

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

# Best practices regarding recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous labour in natural resources sectors



FNQLSDI  
FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN WRITTEN  
FOR ILLUSTRATION AND EXPLANATION  
PURPOSES ONLY

This material is protected by copyright and should therefore be treated in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act*, R.S.C., c. C-42 as well as other applicable federal laws, policies and regulations and relevant international agreements. These various rules require that the name of the author of the document concerned be mentioned and, in most cases, they prohibit the reproduction, transmission or other uses of this document without the prior written authorization of the copyright owner.

How to cite this report:

Caron, J. and Asselin, H. (2022). *Information Document: Best Practices regarding the Recruitment, Integration and Retention of Indigenous Labour in Natural Resources Sectors*. Wendake: First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI).

## Table of contents

The Center of Expertise on Impact and Benefit Agreements .....	ii
Foreword .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
The negotiation of Impact and benefit agreements by Indigenous nations.....	2
Indigenous women and employment.....	3
Best practices regarding recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous labour in natural resources sectors .....	4
1. Best practices regarding recruitment .....	4
1.1. Collaboration .....	4
1.2. Liaison, guidance and support .....	6
1.3. Preparation for employment .....	7
1.4. Introduction to the resource exploitation site .....	8
1.5. Selection process.....	9
2. Best practices regarding integration .....	11
2.1. Training on cultural diversity.....	11
2.2. Cultural valorization in the workplace .....	12
2.3. Respect for Indigenous family context and traditions.....	14
3. Best practices regarding retention.....	16
3.1. Career progression .....	16
3.2. Mentoring.....	17
3.3. Work climate .....	19
Bibliography .....	21
Appendix – Tables .....	23
Table I – Best practices regarding recruitment.....	23
Table II – Best practices regarding integration .....	25
Table III – Best practices regarding retention .....	26

## The Center of Expertise on Impact and Benefit Agreements

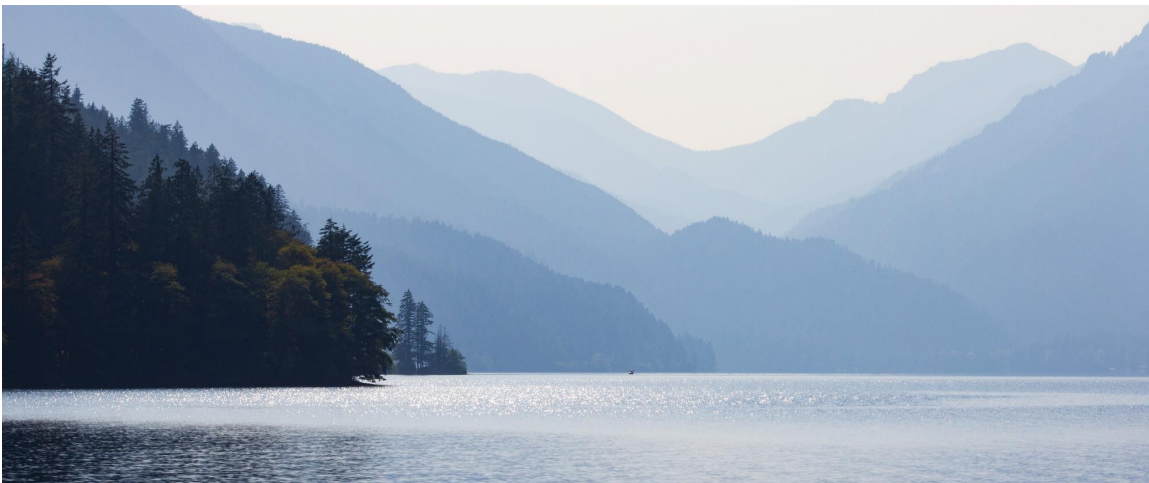
The Centre of Expertise on Impact and Benefit Agreements (**CEIBA**) is one of the departments of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (**FNQLSDI**).

It is responsible for providing materials, tools and resources to First Nations communities to develop their capacities and support them in the process of negotiating agreements related to the exploitation of natural resources on their ancestral territories.

The targeted sectors are mining, forestry and energy projects, as well as projects with impacts on natural resources such as construction and infrastructure projects.

The activities of the CEIBA are divided into five focus areas:

1. Toolkit development;
2. Project analysis;
3. Community preparation for negotiations;
4. Participation in negotiations and reaching agreements;
5. Agreement implementation and relationship maintenance.



## Foreword

Founded in 2000 by the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), the mission of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI) is to provide First Nations with a dynamic hub of services in support of their efforts for the health of the territory and its resources, for the development of sustainable communities and for the recognition of the rights of the First Nations. The FNQLSDI offers diversified services to the 43 First Nations in Quebec and Labrador based on the priorities and issues identified locally while respecting the needs of each First Nation.

