family) and their second, or even third, culture (that of the centre and mainstream society). Primarily by enabling back and forth movements between the two, the cultural mediator gives direction to the cultural navigation and puts into perspective the change required to get there, which enables the student to find their place in the new culture or cultures without having to deny or feel the need to hide their first culture (see the CTREQ website www.ctreq.qc.ca for a summary in French).

This is a role that requires that teachers have a certain experience, a knowledge of the personal and cultural characteristics of First Nations students and the right attitudes in order to create a bond of trust. In their role as a guide, the teacher strengthens or develops their attitudes of cultural awareness and humility that will underpin the associated practices.

These attitudes also have connotations that echo the principles of the sacred teachings cherished by several Nations. They are presented on the next page, in the hope of inspiring teachers as they develop their relationship with the student.

The Seven Sacred Teachings

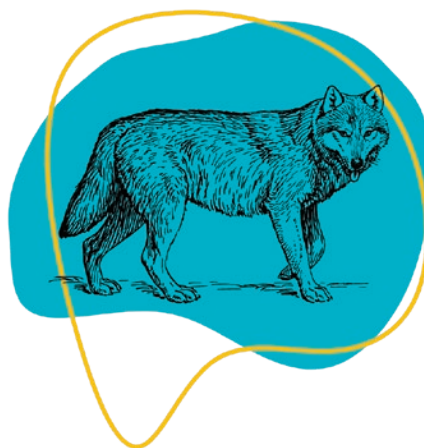


Honesty

Be honest in your words and actions. Be honest first with yourself. Then, it will be easier to be honest with others. The raven represents honesty. He accepts himself for who he is and does not try to be like others.

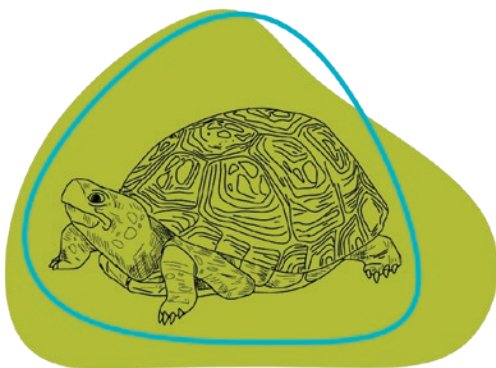
Humility

Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. All are equal and nobody is better than anyone else. The wolf represents humility because he is a social animal who lives in a pack. Wolves work together for the greater good of the pack.



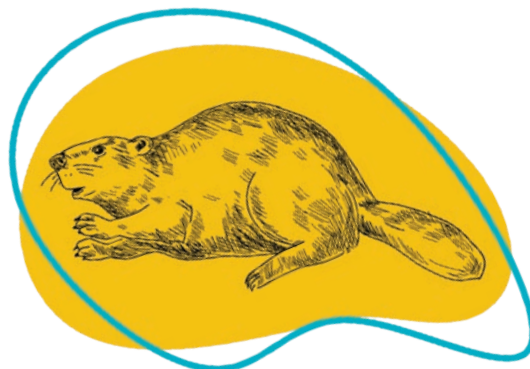
Truth

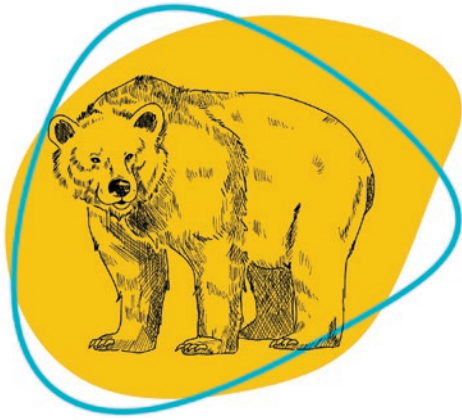
Truth is speaking only about what you have lived or experienced, and not deceiving yourself or others. Truth is represented by the turtle, who was here during the creation of Earth and carries all teachings on his back. By living in a slow and conscientious manner, the turtle knows the value of both the journey and the destination.



Wisdom

Wisdom is to be used for the good of all people. To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom. Wisdom is represented by the beaver, who uses its natural gift of sharp teeth wisely to cut logs and branches to build dams.





Courage

Courage is to face your foes with integrity, and do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant. The bear represents courage. The mother bear has the courage and strength to face her fears and challenges while protecting her young.

Love

Love is unconditional and must be given freely. When we give love freely, it comes back to us – in this way it is mutual and reciprocal. Love is between all of Creation, humans and non-humans. Love is represented by the eagle, who can travel over great distances and carry it and all of the teachings to the four directions of the Earth.



Respect

Respect is mutual and reciprocal. In order to be respected, one must respect others. All of Creation should be treated with respect. Respect is represented by the moose. At one time, the moose was a significant resource for the Anishinabe people, giving every part of itself to provide food, clothing and shelter for humans.

Sources:

Images based on those of the FNQLHSSC. The Seven Sacred Teachings – FNQLHSSC

Texts adapted from those of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. <https://www.ola.org/en/visit-learn/exhibits-art/seven-grandfather-teachings/teachings>

In addition to the attitudes and attributes associated with the seven teachings and cultural safety, the most important ones mentioned by the students who were interviewed were listening, authenticity, caring and empathy. The stable presence of the teacher also seems to make an important difference.

That having been said, other attitudes also enable the teacher to establish and further develop their relationship with the student. Firstly, the teacher must situate themselves in the process: what is their place, their goals, their roles, what values are important to them and which ones underpin this process, etc. Next, their open-mindedness and their capacity and willingness to innovate are important. If guiding the student involves reflecting on the goals to be developed and the means to be implemented in order for the student to successfully complete their training pathway, the teacher should also take a critical look at the student's entire schooling experience at the VTC (welcome, support and guidance, etc.), certain elements of which could require adaptations.

Taking it further



Guiding, because it involves listening to the students' feelings, reflections, rationalizations, and what they confide, helps the teacher better understand the personal and cultural characteristics of the students and more accurately understand their realities. The student and teacher therefore fuel each other and this knowledge will help the teacher guide the student. Among other things, the student's relationship with their environment is subjective and, to guide the student in their choices, the teacher must understand how the student's culture and experiences influence the relationship with schooling and education, knowledge and know-how, learning, the mining industry and the industry sector. This is a key area to be explored as these relationships have an impact on the student's training and the teacher's taking them into account bolsters the student's feeling of being heard and understood, which is also a factor of student perseverance.

Lastly, the teacher who acts as a guide recognizes the student's successes and, with the student, learns from what has been less successful in order to promote self-regulation and improvement in the more difficult elements. To do this, the teacher uses effective feedback to help the student advance. Good feedback also provides positive reinforcement and increases student motivation and perseverance. Guiding the students consists of reducing the students' risk and vulnerability factors, through reflection, working together on their perception of themselves and on learning that is not specifically academic or vocational such as the acquisition of personal resources. In short, guiding the student encourages their perseverance. In conclusion, guiding does not mean accompanying. Rather, guiding is a way of:

- Reducing the effect of social, historical and cultural constructs not only on First Nations and Inuit students but also on the people who enter into a relationship with them.
- Giving meaning to lived experiences through reflection and analysis, for learning outside of "content."

- Working with the student to reconcile the issues experienced and the benefits that training and the hopes of employment bring to them.
- Helping to expand the social and cultural representations that the student has of the people, the trade to be practised, the job to be held in a mining sector.
- Enabling the student to distance themselves from the representations or judgments that society might have about their competencies and capacities (to study at the VTC, pursue a vocational training project, etc.) and lead them to self-identify by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, what they should focus on and what they should improve.

Lastly, guiding the students consists of reducing the students' risk and vulnerability factors, thanks to reflection, working together on their perception of themselves and on learning that is not specifically academic or vocational such as the acquisition of personal resources. In short, guiding the student encourages their perseverance.





Course of action

Adapt their educational practices

Foundations of the course of action

1 What is an educational practice?

Without being exhaustive, educational practices are practices mainly used by teachers that involve:

- Planning pedagogical activities
- Choosing teaching strategies and methods, including organizing the content to be taught or selecting the method to do so
- Selecting the instructional material and using pedagogical and educational resources
- Evaluating the students' knowledge and competencies
- Organizing and managing the classroom

The aim of an educational practice consists of:

- Defining the specific goals for a student or group of students through:
 - the recognition of the students' own ways of learning
 - the taking into account of the students' personal, cultural and other characteristics

2 Why is adapting one's practices relevant?

Most of the time, the teacher contextualizes their practices automatically. For example, they "know" what to do and how to do it in a given context based on their experience and their knowledge of the student and the trade being taught. However, even if certain practices are seen as effective in general in a certain number of contexts, they are not necessarily so in the context of teaching First Nations and Inuit students and the teacher must adapt if they want to promote student perseverance and success.

Adapting educational practices is relevant because the specific personal and cultural characteristics of the students, which are less known in Québec in general and in vocational training programs in particular, are hardly taken into account in education. Furthermore, the students' need to adapt to the content and to the teacher's cultural differences is a key element because it can have a negative impact on their perseverance and success. Their limited familiarity with the educational institution and the "Québec" vision of vocational training places them in new and unknown situations with very few cultural references.

In addition, pedagogical and didactic resources that support the teachers and the First Nations and Inuit students are rare. The existing material is not culturally relevant and the teacher bases themselves most of the time on guides or materials prepared for non-Indigenous students and on pedagogical methods that do not originate from the First Nations and Inuit.

Furthermore, teachers have received little training (initial or continuing education) with regard to these specifics. What is true for students from immigrant backgrounds or diversity in general (gender diversity, physiological diversity, etc.) is not necessarily true for First Nations and Inuit students. There are major distinctions between the groups and adaptation thus becomes even more important.

Also, the research unequivocally shows that the instruction given in Québec is generally not adapted for First Nations and Inuit students. Despite current knowledge, practices are perpetuated without the concrete inclusion of specific cultural characteristics, knowledge and know-how and other First Nations and Inuit perspectives (Deschênes 2022, 2023) or all these specific characteristics are lumped together. Among other things, Deschênes (2022) states that it is necessary to encourage a more global learning of elements of content and to identify evaluation methods that place the students within a larger framework.

Lastly, adapting one's practices does not mean casting them all aside and starting again from zero. Teaching practices learned in training and acquired through experience are adapted and work with First Nations and Inuit students. Despite the important role played by innovation in adaptation, this does not at all entail reinventing everything but rather adapting it.

Principles for adaptation of educational practices

The adaptation of educational practices is based on different principles that guide the teacher's decisions in this area. They are listed below.

Principle 1: Adaptations based on the students' characteristics

- The teacher adapts their educational practices in accordance with the visions, needs, goals, and personal and cultural characteristics of each student, including:
 - The student's specific goals (course of action, "Accompany the student on their training pathway")
 - The student's previous academic pathway, their learning and their experiences, their current knowledge and competencies, etc. (course of action, "Accompany the student on their training pathway")
 - The student's needs and expectations in accordance with their environment and their aspirations (course of action, "Adapt their strategies and educational practices")
 - The student's age and experience (most of the students are adults who are older than the Québec students who pursue this type of training and they have a wealth of experience that is different from the baggage with which Québec students start their program)
 - The student's difficulties (such as a learning difficulty) and talents
 - The use of school strategies at home (What work is done at home? What support is offered by the family? What efforts are made and what time is spent outside of school? etc.)

- The student's career goals, their relationship with knowledge and know-how, with learning or with the world of industry (course of action, "Guide the student on their life journey")
- The student's risk, vulnerability, protection and success factors (Introduction)
- The meaning assigned by the student and their vision of the road to take and their goals in life (course of action, "Accompany the student on their training pathway")
- The need to provide the student with safety (course of action, "Help the student feel culturally safe")
- Etc.

Taking it further



In the interviews, some students stated that their needs and goals are aligned with those of their community. This information confirms the importance of also being interested in the student's environment, their family, their community and their Nation.

- The teacher's learning, general knowledge and knowledge of the students, including the portrait of each one of them, also enable the teacher to know which characteristics should be taken into account, and when (see the course of action, "Raise one's awareness, become informed, know and understand the student").
- Lastly, adaptation also needs to be based on the way students learn.



Good to know!

For First Nations and Inuit students, it is easier to learn:

- by starting with the general and moving to the specific
- by collaborating and working in small groups
- by being very active, doing practical assignments and by experimenting
- by carrying out case studies or solving problems in small groups
- by making their own diagram or by understanding a diagram that is presented to them along with explanations
- by observing the teacher or the other students carrying out actions or modelling a sequence and then imitating them through trial-and-learning cycles
- by observing while participating (through participant observation)
- by putting their land-based learning into practice, in a real context
- by taking the time to assimilate each concept before including a new one
- by talking with the others to make sense of what they are hearing
- by listening to the explanation of content like a story
- by using all their senses
- by contextualizing the content in relation to the environment and the land
- by placing the observations made in a familiar setting and by making connections with their experience (using their imagination, extrapolating and receiving support from the teacher)

FNEC 2014, RCAAQ 2016, Toulouse 2017, CCL 2009, Campeau 2016, 2021, Deschênes 2023

Principle 2: Adaptations based on the teacher's characteristics

The teacher adapts their practice using:

- their knowledge on the pedagogical and didactic level
- their overall experience and teaching experiences
- their expertise and the field for which they are qualified
- their representations and knowledge of the trades to be practised and the competencies to be developed by the students (not just those listed in the programs; they can also consist of soft skills or other skills)
- their values and beliefs in education and their perceptions and representations of teaching and learning
- the relationship they have developed and maintained with the student (course of action, "Establish a relationship with the student")
- Etc.

Principle 3: Adaptations based on the teaching contexts and the characteristics of the educational institution

- Training contexts vary from one centre to another and from one training program to another and the teacher adapts their practice in accordance with the characteristics of their educational institution, including:
 - The number of First Nations and Inuit students in the cohort
 - The type of training
 - The human resources available such as a resource teacher to support them or an educational consultant
 - The other resources: material, financial, etc.
 - The support of the centre team, including the administration
 - Etc.
- The adaptation varies depending on the territory in which the VTC is located and the Nation and communities nearby. (First Nations and Inuit pedagogy is directly linked to the place and the land).

Principle 4: Adaptations based on research and practices that are documented and recognized as effective

- Although the research on the educational practices to be adopted in vocational training for First Nations or Inuit students is rare, some work has been published recently and the existing research regarding First Nations and Inuit students enrolled in other levels of education could be applied in the context of vocational training.

Principle 5: Adaptations based on teaching methods and pedagogies reputed to be conducive to learning by these students and on the specific principles of learning

- Pedagogies reputed to be conducive to learning by First Nations and Inuit students: Indigenous pedagogy (see the bank of supplementary resources), land-based pedagogy (see the bank of supplementary resources), two-eyed seeing (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall 2012) or Indigenous pedagogy (Campeau 2016, 2021).
- The principles and goals of learning for the First Nations and Inuit can differ and the adaptation of practices takes that into account. For example, for some students, learning integrates more of the outdoor environment at the VTC. Adaptations of practices may also be based on what is going on around the centres and in the territory or communities.



Good to know!

For the First Nations and Inuit, learning:

- ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits and the ancestors
- is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational
- involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions
- is a continuous life-long process, the object of which is personal development
- is rooted in the languages and cultures of the First Nations and Inuit
- is focused on spirituality
- is a shared activity that involves the family, the community and the Elders
- integrates First Nations and Inuit knowledge as well as other knowledge
- is cyclical, interconnected and varied
- is objective and subjective, connected to context and place
- is concrete
- is adaptable in accordance with the place, the time and the context
- is based on interpersonal relationships and reciprocity
- consists of exploration carried out autonomously and independently
- is part of a non-hierarchical system of people, "things," knowledge, etc.
- is passed on by different people, with little intervention and instruction

Summary of Toulouse 2016, FNEC 2014, CCL 2009, MÉFM 2017, FNEC n. d.

Taking it further



The words “mistake” and “failure” do not exist in most First Nations and Inuit languages. Asked about this, some students replied that it is a source of learning that involves having to regain confidence in oneself and one’s capabilities. For example, an Elder explains that in Anishinaabemowin (the Anishinabe language), the closest meaning would be, “We will improve!”

In conclusion, these five principles for the adaptation of the educational practices of teachers (characteristics of the student, teachers and teaching context, results of research and principles of learning) provide guidance. They are a foundation on which the teacher can construct their adaptations and justify any potential modifications of their pedagogical and didactic methods that take better account of characteristics of which the teacher might have less knowledge. In addition, teachers develop multiple educational strategies and practices in order to offer teaching adapted to students that still respects the specific objectives of programs of study in the mining sector, the competencies targeted and, more broadly, the goals of the threefold mission of Québec schools: to provide instruction, to provide qualifications and to socialize. The next section proposes adaptation strategies.

Strategies for adapting educational practices

This section covers educational strategies adapted to First Nations and Inuit students, built on the foundations which are the characteristics of students, teachers, teaching context and research as well as the learning goals and principles of the First Nations and Inuit. Furthermore, even though all school stakeholders work and interact with students, the proposed strategies concentrate on what happens in the classroom, which includes all of the teaching and educational services, including pedagogical practices and the choice of instructional material, the choice of evaluation methods and the organization and management of the classroom. However, because the administrators of the centre or program of study provide support that is considerable, actually indispensable, for the adaptation of educational practices, one section exclusively describes certain adaptations related to the administration and management of the centre or its staff, including pedagogical support and guidance.

