CONSEIL JEUNESSE DE MONTRÉAL

≫ **SUMMARY OF THE POLICY PAPER** ON THE REALITY OF ABORIGINAL YOUTH IN MONTRÉAL

Native Montréal
Montréal Autochtone

Montréal

This policy paper was prepared in 2015, the twelfth year of the Conseil jeunesse de Montréal's existence, and was adopted by its members on January 28, 2016.

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SUMMARY

Between 2001 and 2011, there was a significant rise in the migration of Aboriginal people to cities reflected in a 177% increase in the Aboriginal population of Montréal. This phenomenon, although not entirely new, has grown considerably in recent decades. Due to current demographic changes, affecting the younger generation in particular, the phenomenon is likely to intensify in coming years. Large numbers of Aboriginal youth between the ages of 18 and 35 years are choosing to move to Montréal for the short or long term to improve their standard of living by ameliorating their socio-economic status and pursuing their education.

In light of the above and in order to submit a well-informed policy paper to the City Council, the Conseil jeunesse de Montréal (CjM) commissioned a study on the reality of Aboriginal youth in Montréal *(Étude sur la réalité des jeunes Autochtones à Montréal)*. The aim was 1) to provide an accurate picture of the reality of Aboriginal youth in Montréal and their level of socio-economic integration, 2) to identify obstacles and conditions that hamper their integration, and 3) to draw up an inventory of the tools and policies in place, both here and elsewhere, that may foster their social inclusion. Aboriginal youth face multiple, deep-seated challenges, as the statistical report and the consultations held as part of this study revealed. Several issues and potential solutions should be explored to improve integration of Aboriginal youth into the community.

Of all the elements that come into play upon **arrival and in daily life** in Montréal, the most important is unquestionably housing. It has a fundamental influence on their quality of life and is closely connected to their state of health and general sense of well-being. Available data show that Aboriginal households are more likely to live in inadequate housing than non-Aboriginal households. Thus, the implementation of social housing projects for Aboriginal youth and young Aboriginal families are key to ensuring better economic and social integration of this population.

It is important to note the role welcome services play in making things easier for Aboriginal youth when they first arrive in Montréal, and in helping them with the organization of their personal and home lives. These services deal primarily with housing and transportation, childcare services, and the development of the skills required for city life. Many Aboriginal people from reserves or the North report having had difficulty adjusting to city life. For young Aboriginal Montrealers, the transition from a rural environment to an urban setting is made more arduous by a lack of financial means as well as the high cost and low availability of transportation, which prevent them from having access

to the services, activities and pastimes that foster a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, in order to reach this population, agencies must also deal with the challenges posed by the high mobility of Aboriginal youth residing in Montreal.

The main issue with regard to **health and social services**, including traditional and culturally relevant health care services, is lack of service accessibility. It is important to note that health is closely linked to housing conditions, socio-economic status, social inclusion or exclusion, and general sense of well-being.

Although urban Aboriginal people are generally in better health than registered Aboriginal people living on reserves, the state of health of both populations almost always compares negatively to that of the non-Aboriginal population. Among the challenges facing Aboriginal youth are physical, mental and psycho-social health issues, including homelessness and alcohol or drug abuse, which are some of the principal concerns of the government bodies and agencies working with urban Aboriginal populations.

The Aboriginal young people who took part in the study see the health care system as an area that should be prioritized in Native awareness efforts and the development of anti-racism measures, as perceived racism and discrimination in the health care system are one of the key challenges they face. In addition, many of them prefer services provided by Aboriginal agencies. They would like to see the establishment of an Aboriginal health clinic, and they deplore the lack of culturally relevant care in clinics and hospitals.

Most Aboriginal people originally move to Montréal for the opportunities the city has to offer in terms of improving one's socio-economic status. **Education, employment and training** therefore feature at the top of their list of priorities.

The integration of Aboriginal people into economic life is a *sine qua non* for the improvement of all spheres of their lives, and also the domain in which many of them are most intent on being proactive. While the road to social and occupational integration is strewn with numerous obstacles, obtaining a good, stable job proved to be the top priority for the Aboriginal youth interviewed.

Increasing the employability of Aboriginal youth should be at the heart of any Montréal strategy for improving their living conditions and socio-economic status. Although many do manage to

successfully integrate the social and economic life of Montréal, it is still vital to fight the ongoing discrimination and prejudice in the job market. There are stark income gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and poverty and socio-economic inequalities significantly restrict the education and employment possibilities open to Aboriginal people. Other issues that limit their access to jobs include the low level of education among Aboriginal youth and stereotypes, prejudices and preconceived ideas about Aboriginal people in general.

The difficulty Aboriginal youth encounter in accessing internships or work experience and professional references to add to their resumes also limits their opportunities for advancement and success. Aboriginal youth are also prevented from obtaining jobs and act as a barrier to socio-economic integration by unfamiliarity with or limited proficiency in the two official languages; they therefore stress the importance of establishing language upgrading resources.

Education and training are key to ensuring the full participation of Aboriginal youth in Montréal's social and economic life, but staying in school is a major challenge for many Aboriginal young people. The low high school graduation rate and general delay in schooling significantly restrict access to postsecondary education. However, the Aboriginal student associations found in most Montréal universities are very active and play a unifying role in their community.   They would therefore be partners of choice for the City of Montréal in the implementation of policies and measures in the field of education. Not only do Aboriginal university students hope to achieve greater social mobility by developing the necessary skills to obtain good jobs, but they also want to serve as positive role models for the next generation. These young people are working actively to pave the way for lasting improvement in the quality of life of their communities.

The topic of **community belonging and fighting exclusion** allows us to address head-on the racism and discrimination that permeate all aspects of the lives of Aboriginal youth, as well as issues related to social integration and the creation of Native solidarity networks. The development of a sense of community belonging and the importance of a strong, positive cultural identity are core themes.

Racism and the dynamics of social exclusion cut across all topics addressed in this study and affect the vast majority of urban Aboriginal people. Stereotypes and prejudice can affect all spheres of their lives, affecting their searches for housing or work, the possibility of them acquiring a good education, access to health care, and even simply their ability to be part in the public sphere.

For the youth and the community workers interviewed, the development of Aboriginal youth leadership and public participation is key to fighting all forms of racism. This could be achieved through measures such as the implementation of citizen participation programs or showcasing inspiring young Aboriginal role models on the City's various platforms. In addition to helping fight prejudice and deconstruct preconceived ideas, such an approach would help encourage social and political participation. In a similar vein, it would be helpful to implement and encourage initiatives that bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.

The promotion and showcasing of **Aboriginal art and culture** are essential for the development of a strong and positive cultural identity. Sustained funding for organisations dedicated to the creation, distribution and showcasing of Aboriginal art, as well as career development support for emerging Aboriginal artists is crucial. The young Aboriginal artists interviewed stated that what they most needed was coaching to help them better understand the workings of funding agencies and creation, presenter and networking venues. Aboriginal agencies active in the cultural sector point to the importance of providing support for the creation, presentation and showcasing of Aboriginal art in order to make the transition to professional artist status easier.

