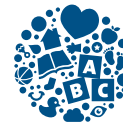




FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC  
AND LABRADOR HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
COMMISSION



**AVENIR D'ENFANTS**  
DES COMMUNAUTÉS ENGAGÉES



## SUMMARY

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN FNQLHSSC AND AVENIR D'ENFANTS 2013-2018

## Summary of the final assessment report under the Entente relative aux Partenariats avec les Nations autochtones – Volet Premières Nations

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Aussi disponible en français: *Synthèse – Évaluation des effets de l'Entente entre la CSSSPNQL et Avenir d'enfants 2013-2018 (2018)*

[info@cssspnql.com](mailto:info@cssspnql.com)

ISBN: 978-1-77315-199-1

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## Brief presentation of the Agreement and the assessment

In 2012, the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) and Avenir d'enfants signed a first agreement, the *Entente relative à la stratégie d'intervention auprès des Nations autochtones – volet Premières Nations*. Until 2015, this Agreement delegated certain responsibilities to the FNQLHSSC. In particular, the FNQLHSSC was in charge of supporting the communities through their local mobilization process to set up the conditions children need to get off to a good start in life.

Under the Agreement, the FNQLHSSC was also responsible for redirecting funds to First Nations communities. It was charged with the administrative follow-up and with ensuring that all communities filed a full and proper statement of accountability, according to the criteria laid out in the Agreement. The impact assessment of the Agreement also fell to the FNQLHSSC. To this end, Appendix G specifies the elements to be assessed:

- Goal 1: Strengthen the FNQLHSSC's capacity to support the communities.
- Goal 2: Foster the emergence of local mobilization in the communities and strengthen it.
- Goal 3: Contribute to change in practice in early childhood interventions to shift focus from treatment to prevention.

In April 2015, the FNQLHSSC and Avenir d'enfants agreed to renew the Agreement, now entitled *Entente relative aux Partenariats*

*avec les Nations autochtones – Volet Premières Nations non conventionnées 2015-2018*.<sup>1</sup> The same assessment goals were pursued, with the addition of support to communities in their self-assessment practices.

Launched in 2013, this assessment focused not only on the implementation of the Agreement, but also the resulting impacts. The period assigned to this assessment does indeed make it possible to highlight the short-term and mid-term impacts in the participating First Nations communities, as well as within the FNQLHSSC.

The assessment plan drew on formative and participative approaches. It was intended as a learning tool for stakeholders and as a way for results to be useful and useable. Therefore, while respecting informants' confidentiality, it was agreed that the observations, lessons learned and avenues for further reflection would be shared in real time with the Development Agent, Early Childhood Services Manager or analysis committee in the goal of continuous improvement and adjustment, if so required.

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter called the "Agreement."

## Participation by First Nations communities

In terms of ethics, the values and principles laid out in the *First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* (AFNQL, 2014), including the OCAP® principles, were applied. For First Nations community stakeholders to be solicited for data collection for this assessment, a community consent form had to have been signed by designated local authorities. Then, each participant had to sign an individual consent form. These consent forms presented the assessment, explained how the information would be processed, what the results would be used for, ensured confidentiality, etc.

Information was collected in three specific phases, respectively labeled Time 1 (T1), Time 2 (T2) and Time 3 (T3). T1 was an online survey of coordinators and the partners of the roundtables in the participating communities at that time (2015). T2 (2016) targeted these same stakeholders (coordinators and local roundtable partners), but using a different data collection method (semi-directed interviews conducted by phone or in person). From a global perspective, T3 (2017) served to collect information on the main effects of the Agreement. The local coordinators, senior managements and relevant FNQLHSSC and Avenir d'enfants managers, as well as the FNQLHSSC coordinator and agents/ advisors were targeted. This last data collection also used an interview format.

An Advisory Committee for the assessment was set up from the very beginning and was in keeping with the *First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* (AFNQL, 2014). This group was constituted with stakeholders from various professional horizons and had the mandate of constructively supporting and advising the FNQLHSSC throughout the assessment process. For instance, each report that was produced was presented and validated by the group before being presented to Avenir d'enfants. Its members included a First Nations representative and an Avenir d'enfants representative. Three or four meetings were held annually between April 2013 and March 2018. The stability of the Advisory Committee for the assessment and the regularity of its meetings provided the research agent with ongoing and consistent support over the years.