*“With First Nations and Inuit students, you have to break down the barriers and work within certain boundaries.”
(Director of a training centre)*

Furthermore, adapting educational practices requires that a stance and attitudes be developed or reinforced. These practices are more personal and difficult to “prescribe” because they form part of an individual learning and consciousness-raising process, but they must still be considered. For example, a teacher’s cultural sensitivity is not developed overnight. It

requires time and a cultural awareness that leads the teacher to question themselves and consider ways of dealing with the new challenges that present themselves. Seen from this vantage point, developing this sensitivity is a long-term activity, which is part of a personal and professional development process that varies from one person to another and cannot be dictated. Although these attitudes cannot be “dictated,” developing them is a necessary first step to all the educational practices proposed.

Please note: Although some of the proposed practices might seem universal in nature, they are based on the comments from practice settings, teachers themselves, other school stakeholders and, above all, on the statements made by students who spoke about what works for them in their context.

The 13 diverse educational strategies proposed in the following pages present varying degrees of adaptation and are applicable to all training-centre students, not just First Nations and Inuit students. In addition, the students and other education stakeholders who were interviewed considered these practices to be successful. Most of these practices were reported during the information-gathering phase for this document, while others came from researchers who have already worked on this subject, and still others from a previous research project whose results have been presented in another publication (Deschênes 2022).

Taking it further



Possible adaptations of educational practices can also be found in the offer of educational and complementary services program at the VTC. Although less used in mining sector programs, they are nevertheless potential avenues of intervention. Examples are also presented further down, particularly in connection with the possible intervention of administrative teams at training centres.

Educational strategies

Strategy 1 Work in close collaboration and jointly with local First Nations and Inuit people and communities through formal and sustainable partnership agreements

- Invite First Nations and Inuit Elders on a regular basis (as Elder-in-residence, for example) so that they can provide input on the courses, bring their cultural knowledge or support the students in the different dimensions.
- Involve First Nations and Inuit organizations such as the Friendship Centres or agencies such as the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ) that specialize in employment.

Strategy 2 Recognize the cultural specificities and include knowledge and other perspectives of the First Nations and Inuit, or refer to them, in the content (knowledge, references, etc.), in the pedagogical activities (exercises, assignments, etc.) and in the teaching (pedagogy, materials, etc.) and evaluation methods

Taking it further



Also see: FNEC 2020, Couture et al. 2019 and Deschênes 2025

"Indigenous students will experience success when teaching approaches value Indigenous knowledge and include Indigenous learning and perspectives. One way of doing this is by finding ways to incorporate holistic lifelong learning, which by definition 'involves a circular activity where everything is interconnected (as opposed to the classic 'linear' theory of learning based on cause-effect dynamics). Learning is formed through language, tradition, nature, family, elders, ancestors, community, etc. All these elements are interdependent and the absence of one element would destabilize the whole learning process" (CCL 2007, cited in FNEC 2020).

"You have to use their strengths, their knowledge. You have to find elements to acknowledge the value of their culture within the framework of the course and incorporate their viewpoint, to give them a place" (Teacher).

Strategy 3 Recognize the expertise of the First Nations and Inuit and use authentic content from sources who are viewed as authorities by the communities

- Use tools created by First Nations and Inuit organizations (RAEC, FNAESC, FNEC, etc.).
- Call upon members of the First Nations and Inuit Nation to review content, provide advice, etc.

Strategy 4 Pay close attention, in a timely manner, to the student's balance between the different aspects related to the development of their cognitive, metacognitive, emotional and spiritual dimensions

- Refer to the course of action, "Raise one's awareness, become informed, know and understand the student."

Strategy 5 Promptly and continuously provide for various support measures throughout the training period to help students integrate into a new cultural and linguistic environment

- Language strengthening workshops
- Human resources in counselling (academic and career guidance, psychosocial workers, academic support, etc.)
- A translation or interpretation service for specific moments

- Support for the students' immediate families for:
 - adapting to their surroundings
 - childcare services or school for the children
 - Etc.

Strategy 6 Choose contents that are in line with the students' schooling experience

The schooling experience of First Nations and Inuit students is different from that of other students. They arrive with different knowledge and skills that do not necessarily match those provided for in the programs.

- Concentrate on the prerequisite knowledge and competencies and ensure that they are developed before teaching the knowledge and competencies specific to the training programs.

Strategy 7 Pay special attention to the cultural relevance of all the content and the pedagogical and didactic materials

- Select authentic content that is culturally relevant and incorporates, for example, elements of First Nations and Inuit cultures and histories (FNEC 2020).

Taking it further



It is important to take a critical look at the material available. If it was created in a context other than that of students, it could not only present references that are very culturally distant from their experience, but could also be distorted and present images or ideas from a single viewpoint.

- Ensure that the student understands the examples used and that they are part of the student's references, especially cultural.
- Use examples and knowledge that are culturally meaningful to the students.
- Even if the options are limited, select material that presents characteristics that are not unfamiliar to students and resources that are culturally relevant (e.g. textbooks that show students in their thirties or forties who are hard at work and not just "white" students).
 - If there are no materials such as textbooks, visual aids or diagrams that can be hung up on the walls or other support material that relates to First Nations and Inuit symbols or cultural references can be used.
- Validate the references used and avoid using any that might be a cultural reference for the teacher who is a Québécois but mean nothing in particular to the First Nations and Inuit student (e.g. using the inukshuk, an Inuit symbol, on an image during an activity with a group of primarily Wendat students).
- Avoid lumping cultural references together, which is using one cultural reference and treating it as if it has the same significance in all First Nations and Inuit cultures.

Strategy 8 Show the practical side of everything to be learned

- Explain the basis of all new learning and contextualize it in terms of its future practical application when the student is in the field, on the job.

*"Things go well when they see it, when it's concrete. They learn better when it is demonstrated. So we favour teaching theory in the morning."
(Teacher)*

Strategy 9 Organize the content

- Consider organizing the content from the general to the specific.
 - Briefly present an overview of the content to be learned, before compartmentalizing it into specific areas.
 - Before beginning to teach each specific area of content, remind the students how it fits into the overall picture (a diagram or semantic map is a very useful tool for this practice).

Strategy 10 Place the emphasis on the teaching methods (pedagogical and evaluation practices) that are considered to be effective for First Nations and Inuit students

- Always present the content within a context, without detaching it from the overall goals, and make the connection between the content and its concrete application in practising a trade.
- Favour the repeated practice of and exposure to the content:
 - Provide for the use of tools and equipment through, for example, partnerships with private stakeholders, a room in which the infrastructure of a mine is reproduced in miniature or a simulator, in order to carry out hands-on demonstrations and encourage the acquisition of the expected professional skills.
 - Place the students in authentic and concrete situations (job integration internships, site visits, doing parts of the course in the field or having field-based workshops, in companies, etc.) so they can see for themselves the work environment into which they must transfer their learning (accompanied by possible twinning with a more experienced staff member).
 - Immediately after each element of the content is taught, propose hands-on activities that involve putting this content into practice.

Taking it further



In addition to its pedagogical value, this practice improves the student's chances of success when seeking employment. During site visits and workshops in the field, meetings with potential employers could be planned, which would provide an opportunity for both students and employers to share their expectations, among other things. In this way, the student can envision themselves in their future workplace, a practice reported to be very effective by several students and stakeholders.

- Prioritize using scenarios and case management studies, practical application and experimentation (simulators, workshops, field-based modules, etc.).
- Orient their pedagogical approaches on experimentation, observation of practices and carrying out tasks specific to the trades targeted

- Favour interaction, teamwork or talking circles as complementary strategies to practical teaching, e.g. problem-solving exercises, and arrange the classroom so that all the students can see each other and interact; these interactions encourage:
 - Conversations, the practice and acquisition of the language of instruction and of the future workplace
 - Increased possibilities for closeness and socialization in a context of creating a community of students who support each other
- Favour pairing, tutoring or mentorship practices
- Frequently summarize the content taught
- For more abstract concepts, favour explicit instruction using visual and tactile elements, especially in workshops
- Provide many examples, always ensuring that they are culturally relevant
 - The examples chosen are associated with concrete realities of the future trade to be practised and, whenever possible, are linked to elements of the students' community life before they arrived at the training centre.
- Use visual support elements as often as possible and for as much content as possible.
- Propose unstructured, sometimes informal, learning situations based on the transfer of experiences and knowledge between students.

Strategy 11 Follow the students' pace

- Understand and accept that students have different paces and do not consider this pace as just being "slower" because, in some cases, a change in educational practices has an effect on the pace of development of knowledge and skills.

Taking it further

In the case of a VTC where cohorts have been formed exclusively of First Nations and Inuit students, more time has been provided for carrying out training programs and this practice has had a positive impact on the success rate of students. This decision was based on the pace of learning of students because the time allotted to the integration of theoretical elements of content appeared to be too short for them, the fact that some prior knowledge had not been acquired and that their prior schooling experiences had not been recent.

- Repeatedly check that students have understood an element of content before moving on to new content; although this practice seems to be time-consuming, it more often than not ends up saving time.

Taking it further

In the VTCs, plans for catching up are not systematically provided for all the programs of study. However, the stakeholders interviewed considered it to be an effective practice.

Strategy 12 Provide students with close support

- Regularly remind students about deadlines, have them note down their responsibilities and schedules, provide reminders, ask questions about the pursuit of objectives, etc.

Strategy 13 Use adapted forms of evaluation

Please note: Evaluation is considered to be a major source of stress by almost everyone interviewed: teachers, students and other stakeholders. It is critically important to support, guide and reassure students in evaluations because this in itself is a factor of student perseverance.

Beforehand:

- Understand and incorporate what evaluation typically means and represents for First Nations and Inuit students, that is:
 - It is more or less a part of First Nations and Inuit education.
 - The compulsory nature of evaluation in vocational training is very stressful for First Nations and Inuit students who enter an unknown area without any references, cultural or otherwise.
 - In vocational training, evaluation is individual, which is contrary to the principles of learning favoured in First Nations and Inuit education where evaluation is an integral part of the total learning process.
 - Evaluation constitutes a judgment that can be considered as a judgment of the person rather than a judgment on the development of an element of knowledge or a skill and, because of that, it affects the student personally, in terms of their relationship with themselves and their cultural identity.
- Avoid evaluating the student without first having provided them with frequent feedback on their understanding of new elements of knowledge and their acquisition of competencies that have been taught.
- Prepare the students for the evaluation well before it is due to take place:
 - Have the students do practice exercises until they reach the point where they feel capable and competent.
 - Give the students the opportunity to work in a team then individually on situations that could appear in an evaluation (problem solving process, etc.).
 - Emphasize self- and peer evaluation as preparation.

During the preparation of the form of the evaluation and the evaluation criteria:

- When in doubt, discuss with the centre team and collaborators from the First Nations and Inuit the forms of evaluation to adopt in accordance with the students (origin, characteristics, etc.) and the content, including the evaluation criteria when possible.
- Diversify the forms of evaluation, for example:
 - Plan oral (e.g. explain an electrical system using a model or the solution of a problem) and written evaluations or offer the alternative.
 - Favour hands-on evaluations: vocational training allows for dynamic evaluations where the student demonstrates their competencies by carrying out or replicating trade activities rather than explaining what they could or should do.

Taking it further



In the context of the evaluation of the integration of knowledge or competencies by First Nations and Inuit students whose mother tongue is not English, the teacher may adapt the evaluation by inserting statements and questions that are short, very clear and only contain one idea per sentence, by offering to read the questions to them or by carrying out their entire evaluation orally.

Working with the students before the evaluation, so they can prepare themselves:

- Objectify the evaluations and put their importance into perspective: yes, they are important but the goal is to verify what has been learned, and failure is not indicative of one's overall competency.
- Explain the foundations and relevance of the evaluation:
 - In general, "We need to evaluate your knowledge and skills because ..."
 - With regard to content that is evaluated more specifically, "We need to evaluate this content specifically because ..."
- Announce exactly what the evaluation will cover and the context in which it will take place, which will greatly reassure the students (it is also suggested that a demonstration or a scenario be presented on exactly what will happen during the evaluation).
 - The content and form of the evaluation is announced to the students and should not come as a surprise to them.
 - The evaluation criteria should be presented, explained and made clear during the preparation.

Taking it further



The research that led to this document shows that it is necessary to evaluate students not only on specific competencies or techniques but also on the complementary competencies to be acquired, such as the relational competencies and *soft skills*.

Before the start of each theoretical evaluation:

- Provide a quiet place that is familiar to the students or allow them to choose one for themselves that feels less formal to them.
- Ensure that each student is feeling well and that it is the right time for them to undergo the evaluation (they are calm and in a good state, they feel ready, they understand the relevance of the evaluation, it makes sense to them, etc., with reference to the four dimensions of the holistic model of the course of action, “Raise one’s awareness, become informed, know and understand the student”).
- Put in place a routine that is reassuring for the student.
- Use humour to help create a relaxed atmosphere.
- Meet ahead of time with the more fragile students who may feel more stressed.
- Read each question or task with the students and have them paraphrase aloud.
- Give examples (not the answers) or ask the students to do so.
- Provide students with the opportunity to ask questions about the questions.

During the evaluation:

- Continue to provide the students with the opportunity to ask questions.
- Remain available throughout the entire duration of the examination.
 - It is the teacher who taught the subject who should be present during the examination, not another staff member, because the teacher is the student’s reference point, who makes the student feel secure.” *If the teacher is there, it’s going to go well, I can do it, because, if I have a problem, he’ll be able to help me because he understands me and knows how I work.”*

Following the evaluation:

- Once the results are obtained, use the evaluation as a source of learning.
 - Provide positive reinforcement for the students’ attitudes or success with regard to the way the evaluation went rather than with regard to the results.
 - Review the elements that were successfully completed and those that were less so (parts of the evaluation could even be repeated in teams, in an authentic context, during the visit to practice settings, etc.).

These elements are foundations for the teacher’s work, which they complete using the practices that are familiar to them and which are generally used with all students. It should be noted that the practices suggested in this part are also good and have been proven effective with regard to all students. As mentioned at the beginning of this course of action, the practices are based on the characteristics of students and teachers first and then on those of the educational institutions. Furthermore, although they have their specific cultural characteristics, First Nations and Inuit students also share characteristics with other students. Moreover, in many cases, students’ cultural identities are not known, making it difficult to offer specific services, which represents a challenge for centre administrators and teachers.

Important: Self-identification is voluntary and should never be portrayed as being compulsory or an incentive. For school stakeholders, the goals remain the same:

- Develop and maintain relationships with the communities and Nations.
- Honour the cultural roots and languages of the First Nations and Inuit.
- Support teachers in the choice of pedagogical and didactic resources that are culturally relevant and that recognize and promote, at least in part, the First Nations and Inuit cultures.
- Offer adapted support measures.
- Make school stakeholders aware of the importance of supporting students on the cultural and identity levels, not just on the academic level, and equip them to do so.

Most of the proposed practices fall within the latitude and scope of professional autonomy of teachers. However, they still require support from the Director and Assistant Director of the training centre. While this support is primarily financial and material (professional development, preparation time, cultural activities, etc.), it is also moral and psychological. The members of the administration team must support those who are providing support. Among other things, the work these teachers do should be recognized for its true merit, as must the time invested in adapting their practices and the thought that goes with it. The following section presents the practices that members of administrative teams could apply to this end, in accordance with the roles that they play with regard to teachers. Ultimately, these practices are intended to bolster student perseverance through the support provided by teachers.

Adaptation strategies related to administration, VTC management and support for teaching

The teachers who are responsible for training students work in an environment where various activities and support measures can be implemented, a fundamental support for the exercise of their profession, enabling them to focus their time and efforts on the perseverance and success of their students. For the most part, these activities and measures come from the administration of the training centre.

In this section, strategies that were reported by the school stakeholders interviewed are proposed. These strategies are used by members of the administration team, have a positive impact on the teacher's work or on their relationship with the First Nations and Inuit student, and facilitate the student's inclusion and perseverance. These strategies are considered best practices and not every centre has the necessary latitude to implement them all. Furthermore, they are presented as ideas for going further, above and beyond what teachers can do in their educational institution or in their classroom.

That having been said, it must be kept in mind that teachers work in an environment where they need support that is not only physical or financial but also pedagogical and psychological. The activities and measures presented in this sector take this into account. Physical and financial support refers to material resources (space, demonstration materials and equipment, console, etc.) that can be provided to the teacher, the adjustment of the time allocated to their professional activities that would be carried out less regularly with First Nations and Inuit students, etc. Pedagogical support involves providing teachers with specific pedagogical resources and guides, time with the educational consultant or resource teacher, specific professional development training sessions, in addition to those offered to all staff, etc. Even with all these physical and pedagogical resources from which teachers can benefit, balance is crucial and may require personal and psychological support. In addition to the teacher's mental health or the cultural shock they might experience, which must be taken into account, psychological support refers to the encouragement and moral support that teachers need to continue their efforts on a road that is not necessarily paved and does not always go in a known direction. For the strategies related to this last aspect, it is the centre's manager who can most often make these opportunities possible. Several strategies are proposed below, mainly based on what people who were interviewed had to say, but some of which can already be found in texts and tools proposed by various researchers (see, among others, Manningham et al. 2011, Lévesque and Polèse 2015, RCAAQ 2020, Couture et al. 2021).