Showcasing Aboriginal culture also rests on proficiency in Aboriginal languages. Such proficiency helps strengthen cultural identity and the sense of community belonging, two key aspects of social integration. However, not only are most Aboriginal languages endangered, but their transmission in urban settings is relatively low and generally jeopardized. Of all the Aboriginal languages spoken in rural and urban communities, only Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway are not endangered. The very variety of Aboriginal languages spoken in the city puts their survival at risk, in that the size of the population that uses each one of them is small, and their transmission from one generation to the next is declining. Yet there is a great deal of interest in learning these languages which are an important pillar of the culture and identity of Aboriginal communities.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the constant growth of the Aboriginal population in Montréal, there is currently a lack of data that would provide a better understanding of its needs and aspirations, hence the decision by the members of the CjM to prepare a policy paper on the reality of Aboriginal youth in Montréal. To support the formulation of recommendations suited to this specific reality, the policy paper 1) identifies the principle needs of Aboriginal youth and obstacles they encounter in their efforts to achieve economic independence, 2) verifies whether there are already any programs or services designed to meet these needs, 3) recommends strategies to better meet the needs expressed, and 4) inventories the practices and programs already set up to meet similar needs, both here and elsewhere.

In order to provide a more accurate and current picture of the situation of Aboriginal youth in Montréal, a combination of research methods was used.

First, we conducted a *literature review* of issues specific to urban Aboriginal youth and of obstacles to their integration. The review comprised analysis of available statistics, an inventory of programs and services, a survey of the literature on urban Aboriginal youth as well as an inventory of inspirational practices already in place.

Semi-structured interviews (16) were conducted with community workers involved with Montréal's Aboriginal community, officials from the City of Montréal, and experts on Aboriginal issues. Interviews were also conducted with Aboriginal youth with particularly inspiring stories.

Seven *focus groups* were created to obtain a general overview of barriers to integration encountered by Aboriginal youth as well as by more specific segments of the population (adolescents, young women, young men, Métis, Inuit, Mohawks, etc.) A focus group was also held with community workers working with Aboriginal youth. The aim of the interviews and focus groups was to ground the research and analysis in the study's specific context—the current situation in Montréal—and to obtain the views of the most knowledgeable workers in the field and Aboriginal youth themselves on the principal issues.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1.1. ARRIVAL AND DAILY LIFE IN MONTRÉAL

The section on *arrival and daily life in Montréal* covers issues related to the arrival in Montréal and organization of the personal and home life of Aboriginal youth. More specifically, it addresses problems related to housing and transportation, childcare services, and the development of the skills necessary for city life. It also examines the challenges agencies face as a result of this population's high mobility.

1.1.1. Survey of the Literature

While increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are living in urban areas in both the province of Québec and the rest of Canada, their high mobility sets them apart from the general population. Migration and moves between reserves or between rural and urban environments, whether for short- or long-term stays, are especially common in this population, as are moves within a same city. Some see this as a sign of precarity and as being characteristic of this population, while others argue that such movement is part of the larger social changes that are making short-, medium- and long-term mobility an integral part of personal and professional life.[1]

There is consensus among researchers and Aboriginal community organizations that the urban Aboriginal presence, while not a new phenomenon, has grown in recent decades and is expected to intensify due to current demographic changes. Indeed, 86% of Aboriginal people living in Montréal are so-called first-generation residents, meaning they were born and raised somewhere other than Montréal. Of these, 32% have lived in Montréal for over 20 years, while 44% have been in the city for less than 10. Second-generation residents, who were born and raised in Montréal to parents who moved there as adolescents or young adults, represent 14% of Montréal's Aboriginal population.[2] As shown in Figure 19, the main reasons cited for moving to Montréal are education, employment and family life.[3] The importance of education reflects the relatively young age of the arriving population.

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[1] C. Lévesque, "La présence des Autochtones dans les villes du Québec: mouvements pluriels, enjeux diversifies," in D. Newhouse and E.J. Peters, *Des gens d'ici: les Autochtones en milieu urbain. Projet de recherche sur les politiques,* 2003, p. 28.
[2] Environics Institute, *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. Montreal Report*, 2011, p. 18.
[3] Ibid., p. 19.

Figure 19—Reasons for moving to Montréal
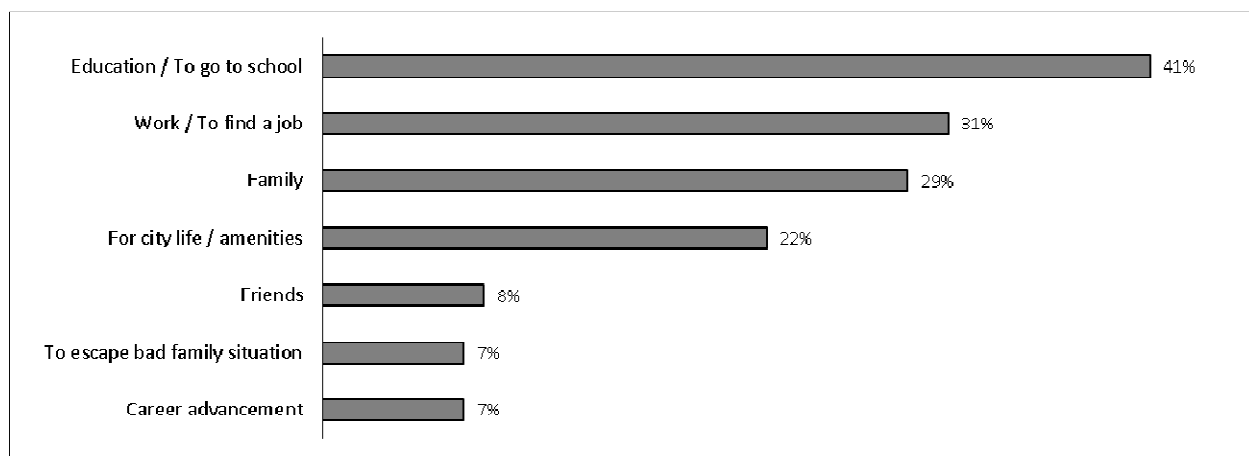
Source: Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study, Montreal Report, Environics Institute, 2011.

Moving from a reserve or rural environment to the city is not without its challenges. As noted by the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), migration to the city is often inspired by "the hope of a better life".[4] While the wish comes true for some, others find themselves coping with the deterioration of their situation instead, having to deal not only with problems that have followed them to Montréal, but with the addition of isolation and financial instability as well. It should be pointed out, as the RCAAQ has done[5], that there are major differences between life in the city and life in Aboriginal communities, and these can make the transition from one setting to the other more difficult than originally expected. The RCAAQ contrasts the anonymity that characterizes city life with the lack of privacy experienced in small communities, and notes the very different ways institutions and services operate in urban environments. Finally, leaving a community to move to the city can be experienced as an abandonment or exile, in that individuals who leave reserves cease to have access to services provided by the Band Council of their community of origin as the latter's powers are confined to the band's territory. Although a large proportion of Canadian Aboriginal people today reside in cities, this reality is not addressed in the *Indian Act*.