When the Agreement was signed in 2012, three First Nations communities were already benefitting from funding and support from Avenir d'enfants. They were transferred to the FNQLHSSC. Between 2012 and 2015, in addition to these, 18 communities were supported under this Agreement. Of these 18 communities, 13 submitted a start-up request and received funds to hire a coordinator, implement a local mobilization committee and develop a project plan based on shared findings of priorities and desired changes for children ages 0–5 and their families.

With the renewal of the Agreement, new promotional activities were implemented in non-participating communities. In December 2017, 25 out of 32 First Nations communities (78%) benefitted from financial and logistical support to implement their project plan. The seven other communities decided not to participate for personal reasons. Here are the numbers of participating communities, per nation:

Abenaki	2
Algonquin	7
Atikamekw	3
Innu	7
Mi'gmaq	2
Mohawk	2
Naskapi	1
Wendat	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>



Here are a few examples of actions found in the project plans of the various participating communities:

**TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS DEVELOPED BY FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES**

Priority observation	Desired change	Action	Description	Length/ Frequency
A large number of children ages 0–5 are not being reached by the services and are under stimulated.	That all children in the communities be adequately stimulated.	Cooking and stimulation workshop	While parents take part in a cooking workshop (healthy eating and traditional foods), kids are in a psychomotricity stimulation workshop at the drop-in daycare	4 times a month
Mobilization around early childhood issues needs to be strengthened	That collaboration for early childhood activities be increased	Early childhood prevention week	Promotion of the services offered in the communities for children ages 0–5 and their families	Once a year
Culture must be valued	That culture be more visible and that children’s cultural identity be reinforced	“Stories and legends” activities	An elder tells stories and legends in the nation’s language at the school library	4 times a month
Dysfunctional families	That fathers and mothers make healthy choices for themselves and for their families	Support for families	Home visits targeting young parents who don’t use services and whose children aren’t in daycare to forge trust-based connections with them	Ongoing

## Overview of the impacts

The term “impact” refers to the changes to which the Agreement between the FNQLHSSC and Avenir d’enfants contributed. The FNQLHSSC hoped to see the following changes through this Agreement:

- A support service offer in response to Stake 3 of the FNQLHSSC Strategic Plan (2014–2017): strengthening First Nations governance;
- Building the FNQLHSSC’s capacity to provide support.

In drafting the agreement *Partenariats avec les Nations autochtones*, Avenir d’enfants aimed for the following changes:

- Mobilized First Nations communities;
- First Nations communities’ reinforced capacity to take action;
- Prevention-focused services and activities adapted to Aboriginal cultures and realities;
- Partners in Aboriginal circles who work concertedly and complementarily to resolve early childhood issues.

This assessment is therefore intended to verify if these desired changes were made. It also sought to know if other unplanned impact resulted from this Agreement. Here is a table of the effects that the assessment brought up.

In connection with:	Impact
<b>Mobilization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Contribution to removing silos and strengthening local mobilization in several First Nations communities, among other things, by successfully bringing new sectors to the local roundtable (e.g. public security).</li> <li>■ Increase in the number of communities who adopted an inter-sector action plan for early childhood with pooled funding.</li> <li>■ Development of a strategy for long-term operability for several local roundtables with a view to sustain their engagement in early childhood.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reinforced awareness of various stakeholders of the importance of taking action in early childhood (the general public, social workers, executive administrations, politicians, etc.).</li> <li>■ Raised awareness among local roundtable members of the importance of reaching families whose children do not use services.</li> <li>■ Development of strategies in many project plans to reach the most vulnerable families.</li> </ul>
<b>Reinforcement of support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Contribution to the reflection around the support approaches to favour and development of the <i>Accompaniment Framework for Quebec First Nation Communities/Organizations</i>.</li> <li>■ Implementation of mentoring between experienced and new agents.</li> <li>■ Use of new tools to personalize support according to needs and follow up on local skills from one year to the next (agent's summary reports, annual co-developed support plan, electronic platform for project plans and accountability).</li> </ul>
<b>Other impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reinforcement of local skills in community project development based on priority observations, desired changes and preventive actions.</li> <li>■ Reinforcement of the culture of assessment in the FNQLHSSC and in First Nations communities, particularly around the assessment of action impacts (i.e., bringing about the desired changes).</li> <li>■ Consolidation of the FNQLHSSC's credibility with other early childhood funding parties.</li> <li>■ Contribution to making the First Nations context known to non-Aboriginal groups.</li> </ul>