Strategy 1 Plan for the students' arrival

- Use a reminder checklist to ensure that everything has been taken into account.
- Prepare, raise their awareness and train school staff:
 - Identify the staff members to be trained.
 - Identify the training needs: How to welcome these students? What to prioritize? etc.
- Organize the educational and student services at the training centre in accordance with the students' characteristics.
- Draw up a report on what the centre could offer and transmit this information to all school staff concerned.
- Draw up a report on what the centre should change or acquire (resources, staff, etc.) and plan the method and the schedule for doing so.
- Form groups and assign students to groups in conjunction with the people who know them well.

Strategy 2 Develop an understanding attitude . . . even if you do not understand

- Give full credibility to the teacher and consider their experiences with the students, without questioning them, even though these experiences might appear to be far from what is usually experienced in the classroom.
- Encourage the teacher and take the time needed to discuss what they are experiencing.
- Encourage creativity and pedagogical innovation.
- Be flexible with the teachers, for example, accept changes that are less common (instruction outside the centre, regular visits to practice settings, etc.).

Strategy 3 Develop and encourage collaborative work

- Offer the possibility (for example, overtime for the teacher) of creating a reflection and action committee to discuss student cases and quickly find solutions to the problems that arise.

Strategy 4 Actively participate in developing partnerships with the families, communities and Nations near the centre, in collaboration with the teachers

Strategy 5 Create partnerships with organizations where the students have had other experiences, especially schooling, including:

- Adult General Education centres
- First Nations and Inuit special-status school boards
- Schools for which the community is responsible
- Centres d'amitié autochtone (Native Friendship Centres)
- Other VTCs
- Non-profit organizations that have supported or still support students
- etc.

Strategy 6 Simplify administrative and institutional procedures

- Try to simplify administrative procedures (registrations, confirmations, follow-ups, etc.).
- Allow for flexibility in frameworks and timetables, for example:
 - Be flexible and adapt school calendars (pedagogical days, calendar of seasons, etc.) and consider cultural holidays specific to the First Nations and Inuit, hunting periods, etc.
 - Set up courses in the evening and on weekends.
 - Offer part-time training regimes.
 - Offer the possibility of taking parts of the training online.
- Accept the possibility of minor modifications (in order to avoid passing over essential notions to be acquired) to the timeframes allocated for each of the technical and trade-specific elements (be flexible).

Taking it further

Some centre administrators delocalize or envision delocalizing training programs into the communities (community-based delivery): implementation of training programs, units or mobile platforms in remote communities. Others offer or are thinking about the possibility of offering only a part of certain programs in communities. This idea is also strongly supported by teachers and students interviewed within the framework of this research.

*"The community-based training with the services available there, that was a factor of success."
(Teacher)*

It should be noted that community-based delivery has been widely implemented in Canada, whether by independent First Nations and Inuit institutions or universities (on campus or off-site programs, especially in the area of teacher training). This delivery model is also widely used in the United States, Australia and Latin America by tribal colleges and initial teacher training programs. The decentralization of programs into the communities enables students to:

- Pursue their training, partially or wholly, in their community.
- Avoid relocating to urban centres, which entails financial and social challenges.

This decentralization also makes it possible to meet the educational needs of the population and, for communities, it can constitute an important factor in community economic development.

Strategy 7 Support teachers on the pedagogical level

- Provide teachers with as many human and material resources as possible, such as pedagogical and didactic resources.
- Give education consultants or resource teachers time to create banks of resources on specific themes, competencies and trades.
- Provide teachers with the opportunity to take specific training programs (grant them the time and encourage them).

Strategy 8 Implement and encourage in-school and extracurricular cultural activities

- Include the families and communities in the activities (allow greater access).
- Identify and organize activities with external partners.
- Be creative: intergenerational week, sharing of First Nations and Inuit knowledge at the centre, etc.

Strategy 9 Surround oneself with human resources with different mindsets

- Surround oneself with specialized education consultants, student life facilitators with experience in indigenization and decolonization, and a single substitute teacher who knows the students (always the same person), etc.
- Hire First Nations and Inuit resources for these roles and functions.
- Set up First Nations and Inuit advisory bodies or committees to improve their representation and their contribution to the teaching staff, administration and decision-making structures of educational institutions.
- Hire First Nations and Inuit staff for complementary positions such as strategic advisor, educational support and guidance, and student services, etc.

Taking it further



The success and effectiveness of several initiatives is often dependent on the involvement of one person in the educational institution who is aware of the realities and needs of First Nations and Inuit students (RCAAQ 2020).

Strategy 10 Ensure consistency in the interventions of the various stakeholders who work with students

- Provide time and space for collaboration.
- Take over when the teachers are short on time.

Strategy 11 Raise awareness among all staff and offer in-school training sessions and conferences to address different topics

- Raise awareness among school staff and provide training on the following areas in particular:
 - the development of their competencies, aptitudes and awareness with regard to students
 - the knowledge about the students' points of view, origins, cultures, experiences, knowledge and aspirations in the policies, programs and teaching styles
 - the establishment of solid, respectful and open-minded relationships with the students and local communities
 - the incorporation of cultural characteristics, knowledge and other perspectives into teaching, etc.
- Offer information workshops for teachers on the frequently encountered difficulties, the resources and tools available for the students as well as awareness-raising workshops on the realities of the First Nations and Inuit (with scenarios).

Strategy 12 Standardize and coordinate practices on the institutional level

- Pilot institutional strategies to standardize practices and make them consistent and effective, through formal commitments, concerted action on the part of the school team and effective communication.
- Raise awareness among the entire school team and identify stakeholders who are culturally competent.
- Create a continuity committee composed of teachers, other professionals offering different services, resource persons and members of the administration as well as First Nations and Inuit students or members of First Nations and Inuit organizations, in order to reflect on possible actions to be taken.

Strategy 13 Create a physical and mental space in their own image for students to use as a place to meet, share and gather their thoughts, a place that is spiritual, a cultural reference, etc.

These physical and ideological spaces inside centres help students mitigate the culture shock and the stress associated with being uprooted. They also represent places that are welcoming and culturally safe (INMQ 2017).

Strategy 14 Create a physical and mental space for teachers to use as a place to meet, share, gather their thoughts, a spiritual space, etc.

Encourage and emphasize meetings and collaboration between teachers (even if they do not all teach the same students) and other stakeholders working with First Nations and Inuit students.

This practice makes it possible to:

- get to know each student better and develop a shared understanding of their needs
- lessen the impression of having to deal with a situation alone and share experiences
- empower stakeholders to carry out roles that have been thought about and determined as a team
- create a network dynamic
- address needs more specifically by building on the existing and available resources
- take the time to “construct” and “co-construct” actions
- compare points of view and ways of doing things
- become familiar with existing tools together
- encourage reflection and discussions about existing levers
- share best practices

Taking it further



Effective collaboration rests on:

- The partners' genuine willingness to cooperate
- The recognition that everyone brings something positive to the table
- The diversity of the stakeholders seated around the table (First Nations and Inuit, youth and Elders, representatives from different trades, etc.)
- The constant attention to the quality of the relationship between the collaborating members of the group
- The adherence to a shared vision of the collaboration and how it is organized
- The coherence, consistency (including time) and cultural relevance of all the goals set in the group and the means to achieve them



Course of action

Accompany the student on their training pathway

Foundations of the course of action

1 What does “accompany the student” mean?

In the context of accompanying First Nations and Inuit students in sociovocational integration, Deschênes (2022) explains that accompanying consists of offering the necessary support to enable the person to develop and attain their career plan goals while taking into consideration their values, the characteristic elements of their culture and their representations of work and their life, all the while knowing what barriers they face. From this perspective, accompanying involves giving the student space and supporting them in their choices, by doing what is possible to help them define their academic and career goals while also strengthening their autonomy, without doing it for them.

To accompany is to act as a guide and ally, and provide a framework and reference points for a person without directing them (Deschênes 2022).

2 Why is it important and relevant to accompany the student?

It is crucial to offer accompaniment to a First Nations or Inuit student in vocational training because it enables unique and individualized services to be provided, based on individual needs. It also ensures successful integration in a training program and in a VTC located off community. This accompaniment helps the student get to know themselves better as they develop relationships with others and are supported on their training pathway. It results in greater commitment on the part of the student, thus increasing their perseverance.

Strategies for accompanying the student

Career guidance strategies

A 2021 study conducted by Dubeau and her collaborators of 356 francophone students enrolled in a two-year vocational training program revealed that certainty about their career choice is directly related to student perseverance. However, for some students, this choice is not always clear and they may be uncertain about their direction. For example, it is only as the months go by that some First Nations and Inuit students discover the trade to which the program of study leads. This is because these students are less familiar with each trade and have few models or references in their respective communities (Deschênes 2022). Some information gathered during the project also confirms these observations and points to the relevance of student career guidance strategies.

Thus, even before the student enrolls in a program, it is possible to accompany them in choosing their training by suggesting:

- **Career days** organized in communities to help people discover vocational training programs leading to trades in the mining sector
- **Exploratory internships** in companies
- **Visits to the VTC** to learn about the training programs offered
- **Information about the training programs** in the mining sector, available on video
- **Information posted on social media** to reach other First Nations and Inuit students
- **Immersion days** through the Student for a Day program that allows students to spend a day at the VTC to visit the facilities and imagine themselves there
- **Information meetings** organized with First Nations and Inuit organizations that are partners in success to present the different training programs leading to employment in the mining sector

*"When someone knows the trade to which their program leads, they are more likely to succeed because there will be fewer surprises awaiting them. When someone is less drawn to the trade, it is more difficult for them to persevere."
(Non-teaching school staff member)*

"It would be good to present the possible careers in the mining sector in the communities so that we can become interested in enrolling in training programs." (Student)

Taking it further



The context of vocational training makes it possible to offer training options with different dynamics that are conducive to perseverance, such as: work-study programs, internships near the student's community, hybrid instruction (alternation between in-person training and online or asynchronous training), buddy system, discussion groups, augmented reality, simulators, etc. These methods allow for greater flexibility in the schedule and the creation of opportunities to rethink the existing formulas.

Strategies to prepare for training

Several students met during the interviews had school experiences that negatively impacted their ability to continue their studies or their choice of vocational training.

Some students who were interviewed had to obtain academic prerequisites or pass a General Development Test (GDT) or a Secondary School Equivalency Test (SSET) in an adult general education centre to enrol in a vocational training program. Furthermore, the SSET is a test of equivalency to Secondary V education and enables, among other things, a student to be admitted to vocational training (STC-DVS). These necessary steps pose potential challenges to students and explain why accompanying them is more than just desirable. Whether it is guidance through the various administrative steps, moral support or encouragement, accompanying a First Nations student can make all the difference in their life.

Being in training is a major transition that students must go through when they enter the training program. Accompanying students has proven to be a valuable form of support that prepares students to learn their new trade. One point that was raised in the interviews was the importance of offering, in collaboration with the community, preparatory training that guides the student as they prepare themselves to learn. This makes for a smoother transition to the vocational training program.

The transition also involves moving to an urban setting, off community, a change that is often difficult to handle. To support the student in this change, planning individualized accompaniment is desirable. This can take different forms, for example:

- Provide support services for adapting to urban life.
- Guide and support the student in:
 - Looking for lodging
 - Managing transportation
 - Managing their budget
 - Preparing the materials and equipment needed
 - Registering their children in school or daycare, for health care
- Collaborate with First Nations and Inuit organizations, consult them to find out the best practices and work in cooperation with the student, through a complementary accompaniment service offer.

*"School was a negative experience throughout my youth. I didn't finish secondary school."
(Student)*

*"I had to change schools in Secondary III. At this new school, I started having problems with the young people in my age group. I didn't feel good, I left. After that, I went to adult ed and I was fine."
(Student)*

*"They pushed me to take my SSET, without actually pushing me. I felt that they were there for me. I wanted to show them that I could do it. That encouraged me and, eventually, I finished my SSET."
(Student)*

Welcome strategies

Practices such as individualized, well-thought-out and flexible intake and school integration planning are important foundations that help the student integrate more smoothly and gradually into their program and into the VTR.

Various current or desired practices were mentioned by First Nations students:

- Hold welcoming meetings with students to present the code of conduct, practices and expectations, rules and ways of doing things, etc.
- Ask the student to list their needs related to:
 - Their place of residence during their studies (safety, furniture, food, etc.)
 - Their travel (means of transportation, frequency of travel, etc.)
 - Their personal or family situation
- Identify the resource persons who could accompany the student and put them in contact to facilitate a future relationship in case it is needed.
- Identify, with the student, the reference points that are important to them.
- Ensure local services, such as:
 - Individual tutorial and accompaniment services (provided mainly by First Nations and Inuit liaison agents and practitioners)
 - Accompaniment services for life in an urban setting (mainly through the Native Friendship Centres)
 - Etc.
- Meet with the teachers and make them aware of the importance of welcoming First Nations and Inuit students, and also inform them about the strategies to adopt.
- Plan visits to businesses, work sites or the workshop, plant or garage where the training will take place, so that the student can see their future trade and visualize themselves working in there.
- Set up a student committee that includes First Nations and Inuit students and is responsible for welcoming and inclusion.
- Organize an ice-breaker activity in the VTC at the start of the training.
- Organize informal meetings or social activities with the other students at the VTC.

*"It's important to take the student under one's wing because they come from a different environment. It's important to welcome them, so that they are aware of the resources that are available to them, and whether or not these resources are "free" to access."
(Partner)*

Monitoring strategy: the individualized accompaniment plan

Definition and goal of the accompaniment plan:

With its goal of the harmonious integration of the student into their program of study and into the VTC, the individualized accompaniment plan is an essential tool for the teacher who includes information (the student's characteristics, personal and academic goals, constraints and difficulties, training aims, strengths, etc.) co-constructed with the student (see **Section 3**). The primary aim of the accompaniment plan is to propose personalized solutions specific to the situations experienced by students (academic, personal, family, working life, etc.) as well as to develop adapted and adaptable solutions all along the student's training pathway. The collaboration of members of the centre team is also required throughout the process of co-constructing the accompaniment plan.

This course of action highlights the main foundations upon which the accompaniment plan should be built and identifies the key moments (although the plan can and should be modified as needed) when the plan has to be updated, during the student's orientation, their preparation for training, their welcome and their integration.

"The student was living in a family context that made taking the training a difficult juggling act to cope with." (Teacher)

"At the beginning, I thought that succeeding wasn't that important to them because they were absent a lot." (Teacher)

Foundations for the development of the accompaniment plan

Accompaniment is reciprocal because the accompanied student and the accompanying teacher mutually enrich each other in the building of the relationship. The accompaniment plan must be co-constructed with the student, that is, constructed with, by and for them. Several elements must be considered when developing the student's accompaniment plan. Here are a few:

- Before the training starts, assess the student's acquired knowledge and competencies in order to plan and implement personalized support that corresponds to their needs.
- Take into consideration the vision of learning as a lifelong pursuit, which is a fundamental value for members of the First Nations.
- Understand the effect of their position and culture on that of the other and pay special attention to the fact that the teacher might be the only non-Indigenous model for the student.
- Have and maintain high expectations of the student.
- Believe in the student's abilities, even though they are demonstrated differently. There are several ways to determine the student's abilities.
- In drawing up the accompaniment plan, identify time-related elements, such as those in their life cycles: day, term, year, end of program.

- Co-construct an accompaniment plan with the student by including their vision of their training pathway and how this pathway forms part of their life course, with regard to their family, their community and themselves.
- Keep in mind that success and perseverance have different meanings for the First Nations and Inuit and have the student verbalize what these terms mean to them.
- Involve First Nations and Inuit organizations whose mission focuses on educational success and preparation for employment.
- Plan an individualized and personalized accompaniment based on the personal profiles as well as on the family profiles (family responsibilities, parental support, etc.), community profiles (the student's community of origin and their needs to return to the community on a set schedule), etc.
- Understand and take into consideration the student's daily realities.
- Follow up with the student on a regular basis in order to include their emerging needs, especially those related to the evolution of personal and family situations and to the student's progress on their training path, aspects that all have an impact on the student and are part of the circle of life.
- Identify, with the student, the protection and risk factors (**Section 1**) that will serve as a foundation for determining the accompaniment strategies to use and to describe how these factors influence each student's perseverance on their training path.

Integration strategies

The use of the personalized accompaniment plan co-constructed with the student is also a tool to help with the student's integration. For example, in addition to enabling close monitoring, it is an effective way of recording the student's needs, their protection factors, the risk factors to which they are exposed, their academic and career goals and their expectations with regard to their training. This facilitates their integration because they have a better understanding of the expectations the VTC has of them.