In addition to the challenges Aboriginal youth face upon arrival in the city, there are those that face agencies seeking to provide support for Aboriginal populations and who must overcome numerous hurdles including the difficulty of establishing contact with a highly mobile population. Not only is

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[4] RCAAQ, *Mémoire du Mouvement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec pour contrer le racisme et la discrimination envers les Autochtones du Québec,* 2013, p. 11.
[5] Ibid.

there migration between communities and between rural and urban environments, but there may also be residential instability and high residential mobility within a same city. Between 2001 and 2006, "more than half of Montréal's Aboriginal population moved at least once", a significantly higher proportion than that in data for the general population.[6]

In 2006, 40% of Aboriginal people in big and mid-sized cities in Canada resided in dwellings in need of major or minor repairs.[7] Moreover, Aboriginal people are more likely to live in overcrowded or inadequate housing than members of the general population with the same income.[8] This is all the more problematic as housing quality is a social determinant of health, well-being, ability to participate in the economy and general society as well as of access to education.[9]

It should be noted that the issue of transportation is crucial for accessing services and employment. The cost of travel is an obstacle for low-income households[10] and for urban youth when attempting to access services or recreational activities that are part of a healthy lifestyle.[11]

1.1.2. Results of Consultations on Arrival and Daily Life in Montréal

Participants stated that Aboriginal people who move to Montréal are obliged to familiarize themselves rapidly with a large number of concepts, such as how to read a city map or use public transit. They stressed that there is currently no referral centre for newly arrived Aboriginal people (dealing with housing, the school system, transit, or the health and social services network). Participants mentioned that adjusting to public transit could be a major ordeal for new arrivals, citing fear of the metro and unfamiliarity with the way it works and its main reference points as examples. They believed that the cost of transit fares discouraged travel, and was an obstacle to the active participation and integration of Aboriginal people, especially youth. In addition, the participants felt that lack of access to childcare services in Montréal contributed to the isolation of Aboriginal parents. They also mentioned a number of obstacles encountered when looking for housing, including lack of references or access to credit, perceived discrimination on the part of certain landlords, and the language barrier. Many preferred to live in apartments owned or managed by an Aboriginal person. Finally, the participants criticized the lack of an accessible legal resource to help Aboriginal people become better informed about their rights and remedies as tenants, workers, and citizens.

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[6] Statistics Canada, "2006 Aboriginal Population Profile for Montréal", 2009.
[7] Y. D. Belanger, "Housing and Aboriginal People in Urban Centres: A Quantitative Evaluation," *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2012:2:1, p. 16.
[8] Ibid., p. 18.
[9] Ibid., p. 4.
[10] Wabano Center for Aboriginal Health, *I Belong Here: A Framework to Promote Healthy Development of Urban Aboriginal Children, 6-12 years*, 2008, quoted in IVTF, *Optique d'équité et d'inclusion et Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes*, p. 11.
[11] RCAAQ, *La jeunesse autochtone dans les villes: une force de l'avenir*, 2015, p. 12.

Inuit participants considered the lack of a referral centre (dealing with housing, schooling, transportation, and health) for newly arrived Aboriginal people a real problem in Montréal. Newly arrived Inuit must adjust to a multitude of things that are unfamiliar to them. They say they have a great deal of difficulty locating resources and agencies that can help them. They too believe the cost of transit fares discourages travel, and is an obstacle to the active participation and integration of Aboriginal people, especially youth.

Agencies specializing in the provision of services to Aboriginal people report having difficulty reaching this community in Montréal due to the population's dispersion, lack of involvement, and considerable diversity. The community workers consulted deemed that, in order to prevent duplication of services and maximize their impact, it would be important to foster cooperation among agencies working in different sectors (culture, health, education, etc.) and to function as a network. Lastly, they stressed problems having to do with public transit in Montréal, stating that the mobility of Aboriginal young people living in Montréal must be heightened to enable them to access services. Specifically, they suggested that bus service be made available for certain activities offered by the agencies, or that the Société de transport de Montréal (STM) agree to offer a reduced fare for Aboriginal youth.

In short, the main programs and services Aboriginal participants and community workers deemed to be lacking or inadequate were:

- A welcome program focused on key life skills for living in the city;
- Improved access to services (babysitting, pediatric health care) throughout the Montréal area;
- A legal information service;
- Networking opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies with similar missions;
- Multisectoral task forces to better respond to issues that affect several types of services.

1.1.3. Recommendations Concerning Arrival and Daily Life in Montréal

Recommendation 1: That the City of Montréal support social housing projects for Aboriginal youth and young Aboriginal families.

Recommendation 2: That the City of Montréal continue its efforts with various government bodies in order that funding programs for the development of social and community housing be extended in future budgets and dedicated funding allotted to Aboriginal people.

1.2. HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The *Health and Social Services* section addresses problems related to physical, mental and psychosocial health, including homelessness and alcohol or drug abuse. It also examines a series of issues around access to care and services, such as the racism and discrimination experienced in the health system, as well as issues to do with traditional health care. The section also explores problems Aboriginal people encounter in their dealings with the justice system, especially the inability to obtain legal advice and a lack of information on their rights.

1.2.1. Survey of the Literature

Just as for the various elements that affect the quality of life and general organization of daily life, health is closely linked to housing conditions, socio-economic status, social inclusion or exclusion, and the overall sense of well-being. Although considerable attention has been paid to the health status of Aboriginal youth, Metis and urban Inuit youth have been underrepresented in the literature. Furthermore, the current body of research on Aboriginal youth health does not provide a comprehensive overview of the situation; in addition, it neglects several of the key determinants of health identified by the Public Health Agency of Canada.[12] Consequently, a number of the major health needs and concerns of Canadian Aboriginal youth are still poorly understood or overlooked.[13] There is a consensus that existing data on homelessness among urban Aboriginal youth is both unreliable and insufficient.[14] That being said, the available data supports the conclusion that Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the homeless population of Montréal.[15]

Although the problem of homelessness among Aboriginal people is more than simply a question of housing, the latter is an integral part thereof being one of the areas in which Aboriginal people are

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[12] The twelve key determinants of health are 1) income and social status, 2) social support networks, 3) education and literacy, 4) employment and working conditions, 5) social environments, 6) physical environments, 7) personal health practices and coping skills, 8) healthy child development, 9) biology and genetic endowment, 10) health services, 11) gender and 12) culture.

[13] A. Ning and K. Wilson, "A Research Review: Exploring the Health of Canada's Aboriginal Youth," *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 2012: 71, pp. 1-10. Société de développement social de Ville-Marie, *Étude statistique. L'itinérance à Montréal*, "Premier pôle de services en itinérance" project, 2013.

[14] C. Baskin, "Aboriginal Youth Talk About Structural Determinants as the Cause of their Homelessness," *First Peoples Child & Family Review,* 2007:3:3, p. 32.