## The main lessons learned

Within First Nations communities, three profiles were identified when it comes to needs for support when developing community projects. The agent should take these into account given that they provide information, among other things, on the amount of support needed.

Profiles	Types of needs
<p><b>Communities with specific needs</b></p>	<p><b>Needs for support are time-specific, are in regards to a particular aspect and are clearly formulated.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The coordinator has the skills needed for the position, strong leadership and commitment.</li> <li>■ The various community sectors participate in a collaborative approach, which facilitates making priority observations;</li> <li>■ Roundtable stakeholders hold shared vision and the operating structure, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communities various needs</b></p>	<p><b>The needs for support are regular, varied and are not always clearly formulated.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The coordinator has some of the skills required of his or her position, a fragile leadership (doesn't always reach all the stakeholders) and is only partially committed;</li> <li>■ A few of the community's sectors take part in a collaborative approach and making priority observations is a challenge;</li> <li>■ Roundtable stakeholders do not always share vision and the operating structure, roles and responsibilities need to be clarified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communities with many needs</b></p>	<p><b>The needs for support are ongoing, relate to basic skills and are not clearly formulated.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Coordinator position is vacant or the coordinator has few of the skills required for the position, is not a leader and lacks commitment;</li> <li>■ Work is done more in a "silo" than a collaborative approach and priority observations are made by only one or two people;</li> <li>■ Roundtable stakeholders do not hold shared vision, and operating structure, roles and responsibilities are not addressed.</li> </ul>

Here are the winning conditions or key elements to carrying out community projects in a First Nations setting. Although here these projects are early childhood projects, these aspects can inspire community action in any field.

In connection with:	Winning conditions
<p><b>Change in practice in early childhood interventions to shift from treatment to prevention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Roundtable stakeholders truly discuss the priority observations and the changes they hope to see in their communities; this leads them to choose the actions to implement.</li> <li>■ A goal to reinforce one or more aspects of children’s global development is added to a leisure activity.</li> <li>■ The assessment of preventive actions goes a step beyond satisfaction and looks at the effects. This makes it possible to assess whether the desired change has been reached or whether adjustments are needed and to target long-term actions.</li> <li>■ Community actions that highlight language and culture have an impact on many levels (construction of identity, strengthening family and social ties, creating a sense of belonging, etc.) and should be doubled.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emergence and strengthening of local action in the communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Community radio and social media, such as Facebook, are very popular means of communication in First Nations communities and their use favours participation in activities.</li> <li>■ The roundtable ensures stable and committed coordination with community-minded leadership.</li> <li>■ The public is consulted regularly, kept informed and invited to get involved in very concrete ways.</li> <li>■ The roundtable should, from the beginning, clarify roles and the division of responsibilities, ideally by adopting a mandate statement (e.g. specifying that a roundtable is not an advisory committee).</li> <li>■ Various sectors align their financial resources on a common goal (in view to bring about the desired change).</li> <li>■ At least once a year, the partners of the roundtable self-assess their operations and mobilizations, leading them to target actions that will help them improve and maintain their gains.</li> </ul>