Integration is also marked by different risk factors and barriers (languages, cultural differences, lack of knowledge about the education system, etc.) Among others, the educational institution as well as its various administrative workings can be daunting and seem impersonal to the student. In order to lift these barriers, various interventions or practices were identified by the students interviewed that could be carried out by the people who accompany them. These are as follows:

*"They were asking me to be present, but first I would have liked someone to help me handle my problems."
(Student who said that they had received little accompaniment on their path)*

"I was shy about using the services, but I got over that because I really needed help. I'm glad I did because that really helped me." (Student)

- Develop simple welcoming guides and images to which the student can refer and present/explain them to the student upon their arrival.
- Explain the educational and complementary services available to students, how they work, how to access them and for what cases students should use them.
- Direct the student to the right resources in accordance with their requests and needs, and physically introduce the people to create a first connection (the student will find it easier to turn to that resource when needed if they have already made contact with them).
- Follow-up with the student to ensure that they have received the support they needed.
- Identify the local services that are relevant for the student.
- Explain how follow-up meetings work.
- Explain the different steps linked to the administrative workings and put the student in contact with a support staff member to whom the student can direct all related questions.
- Explain how the training program works and the different stages of the training pathway (theory, practice, work-study, internships, etc.).
- Give the student summary diagrams or summary sheets outlining the administrative and educational stages and processes.
- Identify, at the beginning of the training, the student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Organize remedial sessions before the start of the program (French, mathematics, work culture and behaviour in an industrial setting).
- See to the cultural safety of the student in their program and in the VTC (see the course of action, "Help the student feel culturally safe").
- Support the student in balancing their studies with occupational, family and community responsibilities.
- Be flexible and adapt to the student's pace.
- Be proactive and innovative in implementing recognized accompaniment and support strategies and practices.

Taking it further

Offer flexibility in the frameworks and schedules (for example, exceptions for family or community problems, arrangements for part-time or evening courses, implementation of online training courses, etc.)





Course of action

Help the student feel culturally safe

Foundations of the course of action

1 What does “help a student feel culturally safe” mean?

The need to provide cultural safety arises mainly due to the reality of racism and discrimination and, to a lesser extent, the poor understanding and ignorance of First Nations and Inuit realities. (CERP 2019, MMIWG 2019, TRC 2015). Providing cultural safety consists of an approach that recognizes the inequities imposed on this group by society and seeks to close the resulting gaps (NAHO 2009, MSSS 2021).

In the context of the integration of First Nations and Inuit, Deschênes (2022), based mainly on Couture et al. (2021), Dufour (2015, 2019), INMQ (2017), Lévesque (2015) and Mareschal and Denault (2020), proposes this definition of cultural safety.



Good to know!

Cultural safety

Cultural safety falls within the context of an encounter between people of different cultures, one of which is considered “mainstream.” In this encounter, the relationship, which is often marked by key historic events, is not egalitarian and presents problematic power dynamics based on an often falsified representation of the other (due to a lack of understanding of their characteristics).

Cultural safety is founded on the recognition of strengths, dialogue and the exchange of ideas, emotions and experiences, the sharing of a common relational space and the knowledge and minimization of the repercussions of social inequalities between people of different origins.

Among other things, cultural safety requires taking care of the other, supporting them and being concerned for their well-being in all its dimensions (cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual). It is founded on relationships developed with respect, knowledge and recognition of the context of the First Nations and Inuit and their historical, cultural, socioeconomic and political determinants.

Within the framework of the six courses of action proposed in this document, cultural safety is seen and presented as cutting across all of these dimensions; it is an integral part of all the educational practices and strategies that promote perseverance.

2 Why is it important and relevant to help the student feel culturally safe?

In education, helping each First Nations and Inuit student feel culturally safe is important and relevant because, through practices such as recognizing their cultural characteristics, valuing and including their knowledge and other perspectives, and culturally meaningful teaching (Deschênes 2023), it bolsters the sense of belonging to the community and family, values the student's individual and collective cultural identity and increases their academic motivation (INMQ 2017). It therefore constitutes a protection factor (**Section 1**) that is a determinant of the perseverance and educational success of students. In fact, when students are able to identify and recognize themselves in the learning, due to adaptation strategies that include making the content culturally relevant or culturally consistent, they persevere more.

Attitudes and competencies that promote cultural safety

Providing cultural safety is based on an active engagement in developing attitudes of conscientiousness, awareness, humility and cultural competence (FNEC 2020). It consists of acting in accordance with a set of individual behaviours, attitudes and practices which, when incorporated into an organization, enables people to be effective in their interventions with members of the First Nations and Inuit Nation (National Aboriginal History Organization, 2009). For Deschênes (2022), in this intercultural context involving First Nations and Inuit, attitudes and cultural competencies that promote the cultural safety of members of these communities are therefore directly linked to student perseverance.

Taking it further



For the teacher, adapting and responding to the student's needs involve adjusting the way they work, especially on the pedagogical level, and do not involve changing the teacher's personality, beliefs or values. Contact with the other is mutually enriching and the desire to discover as well as open-mindedness underlie several elements of learning.

- Show respect for the other person in non-verbal communication (for example, smile at them even though the expression on their face looks serious), keeping in mind that the student's signals might be different from their own); identify their prejudices and what they are resistant to, and try to deconstruct them.
- Recognize both parties' cultural biases.
- Work with the other person to overcome discrimination, notably through inclusion and caring.
- Learn about the other person's cultural codes in order to communicate, thereby ensuring greater mutual understanding.

Attitudes and cultural competencies that promote cultural safety

- Be able to put into perspective and appreciate the cultural differences between the student and themselves.
- Know how to find information and resources in order to learn more about First Nations and Inuit cultures.
- Take a critical look at the distinctive characteristics of the student's culture.
- Know how to manage the aspects linked to the relationship with the other culture in an educational environment.
- Engage in a conversation with the aim of working and thinking together, and explain the differences between the ways of thinking or of knowing (intellectual and cognitive dimension), of doing (physical dimension), of feeling (emotional dimension) or of believing (spiritual dimension) in regard to various elements of the environment, in order to promote harmony.
- Be tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty.
- Put into perspective their own beliefs, values, knowledge, perceptions, etc., in terms of their non-universal character.
- Be empathetic, flexible and tolerant with respect to differences, especially cultural differences.
- Try to adapt to the other person's ways of thinking, feeling or believing.
- Give the student the freedom to do things differently by trusting in their ability to achieve the "desired" result in their own ways, for example, their ways of approaching a task.
- Respond to the student's cultural needs (to recognize themselves or their community in the different stages of their pathway, to find the consistency between the content and their experience, etc.), while respecting their own values.

"[The teacher] never cut us off when we were speaking and liked to hear about our own experiences, which led to openness on the part of everyone." (Student)

Help the student feel culturally safe

To actively engage in a process of providing cultural safety, the administrators, non-teaching professionals and teachers must build relationships based on the respect and balance demonstrated in discussions and the mutual satisfaction with this sharing. For example, the student must always be included in the decisions that concern them and the teacher must ensure that the relationship is egalitarian.

Providing the student with cultural safety primarily involves the following:

- Creating a cultural meeting place that provides opportunities to create connections with the students as well as with the members of their family and their community
 - For example, by assigning exclusive use of a room and incorporating cultural references in it in order to provide a space that reflects the First Nations and Inuit

- Protecting and reinforcing the student's cultural identity and their feeling of fitting in with their cohort, the trade they are learning and the VTC
 - For example, by asking students to propose group cultural activities to take place at the VTC
- Helping the student create a feeling of academic and career competence in an environment that is culturally different from their own and in a trade that the student and communities know little about
 - For example, by encouraging the student to share their vision and point of view on different situations

Cultural safety in teaching

For the First Nations Education Council (FNEC), cultural safety, in the context of teaching, consists of creating learning environments where the student feels respected and welcomed, and which reflect the holistic vision of education (FNEC 2020). Cultural safety involves recognizing the value of the students' visions, representations and perspectives and including them, just like those of mainstream culture. For example, the student could be asked about their view of a situation that could arise in the practice of a trade and about the solutions that they would implement in accordance with their perspective.

Current research on the subject and the data collected reinforce just how important it is for the teacher to value and have all the students value the cultural characteristics, knowledge and other perspectives of the First Nations and Inuit. This also means that the teacher makes this adjustment even if there are just a few First Nations and Inuit students in their class.

Participants also said that cultural safety in the classroom involves:

- Using pedagogical and evaluation practices that are culturally relevant and adapted to the First Nations and Inuit
 - For example, one adaptation consists of rereading examination questions to the student and having them paraphrase these questions to ensure that they understand them
- Setting up talking or sharing circles as a pedagogical activity or as a way of communicating
 - For example, at the start of the cohort, the teacher could use this pedagogical method inspired by the First Nations and Inuit for the discussion on the code of conduct
- Including cultural references in the classroom, workshop, garage or training site
 - For example, elements from the land on which the students' families live or where their communities are located are explored or used in teaching
- Considering teaching styles inspired by the First Nations and Inuit
 - For example, the teacher includes elements of land-based pedagogy (see the course of action, "Adapt their strategies and educational practices") in their pedagogical activities

Taking it further



Experience shows the relevance of offering training in the communities. For the student, such a practice helps bring them closer to people, their setting, their family and their community, and has a very positive influence on their sense of cultural safety for various reasons: daily support from the people around them, lessening of the effects associated with cultural shock, the transition and changes in the pace of life, easier balancing of studies and family life, lower financial needs, a group composed of people from their culture who already know each other. For teachers, offering training in the communities allows them to become more familiar with the student's cultural and linguistic characteristics and to better understand the student's reality, all while developing their own cultural consciousness and attitudes such as cultural sensitivity. For the community, this practice considerably reduces the barriers to training, thereby helping to increase the potential number of registrations in training. Then, the success of some becomes an interesting model for the others.

Cultural safety in the vocational training centre

In addition to educational practices in the classroom, there are also so-called "organizational" cultural safety practices that concern the entire VTC, for example:

- Develop training offers that respect, recognize and integrate the students' historical, cultural, political and socioeconomic determinants.
- Create familiar, warm and welcoming physical spaces that are conducive to emotional or spiritual expression.
- Organize, in collaboration with First Nations people, workshops, events and activities that shine the spotlight on the cultures.
- Provide students with culturally relevant spaces where they can socialize and gather and which help them adapt to the VTC.
- Implement simplified administrative formalities.
- Hire First Nations and Inuit staff.
- Open the VTC to visits by Elders.

*"It is important not to give up on offering cultural activities and not to close the spaces even though they aren't used much. Everyone participates as they wish and this can vary over time. It's a wheel that keeps turning."
(Partner)*

Taking it further



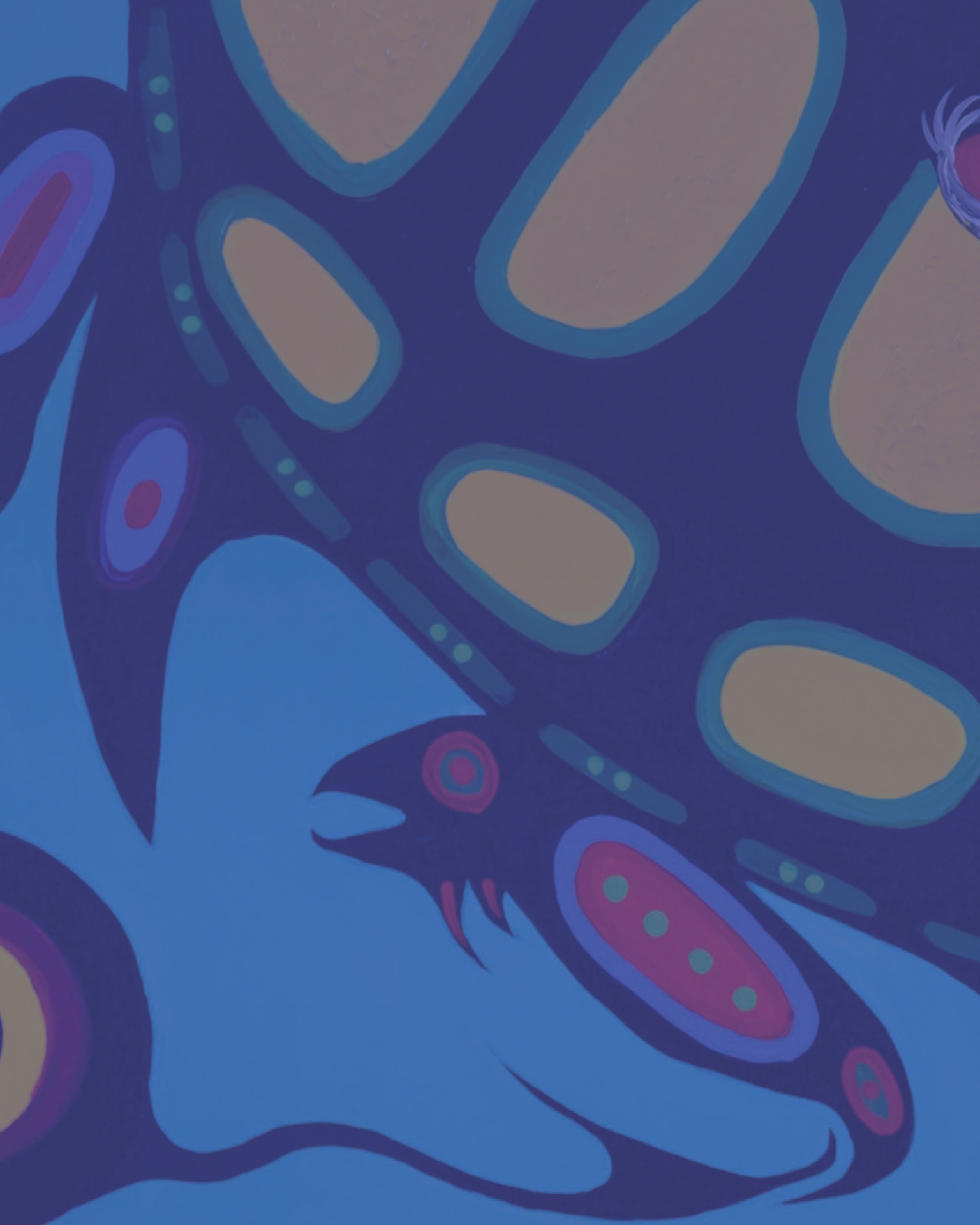
The teacher includes First Nations and Inuit in the development of pedagogical materials to ensure that they are culturally relevant.





3

Reflection tool to orient the
implementation of practices and
strategies





Reflection tools to orient the implementation of practices and strategies

With the goal of better equipping teachers in appropriating practices and strategies designed to increase student academic perseverance, the following pages contain proposed reflection tools. These tools contain questions that assist in thinking about, planning, organizing and implementing each of the proposed courses of action. These tools can be used by the entire centre team for the benefit of students and their success on their training path.

Taking it further



The printable tools are available in the Appendix and also on the website of the Institut national des mines: inmq.gouv.qc.ca.

This reflective step is a great way for the teacher to start the process, thanks to an approach that allows them to take a step back when looking at the subsequent planned activities geared to the students' real needs and expectations. The tools cover each of the courses of action and, like them, are neither linear nor temporal, which makes it possible to go back and forth from one to another.



Acquiring knowledge and developing a portrait of the student



Guiding the student



Adapting educational practices



Developing the relationship between the student and the teacher



Accompanying the student



Helping the student feel culturally safe

It should be noted that, although some answers could be applicable to more than one student and some concern classroom practices that are applied to all the students, the questions have been prepared for a reflection on each student individually.





Reflection tools

Acquiring knowledge and developing a portrait of the student

**Course of action: Raise one's awareness, become informed,
know and understand the student**

Raise my awareness and become informed

This year, what are my goals
(action, means and schedule)
for raising my awareness and
becoming more informed about
the history, current realities
and the cultural and linguistic
characteristics of the First
Nations and Inuit?

What obstacles am I likely
to encounter (lack of time,
lack of knowledge about
resources, etc.)?

How do I get around them?

Know and understand the student

Intellectual dimension

Elements of knowledge associated with learning the trade and other elements of knowledge necessary to pursue the program

What is the state of the student's current knowledge in comparison with the expectations and the progression of the program?

Is the student starting behind or ahead of the rest of the group?

How does the development of these elements of knowledge evolve over time?

What are the student's strengths and in what areas do they need to improve?

What prerequisite elements of knowledge still need to be developed with regard to the expectations and the progression of the program?

What enables the student to acquire new elements of knowledge (recent or prior experiences, personal resources, a peer group, internships, etc.)?