[15] Société de développement social de Ville-Marie, 2013.

clearly disadvantaged. Furthermore, despite representing "around 3% of the Canadian population, the Aboriginal people represent about 10% of the homeless people in Canada".[16]

It should also be pointed out that alcohol and drug consumption is one of the major concerns of public authorities and agencies working with urban Aboriginal populations. In general, the data indicates the presence of considerable psychological distress in individuals with alcohol or drug problems, distress that may well be exacerbated by substance use itself. Moreover, people who wish to stop using drugs or alcohol face numerous obstacles.

1.2.2. Results of Consultations on Health and Social Services

Participants felt the health system should be prioritized in Native awareness efforts and the development of anti-racism measures. Many recounted having had bad experiences and feeling they had been subjected to discrimination and even racism. Participants had also encountered logistical difficulties in the health care system, specifically non-recognition of the Indian Status Card, or lack of information as to how the system works and how it functions in terms of time and priority management. Many Aboriginal youth therefore preferred services provided by Aboriginal organizations and lamented the lack of Aboriginal care in clinics and hospitals and the absence of an Aboriginal health care clinic. In general, they were in favour of the use of traditional medicine and the reappropriation of traditional techniques. However, participants believed some services for Aboriginal people are not sufficiently well-known. With respect to intervention priorities in this field, participants cited the importance of stability and of maintaining a healthy lifestyle in order to be present for their children and provide the latter with adequate care. They also noted the community's very great needs in terms of mental health and self-esteem enhancement. They felt that getting back to one's roots in nature, outside the city, was an effective means of combatting alcohol and drug problems.

Young Inuit also expressed significant discomfort with the use of non-Aboriginal health care, citing cultural differences and racism in the health and social services sector. They also considered maternal health services (pre- and post-natal care) to be insufficient.

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[16] D. Sider, *A Sociological Analysis of Root Causes of Aboriginal Homelessness in Sioux Lookout, Ontario*. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2005, p. 8, quoted in Assemblée des Premières nations du Québec et du Labrador (APNQL) and Commission de la santé et des services sociaux des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador (CSSSPNQL), *Le phénomène de l'itinérance chez les Premières Nations au Québec*, 2008, p. 21.

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In short, the main programs and services Aboriginal participants and community workers deemed to be lacking or inadequate were:

- Native awareness training for health and social services professionals;
- Access to culturally sensitive medical services and care that respectfully integrates traditional and Western practices;
- Access to traditional medicine;
- Health and healthy lifestyle promotion services;
- Accessible mental health services;
- A plan for fighting drug use that integrates opportunities for going out on the land and collaboration with one of the welcome services

1.2.3. Recommendations Concerning Health Care and Social Services

Recommendation 3: That the City of Montréal support the establishment of traditional and culturally sensitive health care and social services clinics for Aboriginal youth that are complementary to the provincial health and social services network, particularly by facilitating access to the infrastructures and premises necessary for such a project.

Recommendation 4: That the City of Montréal provide financial support for safe houses for Aboriginal women in need and shelters for homeless Aboriginal people in the Montréal area.

1.3. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

This section addresses problems involving access to the job market, the availability of appropriate training services, especially for the development of official language proficiency, the acquisition of job-hunting skills, and shortfalls in support for the economic, social and professional integration for urban Aboriginal people. It also examines issues pertaining to access to higher education.

1.3.1. Survey of the Literature

From housing to health to the fight against exclusion and racism, full participation in economic life is the cornerstone of social integration. Researchers therefore recommend intervention in all dimensions of the lives of Aboriginal people in their communities and in rural and urban

environments in order to encourage Aboriginal participation in the economy.[17] While the integration of Aboriginal people into economic life is *sine qua non* to the improvement of all spheres of their lives, the economic sphere is also the area in which many of them most actively seek to be proactive.

Most Aboriginal people who move to Montréal initially come for the employment and educational opportunities the city has to offer, with education being their top priority. These young people hope to climb the social ladder by developing the necessary skills to get a good job. Not only is education their top priority, but many of their hopes are dependent on it. They naturally wish to improve their own quality of life and that of their families, but they especially hope the generation that follows them will recognize the importance of education, have a stronger connection to their culture, and lead happier, healthier and more stable lives overall.[18] Aboriginal youth hope education will enable them to play an active role in the development and betterment of their communities, as well as to provide a positive role model for future generations.[19]

However, the current wave of optimism must not be allowed to mask the obstacles to access education and employment that exist. It is important to note that poverty and economic inequality significantly limit the educational and employment opportunities open to Aboriginal people. In 2011, the income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of Montréal for similar rates of labour force participation was in the thousands of dollars ($52,587 versus $44,602 for average household after-tax income).[20] Similarly, Aboriginal people are generally in financial situations that are far more precarious than those of non-Aboriginal people. In 2011, low income was significantly more prevalent among Aboriginal people than among non-Aboriginal people in Montréal (29.6% versus 24.6%).[21]

Moreover Aboriginal women, who are often on their own with their children, earn significantly less than their male counterparts. In 2011, on average Aboriginal women earned $23,246 while Aboriginal men earned $27,874 (based on average personal after-tax income).[22]

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[17] SAMU, Plan stratégique communautaire pour la Stratégie pour les Autochtones vivant en milieu urbain, 2015.
[18] Environics Institute. Ibid., p. 59.
[19] M. Loiselle, *Une analyse des déterminants de persévérance et de réussite des étudiants autochtones à l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue*, Research Report, 2010, p. 76.
[20] Data from the Direction de santé publique du CIUSSS du Centre-Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, *Portrait de santé des autochtones de Montréal*, 2015.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

Other than the problems inherently associated with socio-economic status and low income, the two most important obstacles to access to employment appear to be the low level of formal education among Aboriginal youth, and the stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings about Aboriginal people.[23] A considerably larger proportion of Aboriginal people has either not completed high school or not pursued higher education than that of non-Aboriginal people. Similarly, the proportion of Aboriginal people found in universities is smaller.