**In connection with:**

**Winning conditions**

**Reinforcing agents' capacity to support communities**

- To be useful and helpful, support tools (like mapping of local mobilization) must be regularly updated.
- Development agents, particularly newcomers and those with little or limited support experience, should themselves be supported in their roles by senior agents.
- The issue of the venture's longevity should be brought up from the very start of the planning process to determine with local stakeholders what they wish to see continue in time (inter-sector mobilization, certain actions, etc.).
- For the FNQLHSSC to be able to fully assess the effects of the support in the communities, goals for strengthening skills in the support plans must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). These goals should be developed and monitored by an FNQLHSSC agent, relevant local players and external partners, if appropriate.
- Should a community receive a high level of support for several years, an end date should be set so that the agent may check if local capacities (which were targeted in the support plan) have been reinforced since the start of the process. This might lead to other support approaches or positions.
- The various initiatives using community mobilization should be quickly shared throughout the FNQLHSSC, and agents in the same communities should all have this knowledge to prompt, if required, harmonization between various local groups.

# Recommendations

Here are recommendations for First Nations communities made to the FNQLHSSC and Avenir d'enfants in light of these observations presented in this report. Although the partnership between these two organizations will end in 2020 when Avenir d'enfants ends, community mobilization around early childhood issues in First Nations communities must be pursued. It is in this spirit that these recommendations are formulated.

## Recommendations for the communities

These recommendations are made more specifically to the roundtables used or set up under the Agreement. They may also inspire other local early childhood roundtables or initiatives.

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

**That the use of strategies to consult, inform and involve the public at all stages of development of a community project be maximized.**

For First Nations communities, except a roundtable, community mobilization means the commitment of stakeholders from various sectors, rather than that of community members. It is true that the First Nations agents involved in such a process hold a double perspective, as community worker and as father, mother, sister, etc. Moreover, some examples seen over the implementation of this Agreement, such as the establishment of a roundtable made up mostly of citizens, or actions taken on almost completely by participants, should be watched closely. This citizen mobilization is a guarantee of sustainable changes. Public mobilizing strategies should be thought-out from the planning stage and implemented throughout the project.

Consultation initiatives should be coordinated so as not to oversolicit the community (e.g. join an initiative of another regional First Nations organization).

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

**That early childhood issues continue to be prioritized for action.**

For First Nations members, children come from the Creator's Land and are very important (elder, 2017<sup>2</sup>). Children are seen to be the future of communities and it is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. Therefore, this sub-group should rightly be among the priorities for political leaders, various sectors of intervention and the public. The structure for mobilization created under the Agreement will continue on after 2020 in certain First Nations communities; it will take a new form in some other communities, while this framework will not be pursued in other communities. In any case, strategies should be thought out so that children and families, particularly vulnerable families, benefit from a variety of prevention services and activities aimed to strengthen their empowerment.

### RECOMMENDATION 3:

**That the means to know the effects of the implemented actions be adopted.**

The development of community actions should always be connected with realistic and measurable goals. What do we hope to achieve? As appealing as it may be from an organizer's point of view, an action may not produce the desired results. Even if it experienced record attendance and participants all loved it, the goals may have not been reached. Evaluating goal achievement allows organizers to make informed decisions about whether or not the activity should be continued, adapted or stopped. Simple and useful measures make it possible to verify the impact of the implemented actions. These should be thought-out at the same time as the actions are developed and the targeted goals should necessarily be measurable.

To this end, communities are encouraged to use the assessment resources<sup>3</sup> developed by the FNQLHSSC.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from the video Children as Seen by the Elders; Online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYNdOx1KwjY>, watched on January 17, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Available on the FNQLHSSC website at HYPERLINK "<http://www.cssspnql.com>" [www.cssspnql.com](http://www.cssspnql.com).

## Recommendation for the FNQLHSSC

In a spirit of reinvestment of learning, these recommendations are intended as much for the employees directly involved with the Agreement as the employees and managers in the organization's other sectors.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**  
**That local roundtables be supported in carrying out in-depth reflection to identify the priority observations and desired changes.**

The priority observations and desired changes laid out in the project plans should first and foremost be useful to the local roundtables. Developing projects according to funders' criteria should be avoided. The planning phase should spread over a sufficiently long period for all local roundtable members to draw up shared observations from an overview of the situation. This step is key as the rest of the project is built on this foundation. If these priority observations and desired changes are to serve as benchmarks for several years, they must be kept up to date. The agent should raise the awareness of local stakeholders to these aspects and offer them support in fully carrying out this process.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**  
**That the achievement of the goals laid out in the support plan for capacity strengthening be assessed on a yearly basis.**

All FNQLHSSC support should be provided according to one or more goals to reinforce skills. Whether for a time-specific or long-term support, the support plan is a structuring tool. The goal should be co-developed by the advised party and the agent, according to the receiving party's needs and the services the agent is able to offer. If another agent, from the FNQLHSSC or another organization, offers this person similar support, efforts should be paired or combined in the same support plan.