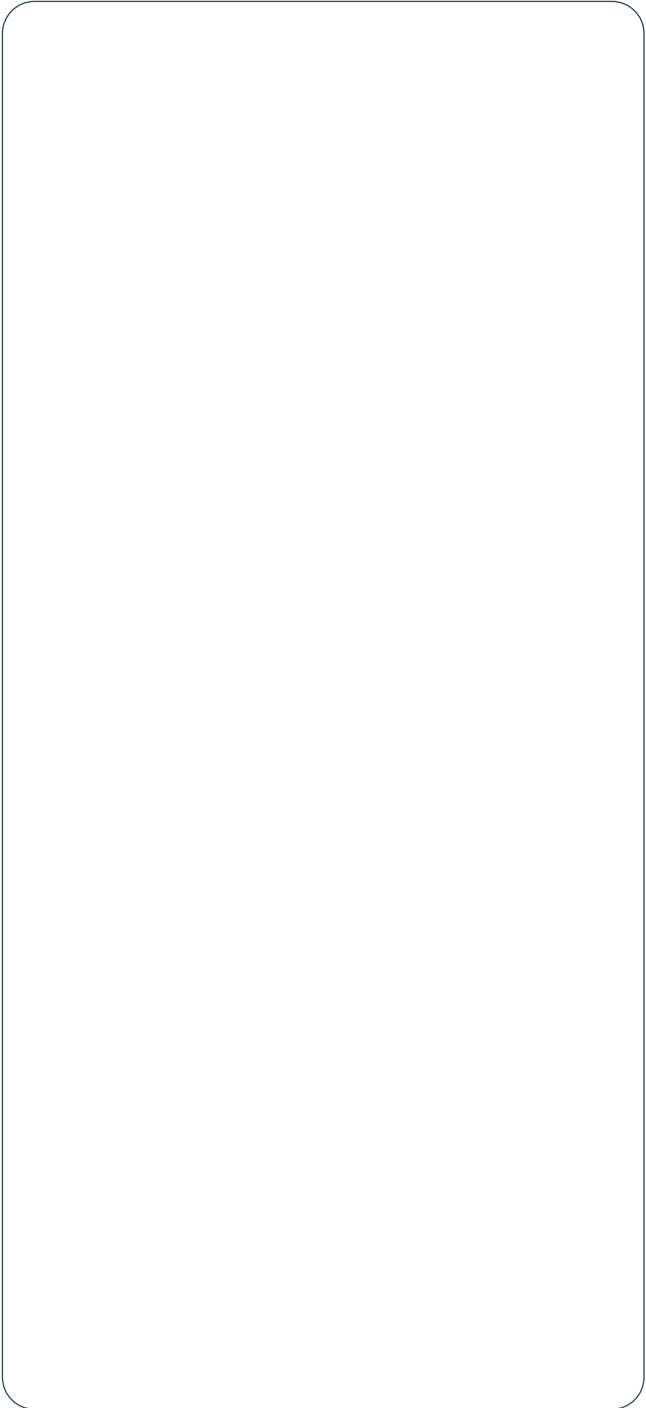
What are the characteristics of the student's academic pathway and what effect do these characteristics have on the learning of new elements of knowledge?



How does
the student learn?

What are the student's
tricks for learning or
understanding a new
element of knowledge?

What works for the
student? What are the
student's strengths and
in what areas do they
need to improve?



Physical dimension

Competencies associated with learning the trade and other competencies: soft skills, relational skills, etc.

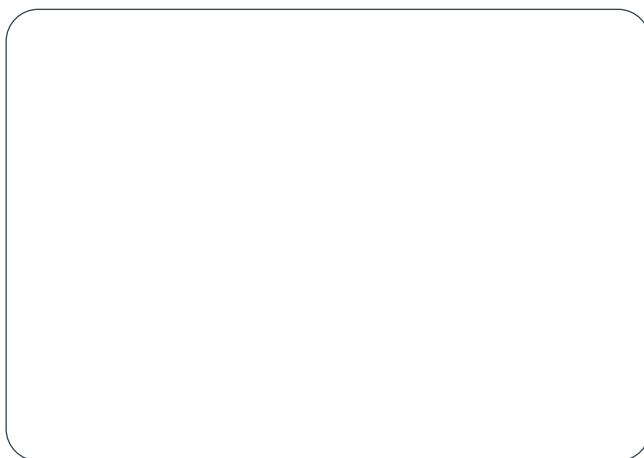
What is the state of the student's current competencies (know-how, practice . . .) in comparison with the expectations and progression of the program?

Is the student starting behind or ahead of the rest of the group?

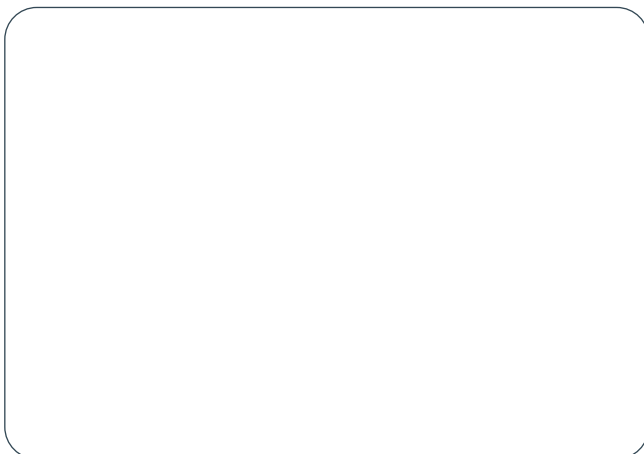
How does the development of these competencies evolve over time?



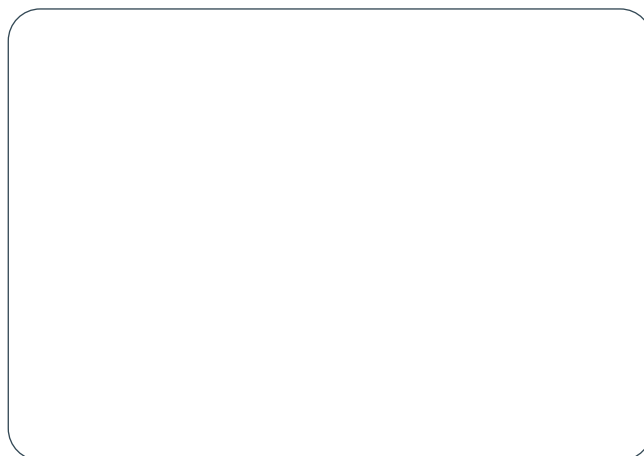
What prerequisite competencies (know-how, practices . . .) still need to be developed with regard to the expectations and the progression of the program?



What enables the student to develop new competencies (recent or prior experiences, personal resources, a peer group, internships, etc.)?



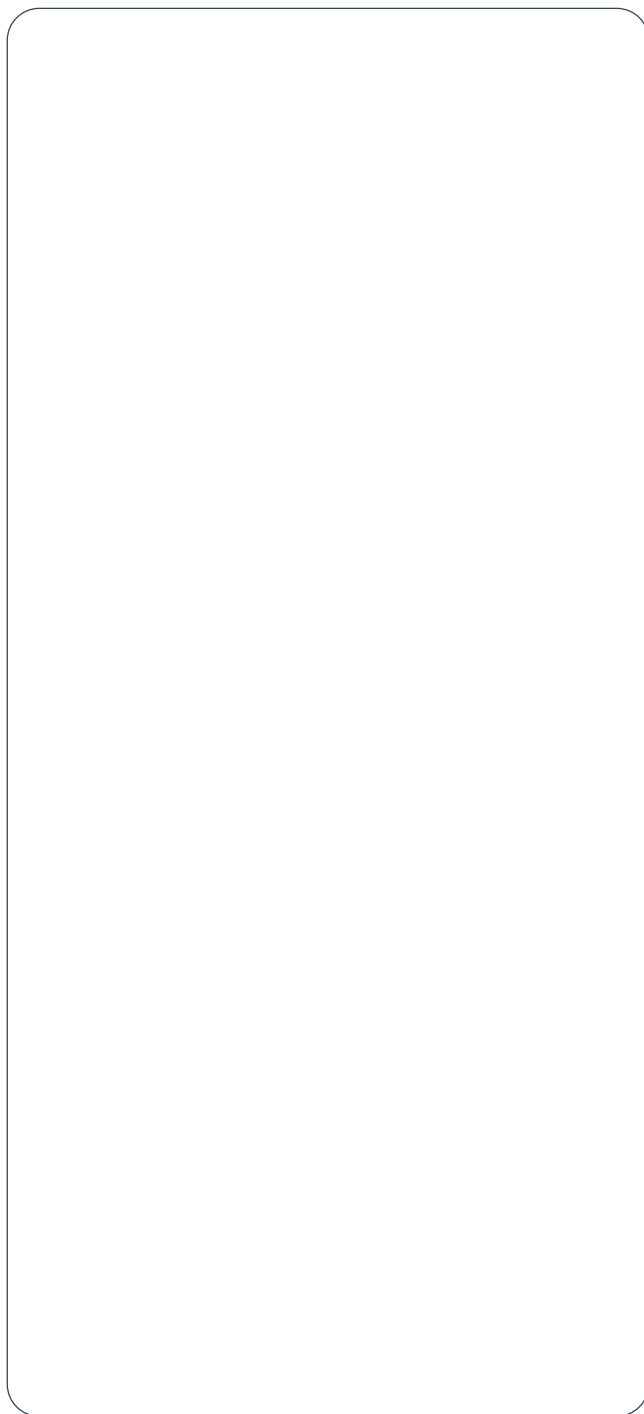
What are the characteristics of the student's academic pathway and what effect do these characteristics have on the learning of new elements of knowledge and the development of new competencies?



How does the student learn
a new competency?

What are the student's
tricks for learning or
understanding a new
competency?

What works
for the student?



Emotional dimension

Current attitudes and attitudes to be developed to enter the workforce, emotions and ways to feel in this context and with the other people

How does the student
feel in terms of their
relationship with
the other students?

Has the student already
developed
connections?

How does the student
see themselves
in their trade later on?

How does the student see
themselves in relation to the
other workers?

How do the family
and the community
support the student?

Who are they?

Where are they?

What are the student's
perceptions and
expectations of
vocational training?

What is
motivating the student
to pursue learning?

Spiritual dimension

Meaning attributed to the training project

What is the student's vision for their plan?

Exactly what trade does the student want to practise?

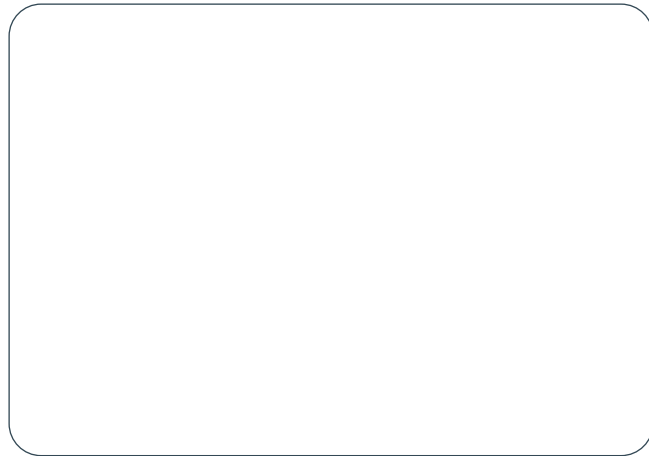
Why does the student want to study?

Why has the student chosen this trade?

How does the student feel about their choice of program?

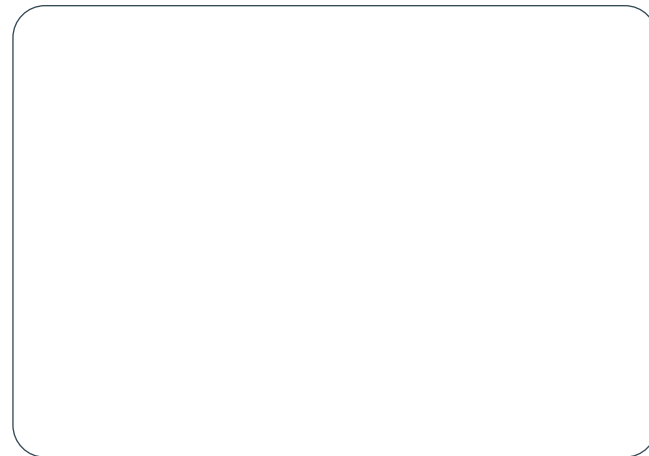


How does the student feel about their choice of pursuing a training program in a VTC?



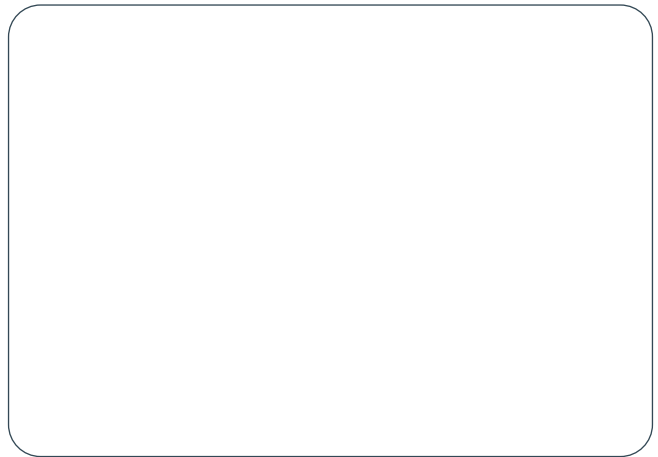
What does the student's family and community think about the student's choices?

How does the student feel about this situation?

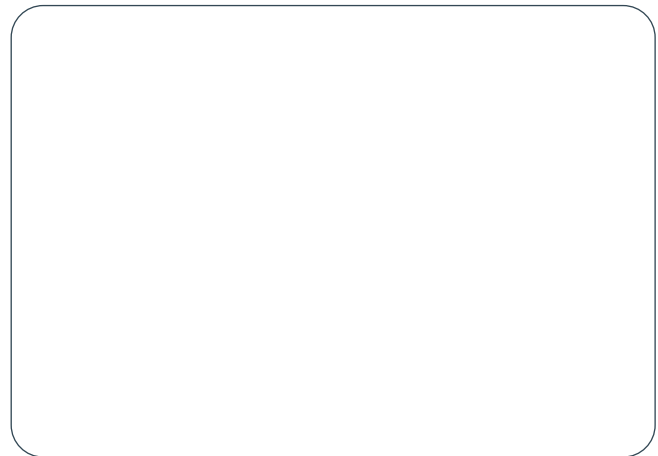




Who or what
influenced the student
in making their choice?



What is most important
for the student
through their
training process?





Reflection tools

Developing the relationship between the student and the teacher

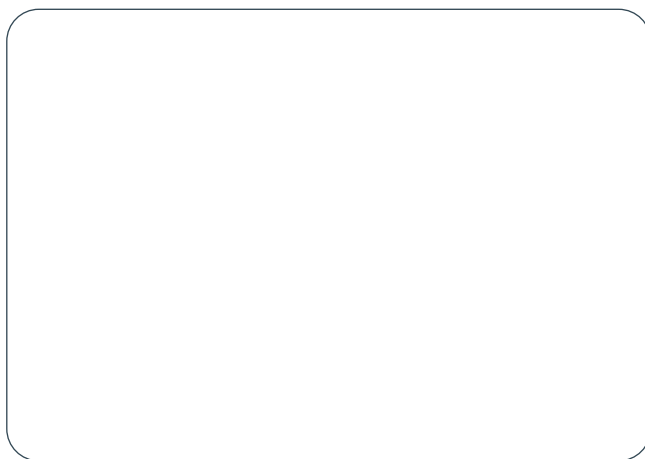
Course of action: Establish a relationship with the student

What means can I
put in place to develop
connections
with the student?

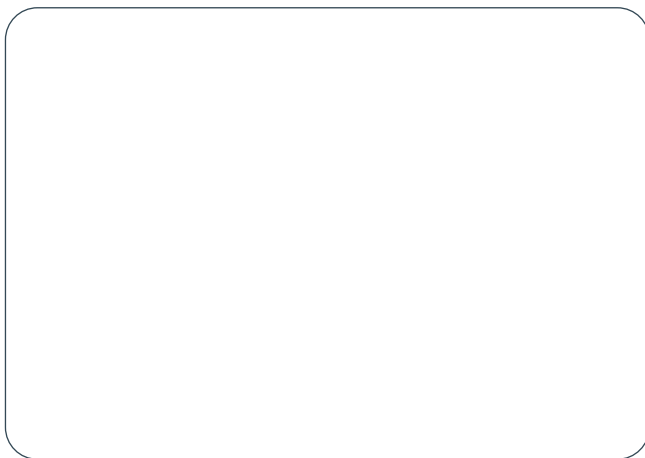
What obstacles
am I likely
to encounter and
how do I overcome them?



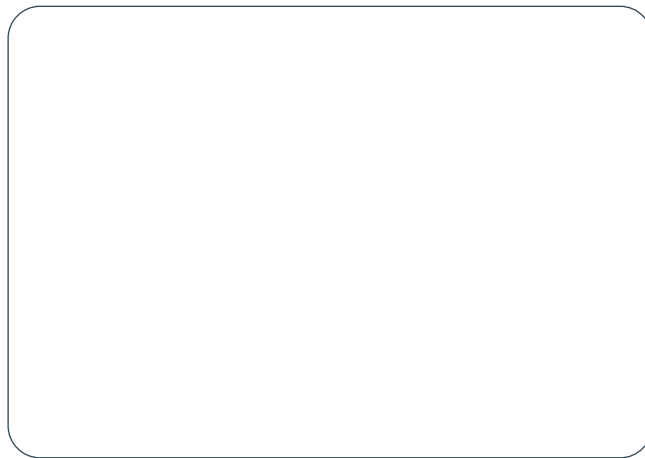
What attitudes
should I prioritize
when building
a connection with
the student?