Stereotypes, preconceived ideas, and direct and indirect discrimination would also appear to account at least in part for income gaps between Aboriginal people and the general population.[24] Direct and indirect discrimination during the hiring process is one of the key obstacles to employment encountered by Aboriginal youth.[25] Moreover, social health inequalities are themselves an impediment to participation in economic life when compounded by low self-esteem tied to a negative cultural identity and the lack of a community or family support network in the city.[26] Aboriginal people in Montréal also mention difficulties associated with having a criminal record or drug addiction, the cost of transportation and related expenses involved in getting to one's place of work, and the lack of user-friendly information about available jobs.[27]

Language also appears to be an issue in that Aboriginal people from across Canada move to Montréal, and a significant proportion of them only speak either English or English and their Aboriginal language. However, most jobs require proficiency in French, and services and resources are often available only in French.[28]

While obtaining a university diploma has been shown to have a dramatic impact on socio-economic status and overall quality of life,[29] and Aboriginal students with more than average education appear more likely to affirm that they are treated with the same level of respect as the general population,[30] there are still numerous hurdles Aboriginal youth must overcome to pursue their education. In addition to the low high school graduation rates and general delay in schooling, the most significant barriers to access to postsecondary studies are the cultural differences Aboriginal students attending university face. Those who leave their communities for the city primarily to pursue further education

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[23] D. Bruce and A. Marlin, *Analyse documentaires des facteurs affectant la transition des études au marché du travail pour les jeunes autochtones*, Report presented to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2012, p. 55; see also SAMU, Ibid.
[24] C. Lévesque, Ibid.
[25] RCAAQ, 2015, Ibid., p. 19; SAMU, 2015, Ibid., p. 16.
[26] SAMU, Ibid., p. 5.
[27] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[28] RCAAQ, 2008a, Ibid., p. 43.
[29] P. Maxim and J. White, "School Completion and Workforce Transitions Among Urban Aboriginal Youth," in J. P. White, S. Wingert, D. Beavon and P. Maxim, (eds.), *Moving Forward, Making a Difference. Aboriginal Policy Research Volume III*, 2013, p. 35.
[30] Ibid, p. 43.

must not only adapt to the institutional setting of the university or to a style of teaching that may be vastly different from what they have known previously but also to a different culture. In addition to this unique dimension of the Aboriginal experience of the start of undergraduate studies, students must overcome obstacles such as a lack of funding, the challenge of balancing work, studies, and family responsibilities, moving, being far from their community of origin, isolation, racism and prejudice, a lack of motivation, low self-esteem, language and housing issues.[31]

The RCAAQ is lobbying for the establishment of financial support for business ventures and the implementation of programs that directly foster access to employment and job retention. It also stresses the urgent need to respond to Montréal Aboriginal youth's explicit request for a mentoring and support service,[32] and the importance of providing language upgrading resources.[33]

1.3.2. Results of Consultations on Education, Employment and Training

The Aboriginal participants consulted generally recognized the importance of education and especially of obtaining a high school diploma. They considered universities and colleges, particularly those with Aboriginal student associations, to be important relational environments for Aboriginal communities. They appreciated events being organized in the school system to promote Aboriginal cultures, but stressed the necessity of remedying shortcomings in the teaching of the history of Aboriginal peoples. Finally, they felt access to education could be made more flexible, by taking work experience into account for example. Participants saw unfamiliarity with or limited proficiency in official languages as an obstacle to the employment and socio-economic integration of Aboriginal people. Many stressed the lack of opportunities for learning and perfecting official languages, particularly when looking for work or after being hired. Obtaining stable employment was another key priority for the Aboriginal young people interviewed. Those who had taken part in social and professional integration programs considered such programs to be a considerable asset and felt they helped them organize their daily lives, access internships, and become better informed about their rights as citizens and workers. They mentioned the lack of work experience and job references as barriers to obtaining employment.

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[31] Service Premières Nations, *Résultats de l'analyse des besoins de formation chez les Premières Nations*, 2008, quoted in J.-L. Ratel, "Comment les universités peuvent-elles contribuer au mieux-être des Autochtones? Quelques cas d'étudiants et de diplômés universitaires autochtones au Québec," in D. Newhouse et al., *Well-Being in the Urban Aboriginal Community: Fostering Biimaadiziwin, A National Research Conference on Urban Aboriginal Peoples*, 2013, p. 206.
[32] Ibid., p. 19.
[33] RCAAQ, 2008a, Ibid.

The Inuit participants complained of a lack of information on schools and available training in Montréal. They appreciated the Ivirtivik employability initiative which helps participants achieve concrete results. They stated that their lack of knowledge about how to act and behave in hiring interviews was a major impediment to finding employment. Finally, Inuit participants felt employers should be better informed about their culture.

The community workers consulted felt it was vital to obtain greater cooperation from employers. They saw the fight against discrimination and prejudice in the job market as being key to improving the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal youth.

In short, the main programs and services Aboriginal participants and community workers deemed to be lacking or inadequate were:

- General support for employment integration;
- Access to employment, education and training for Aboriginal youth;
- The services of a career counsellor to facilitate access to training and development opportunities;
- Job search assistance and interview preparation;
- Entrepreneurial mentoring;
- Business start-up assistance and support;
- Internship and employability programs for women;
- Employer training on the realities, unique characteristics, and principal concerns of Inuit youth in Montréal.

1.3.3. Recommendations Concerning Education, Employment and Training

Recommendation 5: That the City of Montréal develop cooperation and consultation with Aboriginal student groups at Montréal universities and with organizations actively involved in promoting the socio-economic integration of Aboriginal youth in the Montréal area.

Recommendation 6: That the City of Montréal take an active role in increasing the employability of Aboriginal youth via its professional mentoring program, the Programme de parrainage professionnel.

Recommendation 7: That the City of Montréal maintain its efforts to increase the hiring of Aboriginal people by 50% in its next equal access employment action plan, placing particular emphasis on Aboriginal youth. To that end:

- That it improve the dissemination of information on available employment opportunities with the City of Montréal to Aboriginal organizations;
- That it provide sustained financial support to the MAMU! Aboriginal Employment Fair.

Recommendation 8: That the City of Montréal encourage its partners involved in developing youth entrepreneurship, such as PME MTL and the SAJE, (1) to increase promotion of their services with Aboriginal organizations and (2) to facilitate access for Aboriginal youth to the coaching, mentoring and networking services currently available.

Recommendation 9: That the City of Montréal support initiatives and programs that encourage Aboriginal youth to stay in school, especially through Montréal Hooked on School and agreements between the City and the government.

1.4. COMMUNITY BELONGING AND FIGHTING EXCLUSION

The section on *community belonging and fighting exclusion* addresses head-on the racism and discrimination that affects all aspects of Aboriginal young people's lives. It examines issues around general integration into society, while also exploring the creation of Aboriginal solidarity networks. The central themes are the development of a sense of community belonging and the importance of a strong, positive cultural identity.

1.4.1. Survey of the Literature

In addition to being an experience shared by the vast majority of urban Aboriginal people, racism and the dynamics of social exclusion pervade all the topics addressed here. Stereotypes and prejudice can impact all spheres of life, affecting house or job hunting, the possibility of acquiring good education, and comfort with health care, or simply interfering with participation in the public sphere. Most Aboriginal Montrealers agree that they are often treated in an unfair or negative way, and report having been insulted due to their origin, as reflected in the data presented in Figure 32.