A large number of natural resources exploitation projects are carried out on First Nations territories. These projects should only take place with the free, prior and informed consent of the First Nations concerned. In the event that a First Nation accepts that a project takes place on its territory, the negotiation of an agreement with the proponent can ensure that the exploitation of the resources generates benefits for the First Nation and that the negative repercussions of the projects are avoided or mitigated. The employment and training of Indigenous labour in the natural resources sector is an important part of negotiating these types of agreements with proponents.

**In order to assist the First Nations in the negotiation and implementation of agreements with the various proponents of natural resources exploitation projects, the FNQLSDI is providing them with this information document on best practices regarding the recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous labour in the natural resources sectors.**

The production of this information document was based mainly on the doctoral thesis of Joanie Caron, which was published in 2020 at the School of Indigenous Studies of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue under the supervision of Professor Hugo Asselin (Caron, 2020). This project was part of a larger scientific program focusing on mining, forestry and fisheries led by Professor Jean-Michel Beaudoin from the Département des sciences du bois et de la forêt at the Université Laval<sup>1</sup>. Selected publications from this research program were also consulted in the development of this information document.

---

<sup>1</sup>Although the hydroelectric power generation sector was not addressed by the research projects that served as the basis for this information document, an interview with Professor Émilie Deschênes (UQAT) revealed that the situation in this sector is broadly comparable to those of other natural resources sectors (see Deschênes (2022)).

## Introduction

Indigenous peoples in Canada<sup>2</sup> constitute an available, young, growing population and many of them wish to participate in the development of their territories, including projects for the exploitation of natural resources. And yet, Indigenous people continue to have an employment rate that is lower than that of non-Indigenous populations and continue to face many obstacles. **Agreements between natural resources project proponents and Indigenous populations, such as Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs), are one way to close the gap in employment rates with the general population in certain regions, in particular through the negotiation of priority hiring clauses.** Such clauses, inserted into agreements negotiated in good faith, have a marked effect on Indigenous employment. For example, **in the mining industry, the average percentage of Indigenous employees is significantly higher in projects located in territories under agreement (23%) than those without an agreement (< 1%).**

While the projects that have signed agreements apply many strategies to promote effective diversity management and meet the requirements of the agreements, few measures are applied by the proponents of non-signatory projects to foster the recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous employees. In addition, the inclusion of priority hiring clauses in agreements makes it possible to formalize this practice and legitimize it with the general population, thus reducing the risk of it being seen as unfair. In the forestry and fisheries sectors, companies controlled in whole or in part by Indigenous interests have a higher rate of Indigenous employees.

Liaison, work readiness, site readiness, mentoring, internal progression and language training programs are among the success factors that most foster the recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous labour. The organization of activities, the establishment of facilities that promote Indigenous cultures, the achievement of a critical mass of Indigenous employees and the quality of work relations are also important to allow for the optimal management of cultural diversity within companies. **This information document presents the essence of the best practices identified in the literature and with certain First Nations individuals in order to equip First Nations for their negotiations and the implementation of agreements with the various proponents of natural resources exploitation projects.** These best practices can be funded and implemented in different ways, which must be formally specified in the agreements, to the satisfaction of all parties involved. Different combinations of participation between government, industry and Indigenous bodies are possible.

The testimonials presented are all from interviews with 43 Indigenous people from Québec and Nunavut who work, have worked in the past, or would like to work in the mining industry, carried out as part of Joanie Caron's doctoral thesis.

---

<sup>2</sup> The "aboriginal peoples of Canada" are defined by section 35 (2) of the *Constitutional Act, 1982* as being the First Nations ("Indian"), Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. We have chosen to use the term "Indigenous" instead of "Aboriginal" throughout the text, excepted when referred to the legal terms "Aboriginal rights" or "Aboriginal title".

## The negotiation of Impact and benefit agreements by Indigenous nations

Land claims agreements between governments and Indigenous nations – also called modern treaties – were concluded in Northern Quebec, namely the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* (1975) and the *Northeastern Quebec Agreement* (1978). The Cree, Inuit and Naskapi are the three Indigenous nations that are signatories to these modern treaties, and are referred to as the “signatory nations”. These agreements stem from the comprehensive land claims process put in place in 1973 by the federal government in response to the Calder decision of the Supreme Court of Canada (*Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, 1973). Modern treaties establish the basis for the relationship that governments maintain with the signatory nations.

Modern treaties have consequences on the activities of enterprises since they specify the terms of participation of the Indigenous nations in the management of the territory and the exploitation of natural resources. Indigenous participation involves in particular the assessment of the impacts of projects on the environment and the social environment, which can lead to the signing of various types of private agreements, including impact and benefit agreements (IBAs), between proponents and Indigenous nations. Today, in parts of Canada where land claims agreements have been reached, including Nunavut, the signing of IBAs is legally required. In Quebec’s territory under agreement, although it is not mandatory, it is preferred by most enterprises in order to promote the social acceptability of projects. In contrast, the conclusion of IBAs between companies and non-signatory nations is rarer. Notwithstanding the legal status of the territory, the Government of Quebec says it is “in favour” of this type of agreement between Indigenous nations and private proponents (Government of Quebec, 2019).