How can I find a safe sharing
place in order to spend
time with the student in a
non-hierarchical context?



How can I develop the bond
of trust between the student
and myself (actions, attitudes,
behaviours, etc.)?





Reflection tools

Guiding the student

Course of action: Guide the student on their life journey

What do I know about the student that enables me to guide them, bring them back to their initial objectives, reassure them, etc.?

The teacher is encouraged to talk with the student in order to become more familiar with the following aspects of their life journey. These conversations can be formal or informal and are occasional, taking place at different moments on the student's path; they are not one-off.

What are the student's goals for their training project?

Why did they embark on this training project?

What do they want to develop?

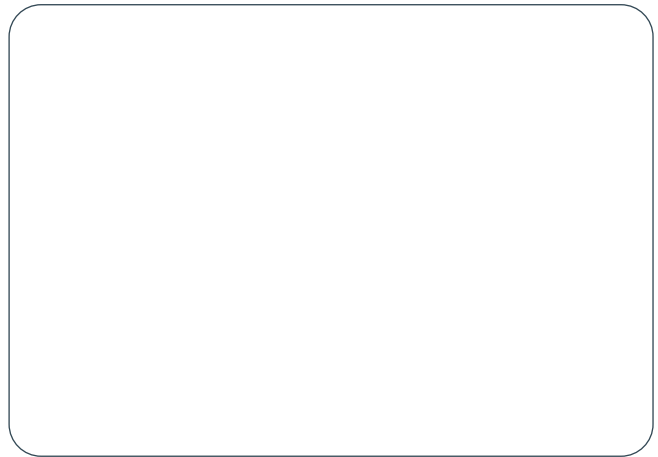
How does the student see themselves in 5 (or 10) years?

What is their vision?

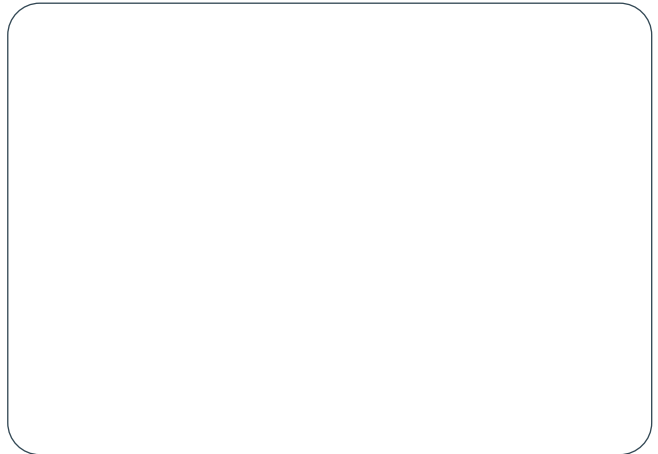


To what extent do the student's goals keep them motivated?

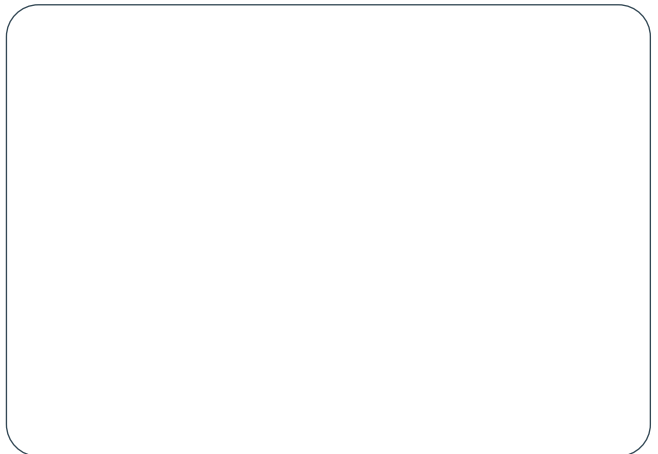
How does this motivation evolve over time? Why?



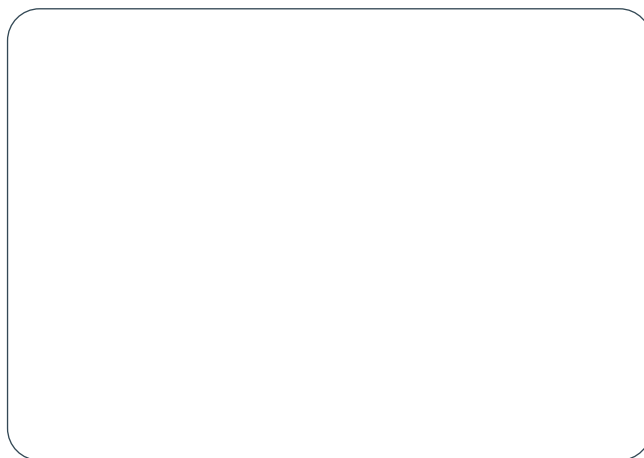
How does the student feel with regard to the development of their life journey?



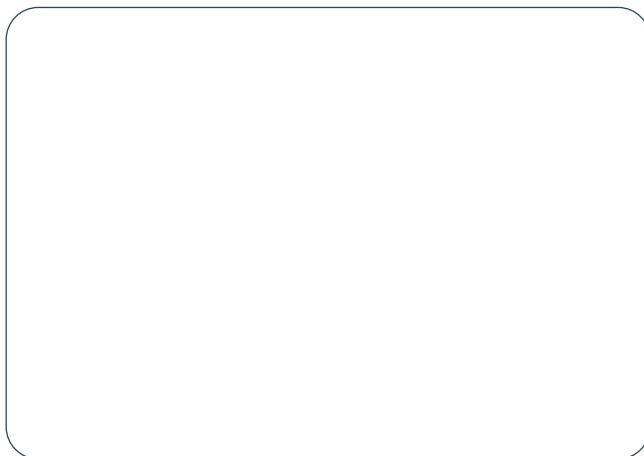
What obstacles is the student facing?



What encourages
the student
to persevere?



What strategies
could I suggest to the student
with regard to each of these
questions?







Reflection tools

Adapting educational practices

Course of action: Adapt their educational practices

Which educational practices
are already working well
and which ones do I need to
adapt:

... pedagogical practices?

... evaluation practices?

... classroom organization practices?

... other practices?

In relation to the principles upon which these practices are adapted

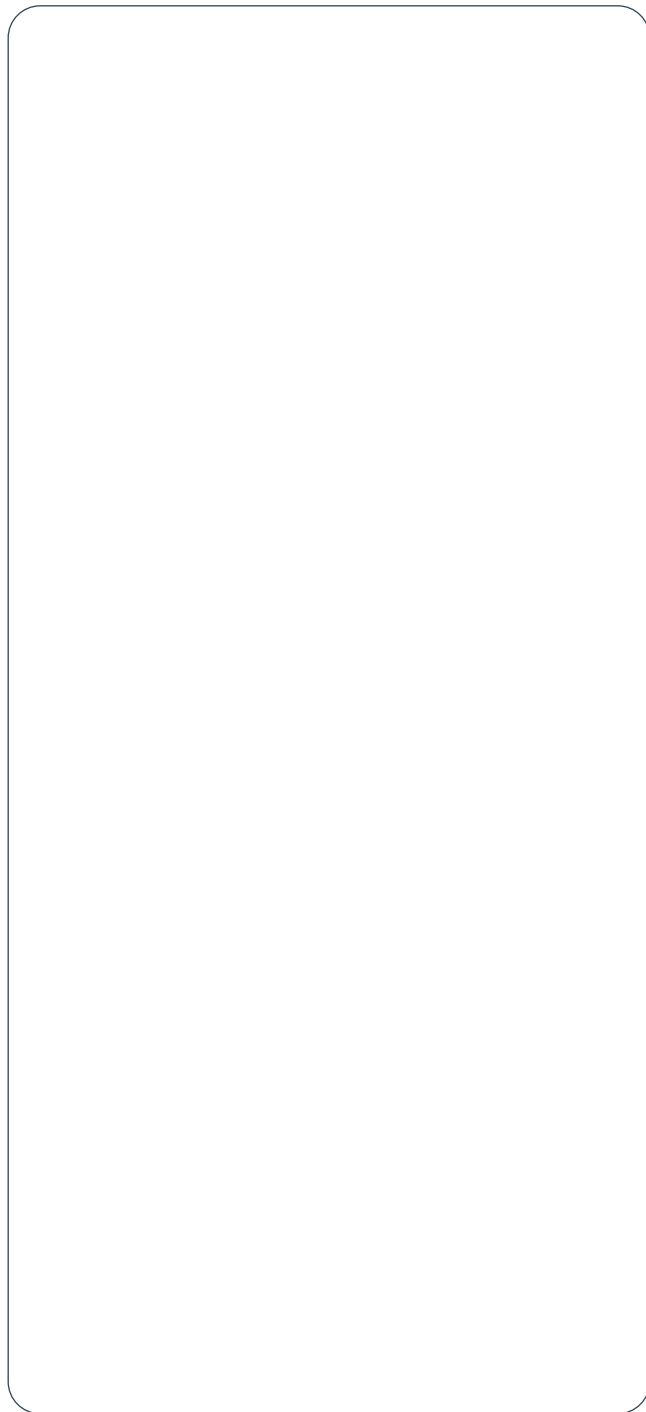
What characteristics of the students should direct the choice of adaptations? What do I still need to learn about the students so that I can make the necessary adaptations?

To what extent are the adaptations made or to be made in line with my beliefs, values, competencies, etc.?

What do I know about the pedagogies recognized as being conducive to learning by First Nations and Inuit students and how can I develop them?

What teaching contexts
or characteristics of the
setting should direct the
choice
of adaptations?

What recognized research
and practices should direct
the choice
of adaptations?



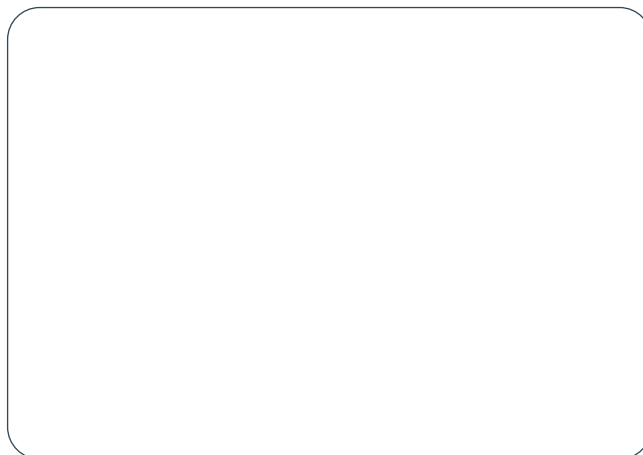
In connection with the strategies for adapting educational practices

Which of the proposed educational strategies are within my reach and which ones can I already implement?

Which of the proposed educational strategies should I develop further?

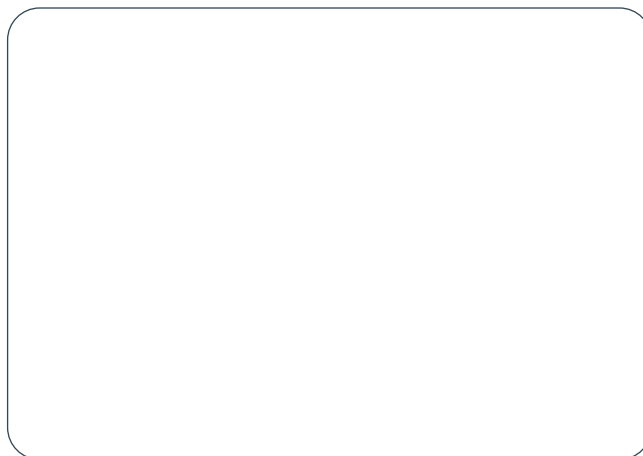
When should I establish a progression plan for using proposed strategies?

What resources do I need to implement or adapt my educational practices?

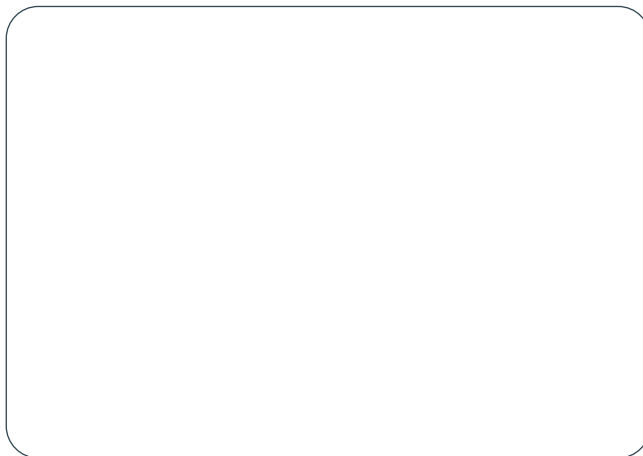


What are my apprehensions? Why?

How can I lessen them?



How can I become an agent of change in the VTC, especially with regard to the administrative team, so that it supports me in adapting my educational practices?







Reflection tools

Accompanying the student on their training pathway

Course of action: Accompany the student on their training pathway

Identify the risk and vulnerability factors

(See **Section 1**)

What are the personal risk and vulnerability factors that might affect the student?

How could I accompany them in order to lessen the negative effects?

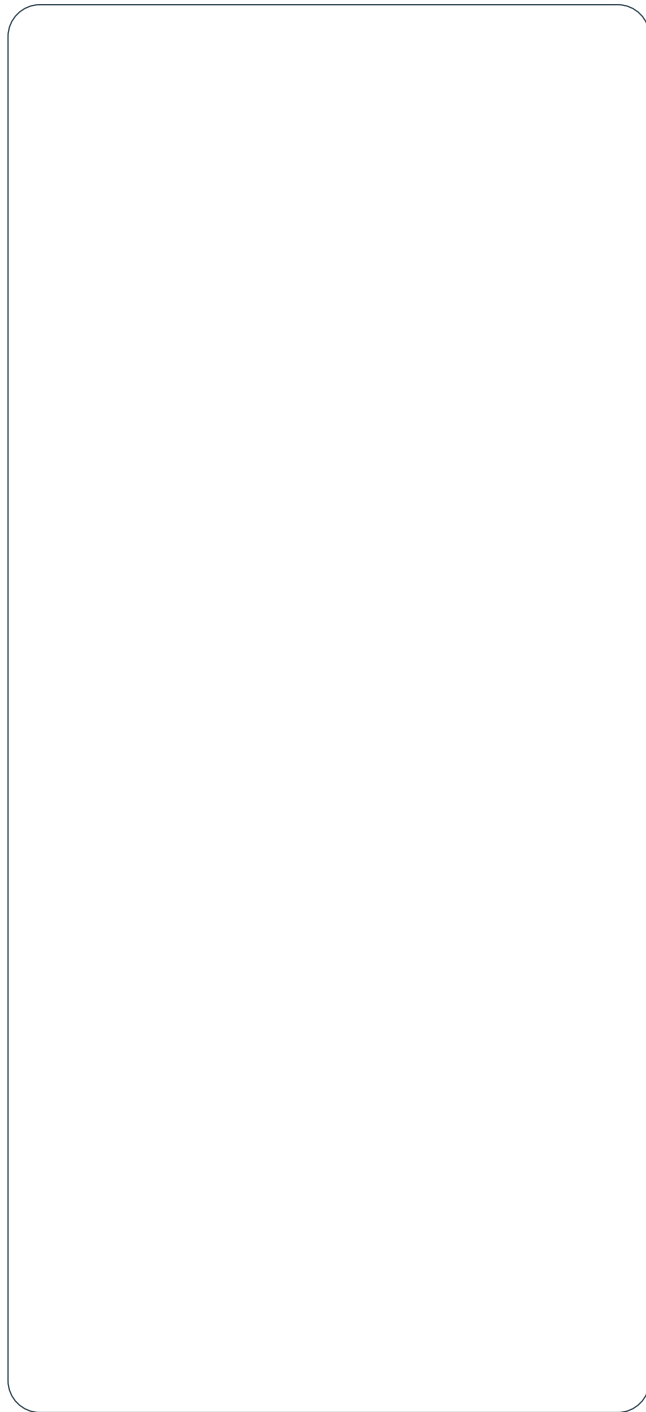


What are the pedagogical
risk and vulnerability
factors that might affect
the student?

How could I accompany
them in order
to lessen the
negative effects?

What are the organizational risk and vulnerability factors that might affect the student?

How could I accompany them in order to lessen the negative effects?