Figure 32—Negative Behaviour: "I think others behave in an unfair/negative way toward Aboriginal people."
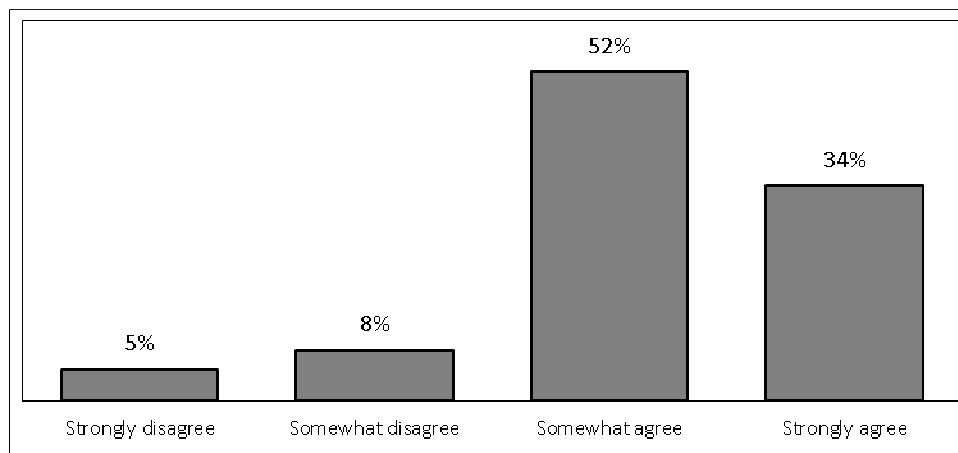
Source: Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. Montreal Report, Environics Institute, 2011.

A number of researchers argue that the problem of racism and discrimination is rooted in profound misunderstanding or sheer ignorance of contemporary Aboriginal culture and realities. There are numerous arguments for making a major concerted effort to educate the general population and deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes.[34]

From the Aboriginal population's perspective, solid Aboriginal institutions, a strong, positive cultural identity, and a sense of community can help mitigate or counteract the effects of racism and social exclusion in that the three elements operate hand in hand in establishing a system of solidarity to help protect or arm individuals against the aggression they may experience in their daily lives due to their cultural origin.[35]

The RCAAQ repeatedly calls for the creation of community centres and gathering places for Aboriginal people. The request is based on findings related to the isolation experienced by many Aboriginal people in Montréal, the current dispersion of services, as well as interviews conducted with Aboriginal people living in Montréal.

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[34] I. Comat, K. O'Bomsawin, É. Cloutier, C. Lévesque and D. Salée, "Comprendre pour mieux agir afin d'éliminer la discrimination et le racisme à l'endroit des Premiers Peuples," *Cahiers ODENA*, 2010:1. See also Conseil en éducation des Premières Nations (CEPN), *Vers une politique gouvernementale contre le racisme et la discrimination.*
[35] K. O'Bomsawin, *Le racisme à l'égard des Autochtones en milieu urbain au Québec: expériencs, enjeux et défis*, 2011, p. 137.

All agree that in order to counter racism and social exclusion, it would be vital to:

- establish culturally relevant, safe and holistic services;[36]
- take concrete action and develop targeted services in all municipal policies and services,[37] in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations;
- ensure the representativeness of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal youth in municipal government;[38]
- actively support Aboriginally-driven development initiatives;[39] and
- recognize and respect the diversity of populations in service creation.[40]

In other words, it is crucial that all municipal services take Aboriginal people into account and that the needs of this population be systematically considered in the design and implementation of such services, which would mean including Aboriginal representatives in all stages of political and administrative processes and favouring the hiring of Aboriginal employees within the municipal civil service.   The adoption of such a position would help not only to strengthen existing Aboriginal organizations that play a crucial role in the development of a sense of solidarity and community, but also to actively fight exclusion by removing barriers to services and citizen participation while also countering prejudices and stereotypes by promoting full participation by Aboriginal people in the city's social, political and economic life.

1.4.2. Results of Consultations on Community and Fighting Exclusion

Participants stressed the pervasiveness of ordinary racism experienced at school, on the job, in public places, and in interactions with their neighbours and landlords. They are frequently the object of racist comments and prejudice and consider that there is far less tolerance toward Aboriginal people than toward other cultural minorities. According to the participants, it is vital that the public be made more aware of Aboriginal realities. Ties between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people must be strengthened, primarily through increased opportunities for dialogue and cooperation. Greater awareness and increased opportunities for meeting and dialogue would foster better understanding of Aboriginal realties by all. The participants also felt that increased political presence at Aboriginal

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[36] Holistic services require "a genuine understanding on behalf of workers of the historical, legal, political, economic and social contexts that the Aboriginal people are faced with". This view of services is aimed at "building trust with the Aboriginal people while recognising the role of socioeconomic conditions, history and policy in terms of service delivery" and "is based on an integrated view of the person". RCAAQ, 2014a, Ibid., p. 12.
[37] Ibid., pp. 16-17.
[38] RCAAQ, 2008, Ibid., p. 14.
[39] RCAAQ, 2013a, Ibid., p. 30.
[40] R. C. Walker, "Improving the Interface between Urban Municipalities and Aboriginal Communities," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research, Suppl. Canadian Institute of Planners*, 2008, p. 26. See also RCAAQ, 2013a, Ibid., p. 31.

events would be helpful, and that it was important to find ways of generating greater Aboriginal participation in decision-making. They stressed the need for more systematic consultation of the various representatives of Aboriginal communities by political bodies. In their opinion, it would be beneficial to showcase positive Aboriginal role models who play an active role in their communities and in Québec society. Finally, some mentioned feeling uncomfortable going to municipal recreational facilities, especially sports facilities, which they felt were used only by non-Aboriginal people.

The Inuit participants suggested establishing a buddy service between Inuit Montréal residents and newly arrived Inuit. They considered it very important to encourage increased Aboriginal participation in public institutions and decision-making bodies. They too deplored the serious lack of inspiring Aboriginal—particularly Inuit—role models, and felt it would be helpful to showcase profiles of young Inuit with inpirational stories in order to debunk preconceived ideas and prejudices. Such profiles could take the form of Web videos, photo exhibits or articles. Finally, Inuit participants and community workers viewed sports and recreational activities as potential catalysts for youth socio-economic integration and combating racism.

In short, the main programs and services Aboriginal participants and community workers deemed to be lacking or inadequate were:

- Public awareness programs and workshops on racism toward Aboriginal people for professional communities in contact with the Aboriginal population (e.g. health and education);
- Training workshops and public awareness events on the realities of Aboriginal students in non-Aboriginal schools in order to deconstruct myths and prejudices;
- An Aboriginal—non-Aboriginal buddy program for specific activities;
- Cultural exchange programs in Aboriginal communities to foster ties with non-Aboriginal people;
- A buddy service between Inuit Montréal residents and newly arrived Inuit.
- Programs for Aboriginal people to teach traditional activities such as fishing, hunting, trapping;
- Information sessions on how institutions and the democratic system in Montréal work.

1.4.3. Recommendations Concerning Community and Fighting Exclusion

Recommendation 10: That the City of Montréal contribute to the development of Aboriginal youth leadership, in particular by showcasing inspirational Aboriginal youth as role models in its publications and during events it holds.

Recommendation 11: That the City of Montréal and its boroughs work to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth together in the interests of reconciliation through their current services as well as the development of new programs.