Assessment with a view to determining whether or not the targeted goal was reached makes it possible to make an informed decision whether the support should continue as is, if adjustment should be made or if support needs were met. This also makes it possible to identify agents' needs and for them to seek out further training, if needed, to strengthen their own capacities.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**  
**That strategies be adopted to ensure stability in human resources.**

Over the years, FNQLHSSC employees (particularly those providing support directly to First Nations communities) develop knowledge and expertise that is distinct from that gained in other professional settings. Stakeholders in the communities enjoy working with people they already trust. Hiring people with experience with the First Nations and social development expertise in early childhood issues, as well as access to a personalized training plan, support from co-workers and managers and tools for carrying out their mandates are examples of means that favour low employee turnover.



## Recommendations for Avenir d'enfants

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

**That the connection between First Nations stakeholders and Quebec organizations be facilitated, in view of pooling knowledge.**

The events Avenir d'enfants organized and to which they invited First Nations members were more profitable for First Nations than for Quebec organizations. With a view to longevity, it would be very useful to share many mobilization, prevention or assessment tools, methods and processes. The Avenir d'enfants website and Facebook page are interesting means of communication. Support and liaison agents can also play an active role in fostering interaction between the local roundtables in the First Nations communities and local groups of partners in the same area.

### RECOMMENDATION 2:

**That Avenir d'enfants and FNQLHSSC share the lessons learned from this partnership with other financial partners.**

As the FNQLHSSC seeks out other financial partners to support other early childhood projects in community prevention, sharing the learning gained during this Agreement would make it possible to build new relationships on solid foundations. As in all partnerships, a trust-based connection must necessarily be built; and it is all the more true with First Nations organizations. Trust is gained through egalitarian relationships and recognition of both partners' expertise. Open-mindedness and flexibility, which make it possible to meet the communities' needs particularly in regards to accountability, and forging effective channels of communication are approaches that should be favoured.



## Conclusion

*“Children’s future rests on the back of the Eagle. The Eagle’s head is the vision, its two wings are the father and the mother, its tail is the uncles and aunts. It is in that whole that children develop their future”*  
(Elder, 2017; our translation).

Even if it took a different form before colonization, mobilization around early childhood has always been inherent to First Nations values. The great disturbances experienced in the past decades have led this mobilization to fit into a new reality that includes issues of all kinds (social, economic, cultural, etc.).

The governmental funding system per project has contributed to developing disconnection and isolation in the work being carried out in First Nations communities. In the past decade, stakeholders in various sectors and working in the communities have tried to shift directions and foster a more community-oriented approach. This project has allowed us to see that still today all communities are not at the same point and community mobilization continues to be a challenge for many. Therein lies the importance for FNQLHSSC agents to truly understand the local realities and jointly set and assess the success of goals for reinforcing capabilities according to specific needs.

Among other gains, this partnership has launched or strengthened mobilization around early childhood to make it a real priority in First Nations communities. The FNQLHSSC, and most specifically the early childhood services sector, will pursue this work, reinforced by the learning and experience gained with Avenir d’enfants.

*“We must remember this is the seventh generation! It has been seven cycles since the Act was proclaimed. Maybe this generation will take action; they can put an end to the Act’s cancerous decay. They have the potential to turn us back to healthier patterns. There are prophecies among my people about their gifts. In my eyes, I can see these ancient promises coming to pass through their efforts. Many are rising up, retracing ancient steps and rekindling sacred ways. They are striving to be wise, humble, respectful, truthful, brave, loving, and honest.”* (Burrows, 2008: 3).



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