Identify the protection and success factors

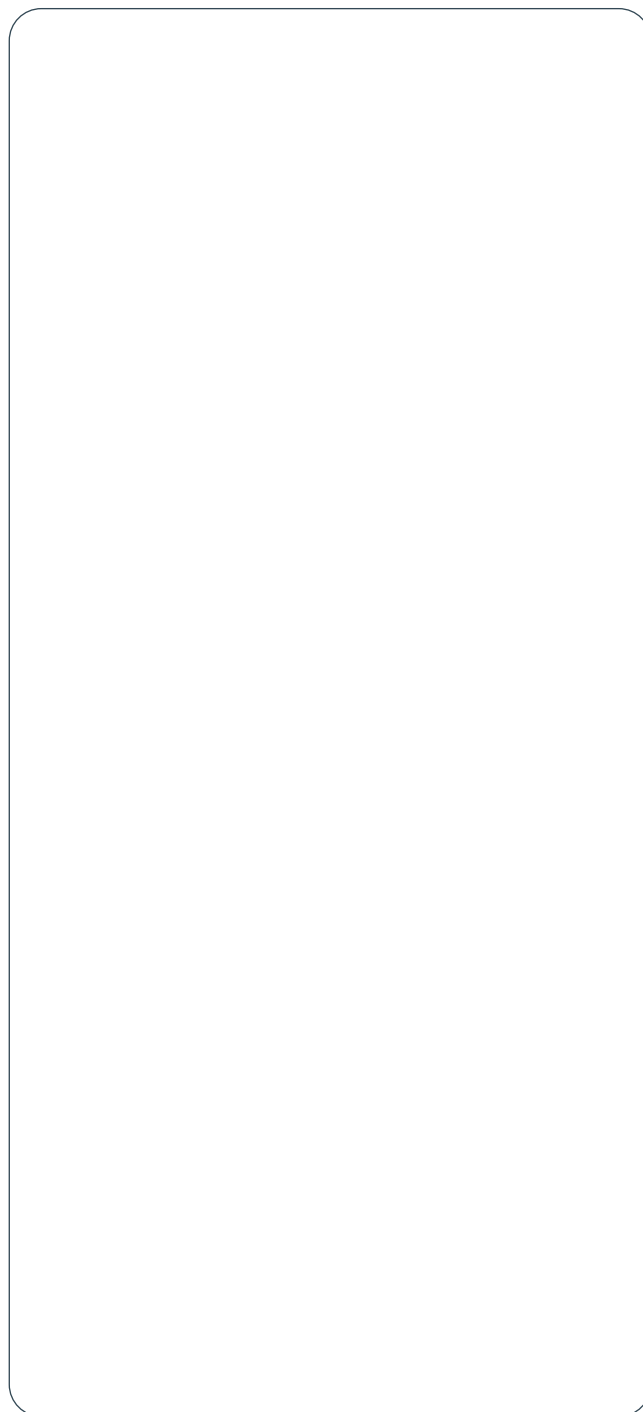
(See **Section 1**)

What are the personal protection and success factors that might affect the student?

How can I use them as a lever for accompanying the student?

What are the pedagogical protection and success factors that might affect the student?

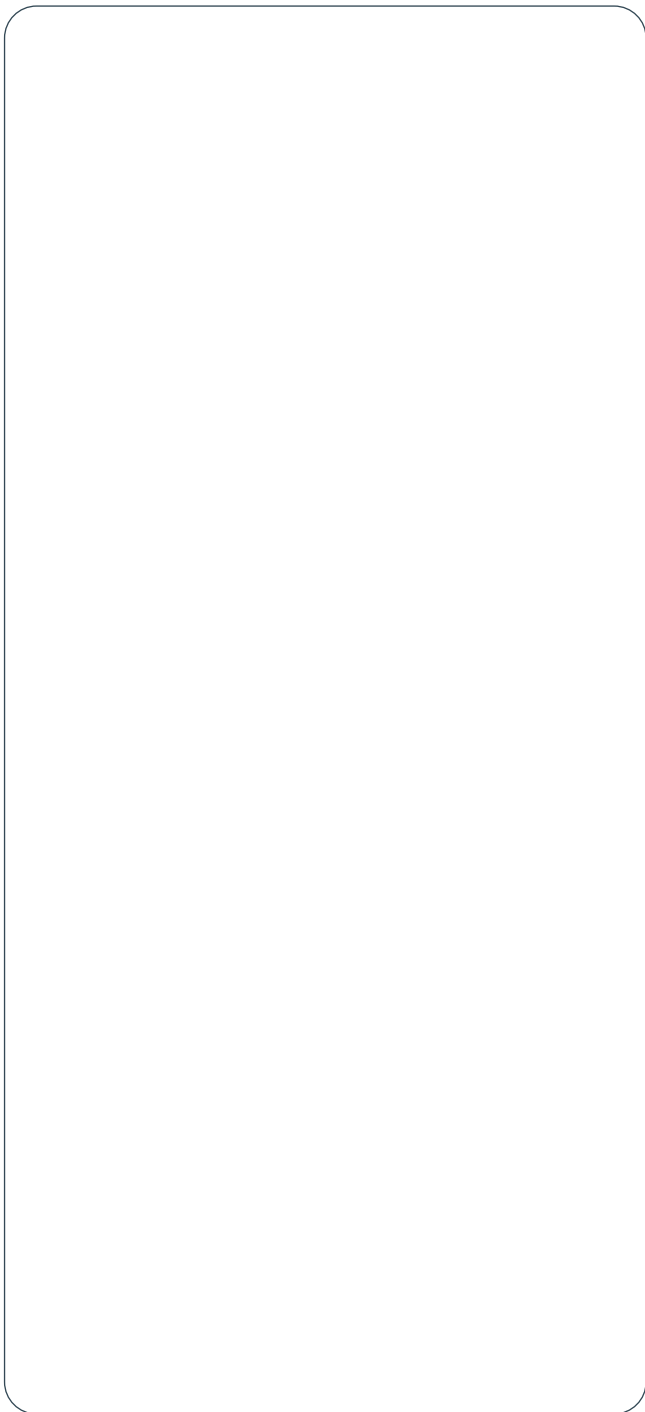
How can I use them as a lever for accompanying the student?





What are the organizational
protection and success
factors that might affect
the student?

How can I use them as a
lever for accompanying the
student?



Prepare for the training

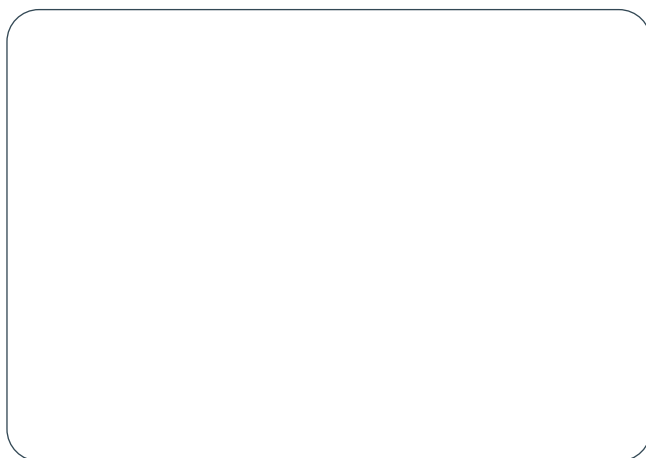
What are the student's needs on the academic level?

What prerequisites does the student still have to develop?

What are the student's needs on the personal level? For example, finding lodging, planning transportation, managing their budget and organizing the family.

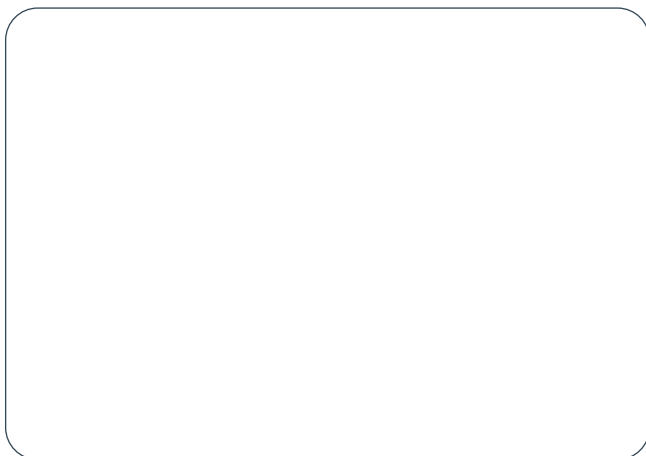


To what extent and in what way (concrete strategies) could I accompany them with regard to these needs?

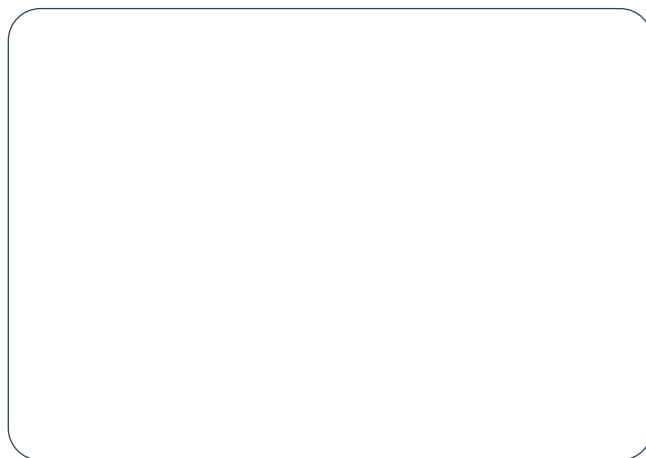


Which First Nations and Inuit organizations are already accompanying the student?

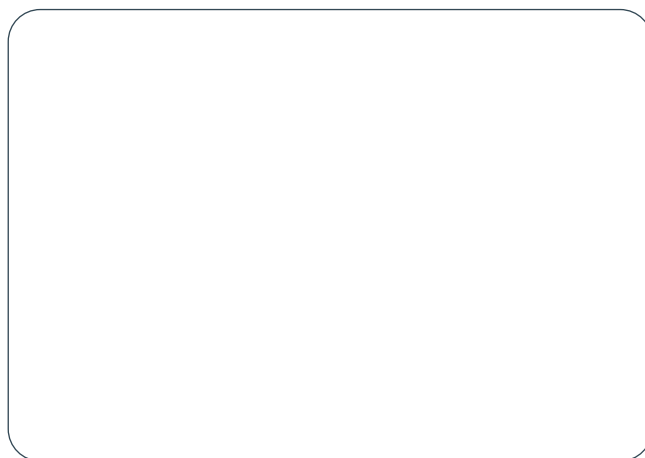
Is the help received satisfactory and sufficient?



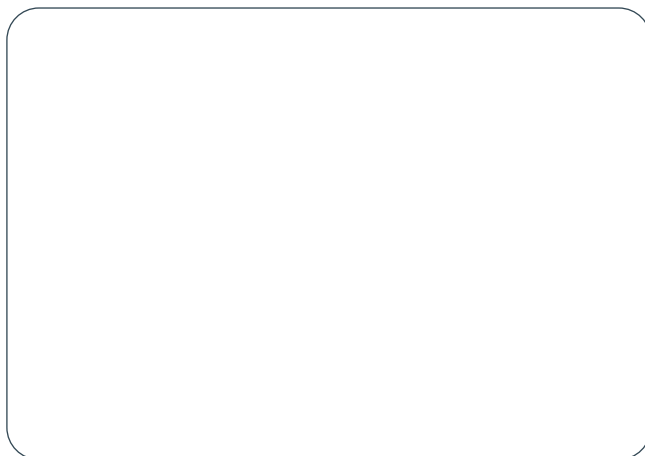
Which other First Nations and Inuit organizations could accompany the student, depending on the student's needs?



How could I contact these organizations, create a partnership with them and involve them in the student's educational process?



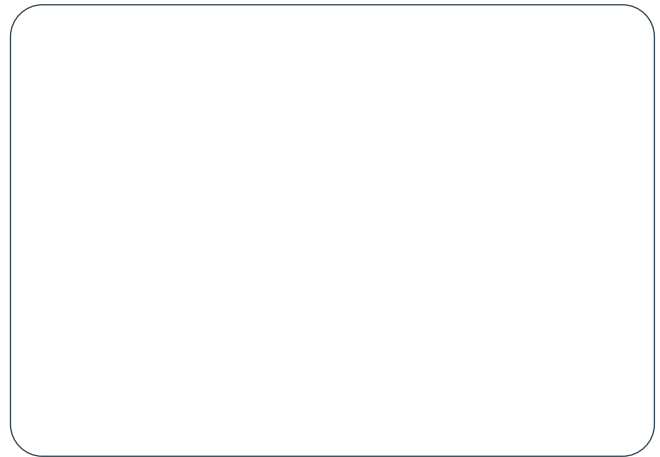
What services can be put in place to accompany the student in their transition (between the community and the urban centre, between cultures, between ways of doing things, etc.)?



Welcome the student

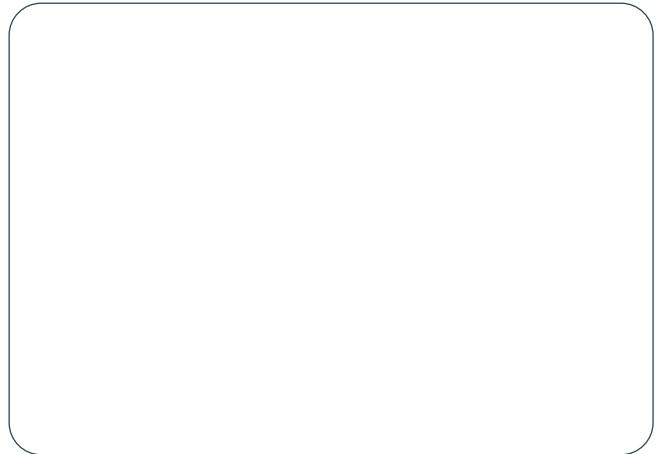
How often would the student like to return to their community?
Is this realistic?

How can we organize these trips in order to lessen their impact on the student's schooling?



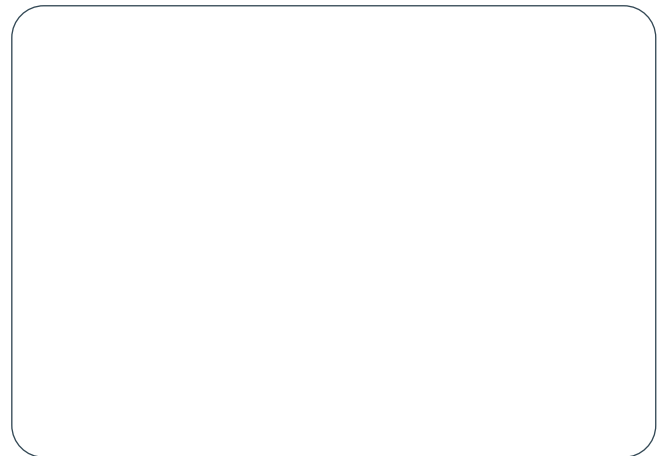
What is the portrait of the student's family situation?

To what extent could this situation impact the student's pathway?



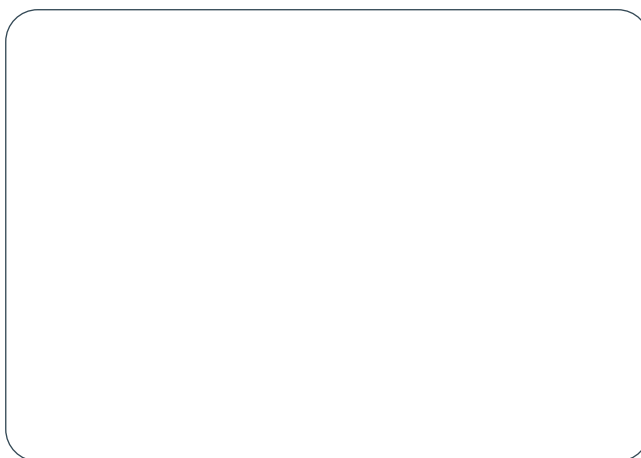
To what extent does the student have the support of their family and their community in their study project?

How does this situation impact the student's educational path and how can I support them?



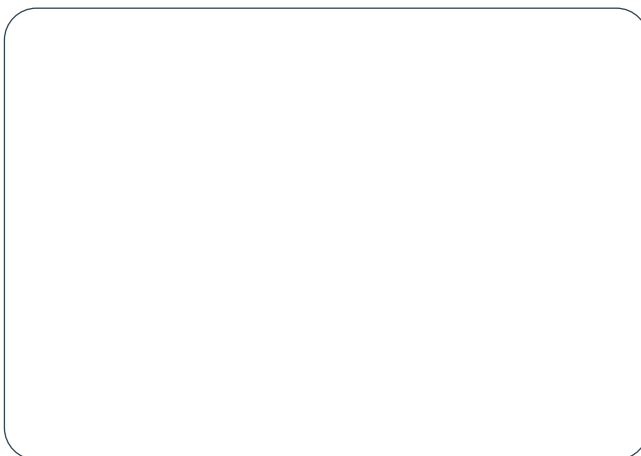
With regard to learning, what are the challenges that the student is anticipating?

How can I help them overcome these challenges?