Recommendation 12: That the City of Montréal develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, public awareness campaigns aimed at combating exclusion and deconstructing prejudice toward Aboriginal youth.

1.5. ARTS, CULTURE AND CULTURAL REAPPROPRIATION

This section addresses both the safeguarding of traditional cultures (languages, artistic and traditional practices) and contemporary art production. The promotion of Aboriginal culture is a key tool in the fight against racism and discrimination and a mainstay of both the development of a strong positive cultural identity and the work of cultural reappropriation.

1.5.1. Survey of the Literature

The vast majority of researchers and organizations familiar with the situation of urban Aboriginal people agree that a strong, positive cultural identity plays a vital role in economic and social integration. Although Aboriginal people in Montréal seem confident about their ability to retain their cultural identity,[41] there are still serious concerns about this issue. Indeed, it seems that Aboriginal youth in Montréal have an ambiguous relationship with their cultural identity, a relationship characterized by pride in their language on the one hand and shame at being associated with a group with multiple social issues, especially drug and alcohol dependency, on the other.[42] The diversity of the Aboriginal population in terms of cultural origins, socio-economic status and identity affiliations complicates matters. Policies often fail to take into account the heterogeneity of the urban

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[41] Environics Institute, Ibid., p. 22.
[42] E. Fast, *Exploring the Role of Culture Among Urban Indigenous Youth in Montreal*, 2014, p. 165.

Aboriginal population.[43] Differences in the relations Aboriginal youth who were born and raised in the city and those who moved there later on in life have with their culture must also be taken into account.[44]

Proficiency in an Aboriginal language is an important factor in the development of a strong, positive cultural identity. However, not only are most Aboriginal languages endangered, but their transmission in urban settings is low and jeopardized. Of all Aboriginal languages spoken in rural and urban communities, only Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway are not endangered.[45] The very variety of Aboriginal languages spoken in the city puts their individual survival at risk, as the size of the population that uses each one of them is small and their transmission from one generation to the next is declining. The situation is all the more precarious in Montréal as the proportion of the city's population that is comprised of Aboriginal people is lower than elsewhere in Canada.

The development of a strong, positive cultural identity may also be tied to the promotion of Aboriginal traditions and culture, as well as of contemporary First Nations artists. There is widespread concern about the lack of visibility of Aboriginal cultures in Montréal[46] as well as the lack of cultural services and opportunities for Aboriginal young people to develop a connection to their culture.[47, 48] Montréal offers few spaces or opportunities for maintaining intergenerational relations, even though such spaces are vital to the transmission of languages and cultural practices.[49] Yet the presence of diverse First Nations' cultures and traditions could significantly enrich the cultural life of the city, contribute to the development of a sense of community, foster economic and social integration, and help deconstruct stereotypes and overcome prejudice.

With the urban Aboriginal population likely to grow in the coming years, municipalities would be wise to take advantage of all their Aboriginal communities have to offer culturally and economically by involving them in their urban and cultural planning processes. The promotion of Aboriginal heritage and traditions and showcasing of Aboriginal cultures in public art and monuments, for example,[50] could enhance the city's cultural and economic vitality. In other words, the possibilities are endless

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[43] E. J. Peters, "Emerging Themes in Academic Research in Urban Aboriginal Identities in Canada, 1996-2010," *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 2011:1:1, pp. 78-105.
[44] E. Fast, Ibid.
[45] M. J. Norris and L. Jantzen, "Aboriginal Languages in Canada's Urban Areas: Characteristics, Considerations and Implications," 2003, in D. Newhouse and E. J. Peters, *Not Strangers in These Parts: Urban Aboriginal People. Policy Research Initiative,* 2003, p. 95.
[46] RCAAQ, 2009b, Ibid., p. 39.
[47] RCAAQ, 2015, Ibid., p. 22.
[48] IVTF, 2010, Ibid., p. 6.
[49] SAMU, 2015, Ibid., p. 17.
[50] R. C. Walker, Ibid., p. 30.

and the time is ripe for establishing economic and cultural partnerships beneficial for everyone, especially in terms of tourism.

The work of cultural reappropriation that remains to be done may also be viewed as an integral part of the collective healing process and a tool for promoting and improving the health of urban Aboriginal populations. It involves developing a strong, positive cultural identity and improving self-esteem and psychosocial health in general, as well as improving relations between Aboriginal people and the general population. From this perspective, viewing art as a health promotion tool is consistent with the holistic view of human beings and well-being that predominates in the enduring worldviews of First Nations people.[51]

Aboriginal art and culture appear to be flourishing and the artistic community seems eager to actively promote this growth. Given how interlinked the cultural and artistic vitality and psychosocial health of a community are, it is important that support be provided for this movement which could benefit everyone, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike, if it grows.

1.5.2. Results of Consultations on the Arts, Culture and Cultural Reappropriation

Numerous participants expressed a desire to access Aboriginal language courses and participate in Aboriginal events. They stated that they took part in a large number of Aboriginal cultural activities (pow-wows, Montréal's First People's Festival, drumming workshops, etc.). For many, such gatherings are a means of reconnecting with their identity roots. Participants deplored the fact that Aboriginal events are not highly publicized and, in their opinion, do not receive sufficient funding. They also noted the considerable benefits of returning occasionally to Aboriginal reserves or communities, as doing so afforded them the opportunity to practise traditional activities and adopt a more active lifestyle. They also indicated keen interest in practising traditional activities such as fishing and hunting. They said they missed the connection to the elders of their communities and spoke of the importance of working with the elders to reappropriate their traditional cultures. They stressed their interest in traditional cuisine, crafts, language classes and the Aboriginal film industry. However, some who did not define themselves as traditional Aboriginal people had little interest in traditional events or ceremonies. Several participants mentioned the importance of showcasing more modern types of Aboriginal art, such as street arts and poetry slams. The participants also felt it was vital to promote young Aboriginal artists and heighten appreciation of, promote and increase the

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[51] Centre de collaboration nationale de la santé autochtone, *Art et santé: l'importance de l'art pour la santé et la guérison des peuples autochtones*, 2012.

visibility of the active Aboriginal community. In their opinion, it is crucial that cultural programming be provided that meets the needs of all Aboriginal communities.

Inuit participants expressed a desire to reappropriate traditional artistic techniques. Many wished to learn or improve their Inuktituk. The Inuk participant from Ivirtivik was very interested in the possibility of camping outside Montréal. Many Inuit youth practise art as a hobby, and several expressed the need to make their practice more professional, but stated that they did not know how to do it or who to ask. Inuit participants felt it would be good to set up an Inuit exhibition centre.

The community workers consulted had difficulty reaching Aboriginal youth, and were uncertain about where they could meet up with young people to promote their organizations' activities and encourage them to participate. The workers stated that there is a lack of resources in the Montréal area for cultural workshops and language classes. They see creativity and the arts as a good way of getting Aboriginal youth involved, and feel it is important to deconstruct the clichés and prejudices about the folkloric nature of Aboriginal art work. They believe that ongoing rather than event-driven visibility—primarily through permanent art and cultural facilities—would be a better means of showcasing Aboriginal cultures, and that showcasing Aboriginal cultures could have benefits for international tourism.

In short, the main programs and services Aboriginal participants and community workers deemed to be lacking or inadequate were:

- Aboriginal language classes;
- An inventory of individuals able to give traditional language classes and lead workshops in the traditional arts.
- An information and referral service for opportunities to practise traditional activities in Montréal or the surrounding area;
- Courses/workshops on techniques involved in traditional art and cultural traditions (e.g. stone carving);
- Inter-national Aboriginal centres, but also centres for each of the different nations given their very different realities.
- The creation of an intergenerational club to foster the transmission of Aboriginal culture;
- A financial assistance program for visits to communities of origin;
- Forest activities offered by organizations attended by Aboriginal people (such as the camping

trips offered by the Ka Mamukanit program);

- Web videos, television shows, series, and newspaper articles offering Aboriginal people heightened visibility in popular culture;
- Youth entrepreneurial projects centred around Aboriginal art (such as the TAKU project).

1.5.3. Recommendations Concerning the Arts, Culture and Cultural Reappropriation

Recommendation 13: That the City of Montréal foster an appreciation of and heightened visibility for Aboriginal art by providing sustained funding for arts creation organizations, presenters, and showcases cited as examples by the Aboriginal community.[52]

Recommendation 14: That the City of Montréal pledge to showcase art by young Aboriginal artists by exhibiting their work on its own premises and by establishing a public art competition for Aboriginal artists.

Recommendation 15: That the Conseil des arts de Montréal support the development of the artistic careers of young Aboriginal artists particularly through the organization Diversité artistique Montréal (DAM) to further develop its mandate with respect to young Aboriginal arts.

Recommendation 16: That the Accès culture network make a consolidated effort to provide greater support for Aboriginal artists by offering programs and creation and presentation venues, and by encouraging the creation and presentation of Aboriginal art particularly through a call for Aboriginal art projects.

1.6 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations for each of the sections, the CjM submits the following general recommendations:

Recommendation 17: That the City of Montréal accord special attention to Aboriginal youth in its action plans, strategic planning, and any other similar documents it produces, especially regarding the next Montréal Youth Strategy to replace the 2013-2017 strategy.

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[52] For example, Wapikoni mobile, Musique nomade, Ashukan Cultural Space, Sacred Fire Productions, Land InSights, and Ondinnok.

Recommendation 18: That the City of Montréal appoint an elected official to be responsible for Aboriginal issues. This person would focus primarily on strengthening relations between the City and the Aboriginal community, and would also be responsible for speaking publicly about issues concerning the community.

Recommendation 19: That the City of Montréal acquire more comprehensive data on Aboriginal youth residing in the city, particularly on their socio-economic integration, using gender-based analysis (GBA).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Arrival and Daily Life in Montréal

Recommendation 1: Recommendation 1: That the City of Montréal support social housing projects for Aboriginal youth and young Aboriginal families.

Recommendation 2: That the City of Montréal continue its efforts with various government bodies in order that funding programs for the development of social and community housing be extended in future budgets and dedicated funding allotted to Aboriginal people.

Health and Social Services

Recommendation 3: That the City of Montréal support the establishment of traditional and culturally sensitive health care and social services clinics for Aboriginal youth that are complementary to the provincial health and social services network, particularly by facilitating access to the infrastructures and premises necessary for such a project.

Recommendation 4: That the City of Montréal provide financial support for safe houses for Aboriginal women in need and shelters for homeless Aboriginal people in the Montréal area.

Education, Employment and Training

Recommendation 5: That the City of Montréal develop cooperation and consultation with Aboriginal student committees in Montréal universities and with organizations actively involved in promoting the socio-economic integration of Aboriginal youth in the Montréal area.

Recommendation 6: That the City of Montréal take an active role in increasing the employability of Aboriginal youth via its professional mentoring program, the Programme de parrainage professionnel.

Recommendation 7: That the City of Montréal maintain its efforts to increase the hiring of Aboriginal people by 50% in its next equal access employment action plan, placing particular emphasis on Aboriginal youth. To that end:

- That it improve the dissemination of information on available employment opportunities with the City of Montréal to Aboriginal organizations;
- That it provide sustained financial support to the MAMU! Aboriginal Employment Fair.

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Recommendation 9: That the City of Montréal support initiatives and programs that encourage Aboriginal youth to stay in school, especially through Montréal Hooked on School and agreements between the City and the government.

Community Belonging and Fighting Exclusion

Recommendation 10: That the City of Montréal contribute to the development of Aboriginal youth leadership, in particular by showcasing inspirational Aboriginal youth as role models in its publications and during events it holds.

Recommendation 11: That the City of Montréal and its boroughs work to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth together, in the interests of reconciliation, through its current services as well as by developing new programs.

Recommendation 12: That the City of Montréal develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal organizations, public awareness campaigns aimed at combating exclusion and deconstructing prejudice toward Aboriginal youth.

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General Recommendations

Recommendation 17: That the City of Montréal accord special attention to Aboriginal youth in its action plans, strategic planning, and any other similar documents it produces, especially regarding the next Montréal Youth Strategy to replace the 2013-2017 strategy.

Recommendation 18: That the City of Montréal appoint an elected official to be responsible for Aboriginal issues. This person would focus primarily on strengthening relations between the City and the Aboriginal community, and would also be responsible for speaking publicly about issues concerning the community.

Recommendation 19: That the City of Montréal acquire more comprehensive data on Aboriginal youth residing in the city, particularly on their socio-economic integration, using gender-based analysis (GBA).

CONCLUSION

While Aboriginal youth who move to Montréal for the short or long term have a multitude of needs and aspirations unique to each individual, all of them must overcome similar obstacles. In this policy paper, the CjM has presented a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring better consideration of the needs of Aboriginal youth and the implementation of measures to encourage their complete integration. We hope the City will accord special attention to the issue of Aboriginal youth in the preparation of its action plans, strategic planning, and any other similar documents it produces, especially the next Montréal Youth Strategy to succeed the 2013-2017 strategy.

In light of this study, it is crucial that Aboriginal youth be better represented at the City of Montréal. Not only must relations between the City and the Aboriginal community be strengthened, but Aboriginal youth must be better represented at the City so they are able to contribute to the vibrancy of Montréal. The City must also help promote new research and data collection initiatives so as to obtain a better picture of this rapidly growing population in order to ensure the well-being and fulfillment of these young people from diverse backgrounds, . A clear vision of the situation and context is vital to ensure partners are able to take concerted action and adequately develop appropriate programs and services.

As revealed by the picture in this policy paper and the consultations conducted for its preparation, for Aboriginal youth living in Montréal, the road to full social, political and economic integration is strewn with obstacles. However, as relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples are being redefined, there is every indication that the current context is a favourable one. Many Aboriginal youth who leave their communities to move to the city do so in the hope of a better life, and Montréal is ideally situated to support them in fulfilling their dreams.