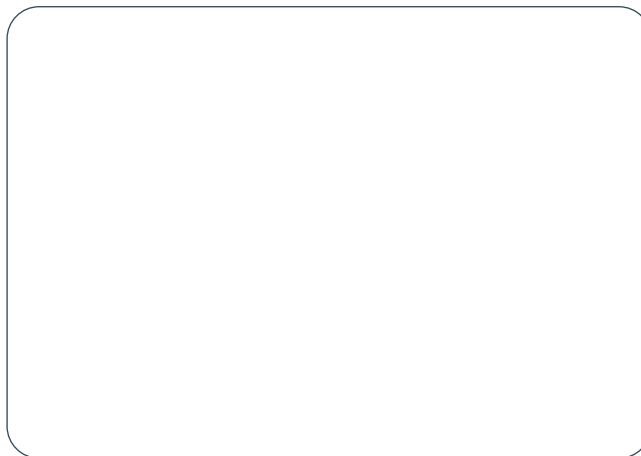


With regard to the administrative side, what are the challenges that the student is anticipating?

How can I help them overcome these challenges?

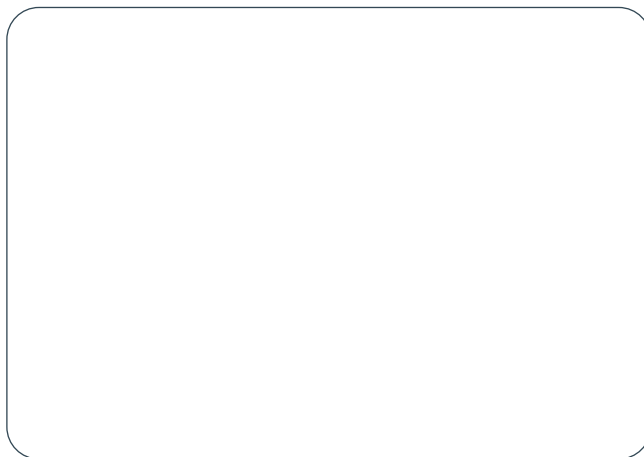


Who are the resource persons able to accompany the student in accordance with each of the student's needs?

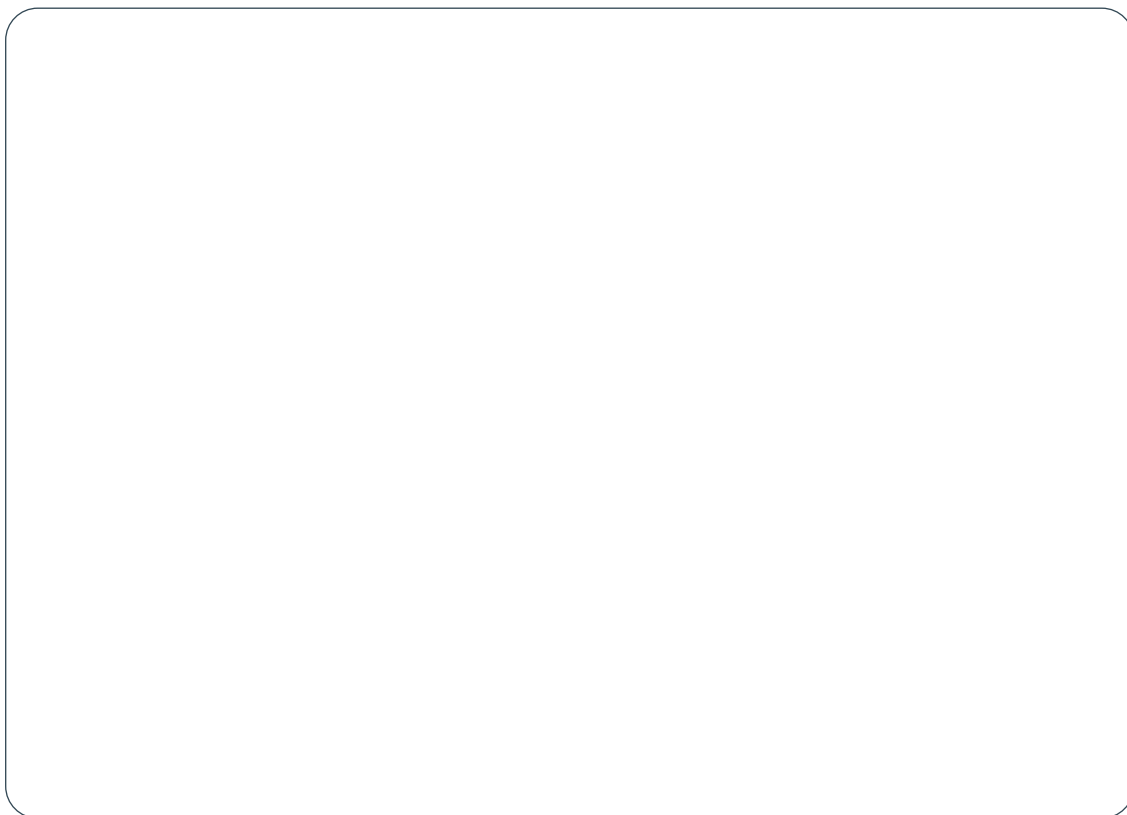




How often should the
monitoring
meetings take place?



In this space, make a list of activities to be organized that appeal to the student and their needs (examples: visits to companies, social activity, ice-breaker activity, etc.).
With the student, establish an implementation plan
(dates and prioritization of activities).



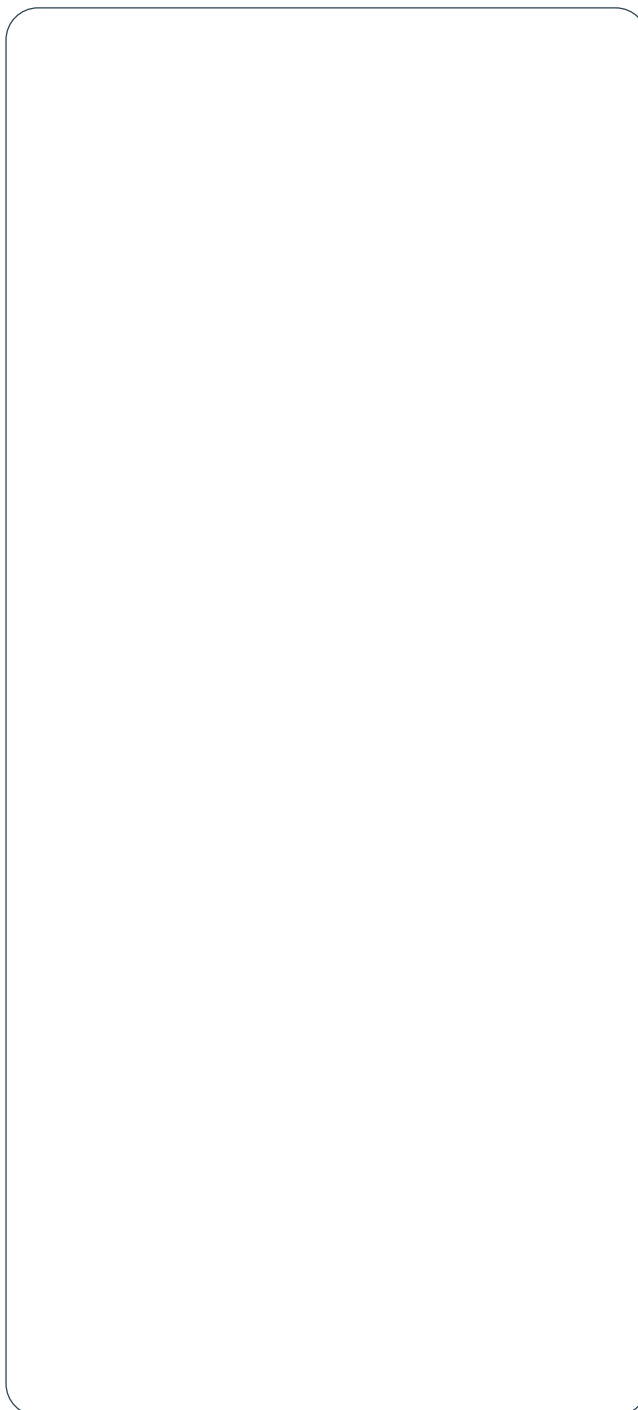
Updating the accompaniment plan

Update the plan more than once throughout the course of the training pathway.
Review the elements of the accompaniment plan and update them with the student.

What elements are new?

How do we adapt the
accompaniment in
accordance with the new
elements?

Does the
accompaniment offered
meet the student's needs?







Reflection tools

Helping the student feel culturally safe

Course of action: Help the student feel culturally safe

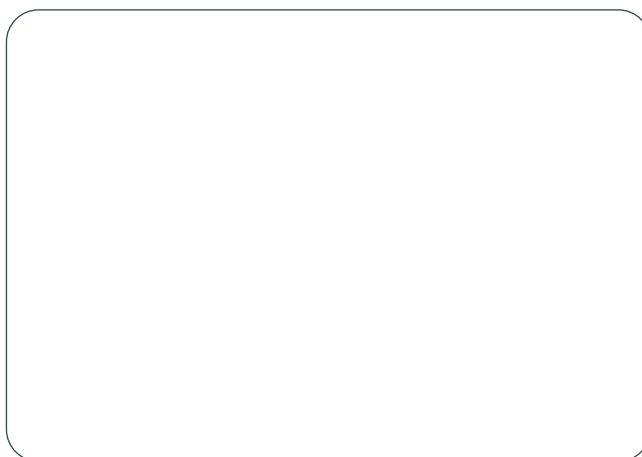
Providing cultural safety in the classroom, workshop, garage, on the worksite ...

What could I put in place to recognize the student's cultural or linguistic characteristics?

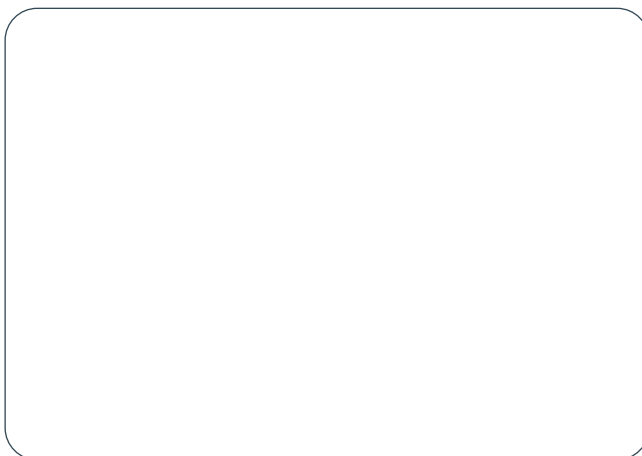
What could I put in place to value and include the knowledge and perspectives of the First Nations and Inuit in my teaching and, more broadly, in my educational practices?



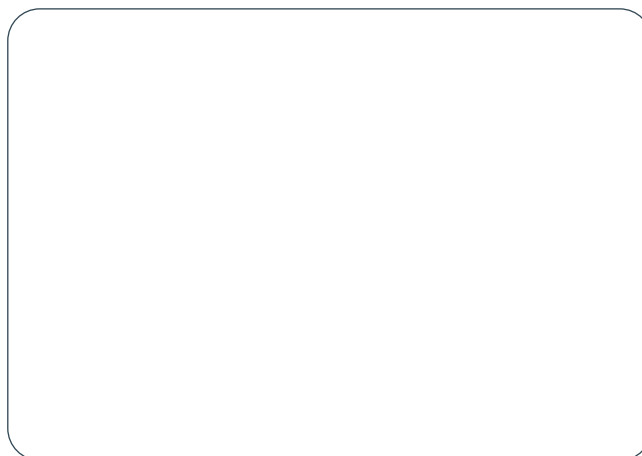
To what extent are my
pedagogical and evaluation
practices culturally relevant?



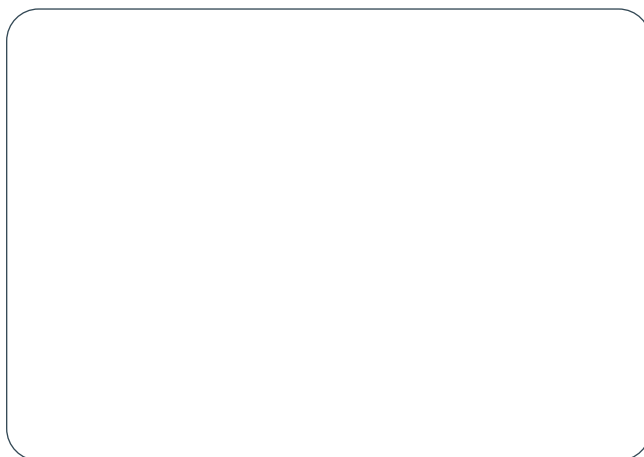
How could I incorporate
relevant cultural content into
my teaching?



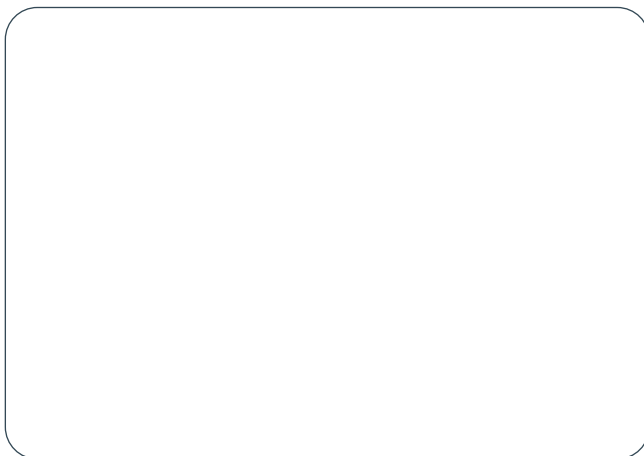
How could I incorporate
cultural references?



To what extent is the student free to think, do, feel or speak in their own way?



How could I build connections with my student's family and community?



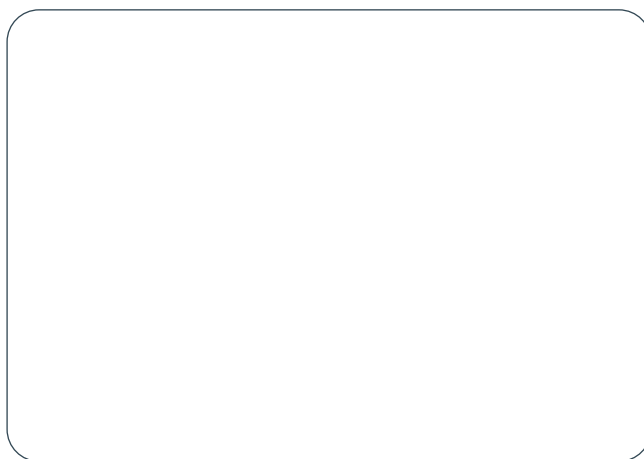
Providing cultural safety at the vocational training centre ...

How could I foster the inclusion of cultural references?

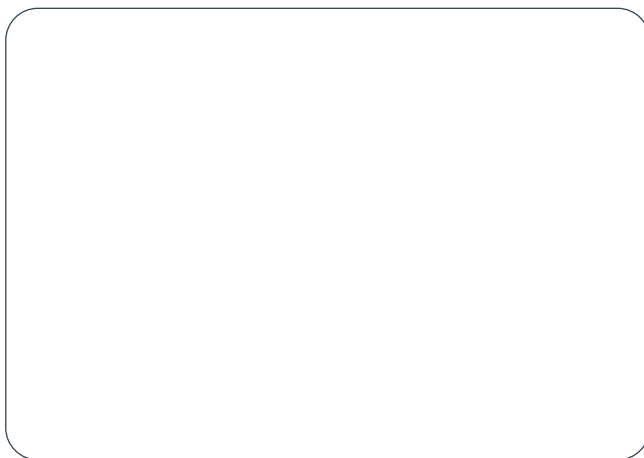
How could I help families and communities feel welcome and included in the VTC?

How could I contribute to organizing cultural and social activities?

How could I
contribute to setting up
culturally relevant spaces?



How could I
promote the delocalization
of training
into communities?





Conclusion

After presenting risk and vulnerability factors as well as protection and success factors for students enrolled in vocational training, this tool proposes six courses of action that offer culturally sensitive strategies, concrete practices and ways to implement them, which enable the centre team to intervene and take actions that encourage student academic perseverance.

The adoption of these new strategies and practices by teachers can, however, pose challenges. For example, it requires the development of a diverse body of knowledge about the cultures of the First Nations and Inuit and about the pedagogies and the ways to implement them. Then it requires the development of specific pedagogical and cultural competencies. This situation explains why humility and cultural sensitivity, constant attention to and flexibility in the methods used to meet students' needs, cultural consistency and relevance, the adaptation of educational practices and strategies, empathy and caring are attitudes to be developed or reinforced in the teachers who welcome First Nations and Inuit students.

Lastly, time and patience, experimentation, initiative, even to the point of taking risks, and experience are guarantees of success in the steps taken by teachers in order to implement the strategies and practices proposed in the six courses of action presented. The choice of the best time to carry out this implementation is based on the respect for each student's pace of progress. Little by little, everyone defines their sphere of influence, their responsibilities and their leeway in each situation encountered.



Appendix

Use the following QR code to access:

(Please note that the following documents are available in french only on the Web site.)

- all the reflection tools in printable format
- a bank of supplementary resources
- a summary of Indigenous pedagogy
- a summary of the institution's pedagogy
- the methodology used in the framework of the project to create this tool
- a list of official documents
- references to works identified throughout the course of the project to create this tool
- other relevant information



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