**The federal and provincial governments have a constitutional duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous nations when projects threaten to infringe their Aboriginal rights, including the Aboriginal title. Governments can delegate certain procedural aspects of their duty to consult to proponents, but they cannot completely offload them. Indigenous nations can use the government consultation process as leverage with proponents to demand the negotiation of IBAs.**

Many Indigenous people maintain that signing an IBA should be mandatory for any natural resources exploitation project, regardless of whether it is taking place in signatory or non-signatory territory. Moreover, proponents should seek to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous nations and accept the possibility that they may oppose natural resources exploitation projects.

## Indigenous women and employment

Indigenous women are particularly under-represented in natural resources sectors and, more broadly, in non-traditional occupations. Several barriers can explain this under-representation of Indigenous women (FNQLEDC, 2019):

- Cultural mentalities (separation of professions for men and women);
- Lack of knowledge of jobs generally held by men;
- Difficulty reconciling family life and work;
- Lack of consideration for the particularities of women in the workplace (e.g., pregnancy);
- Racism and discrimination;
- Lack of self-esteem, shyness and more apprehension related to work.

The integration of Indigenous women into the natural resources sectors would have many benefits. Many employees highlighted the related training and employment opportunities and, consequently, an improvement in their quality of life. In the mining sector, employers have repeatedly said that Indigenous women bring superior quality of performance through their thoroughness and attention to detail and a job well done. The machineries operated by Indigenous women are apparently generally in better condition and require less repair. In the forestry sector, employers have also testified positively to the inclusion of Indigenous women in their work teams and have noted that they are among the best machine operators in the company.

In the Quebec energy sector, work by Émilie Deschênes carried out among Cree women revealed that they can derive many benefits from having a job:

- Get out of a difficult situation or improve their living conditions in general;
- Counter the challenges of single parenthood;
- Serve as a role model for their children, provide for their needs and offer them opportunities for further development, education and socialization;
- Support or follow their spouse;
- Get more freedom.

The Toolkit<sup>3</sup> from the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission (FNQLEDC) provides information promoting the recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous women, in particular in trades related to the natural resources sectors. The FNQLEDC's toolkit suggests in particular the establishment of employment equity programs aimed at increasing the proportion of Indigenous women and improving their employment conditions<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> FNQLEDC, *Indigenous Women and Non-Traditional Occupations*, Toolkit: [https://cdepnql.org/en/boite\\_a\\_ouils/indigenous-women-non-traditional-occupations/](https://cdepnql.org/en/boite_a_ouils/indigenous-women-non-traditional-occupations/).

<sup>4</sup> For more on this, see the guide developing a special program by the Canadian Human Rights Commission: [https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/fn\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/fn_handbook.pdf)



## Best practices regarding recruitment, integration and retention of Indigenous labour in natural resources sectors

### 1. Best practices regarding recruitment

Recruitment is the process of attracting, screening, selecting and hiring candidates who have the skills required for jobs within an organization. The factors favouring the recruitment of Indigenous labour are based on collaboration, the implementation of liaison, guidance and support, work readiness and site readiness programs, as well as culturally relevant selection processes.

#### 1.1. Collaboration

Collaboration between communities, businesses and government authorities is decisive, even conditional, in terms of ensuring the employability of First Nations people. In order to identify the priorities and actions to be taken to promote the increased participation of Indigenous employees and their professional well-being, periodic meetings involving representatives of each party are required, including young people, women and elders on the Indigenous side.



#### Testimonials from Indigenous people - Collaboration

*I wasn't aware of all these job possibilities. But when I went onsite, I saw those departments like HR, concentrator, the mill and everything. For me that was an eye-opener.*

*The other really good thing they did was having posters of (Indigenous) employees that work at the mine. Role models.*

*How do you attract them? I think one way is video! (...) Produce a video (showing) that both worlds can be present (simultaneously). That you don't have to necessarily give up your way of life (to enter the job market).*



## Testimonials from Indigenous people - Engagement

*We now have to find ways to work together and be partners with non-native (enterprises). It's the whole idea of sharing the land. And that's what our ancestors thought.*

*The (community) is very proactive. They run their own work readiness program (...) they take the initiative to get people trained.*

## Best practices

- Periodic meetings between representatives of First Nations, employers and relevant government authorities to identify actions to be taken to foster the increased participation of Indigenous employees and their professional well-being
- Creation of partnerships between local Indigenous employers and businesses
- Continuous participation of young people, women and elders in the reflections, decision-making and deployment related to measures
- Visits to schools and presentations and videos highlighting reconciliation between the workplace and Indigenous cultures
- Mine visits for students and other First Nations people
- Raising awareness regarding non-traditional professions among women and young people, in collaboration with training institutions<sup>5</sup>
- Promotion of “role models”: Indigenous employees who have achieved professional fulfilment
- Involvement of Indigenous employees who are already employed and integrating them into the promotion and recruitment plan
- Keeping of a register of job seekers: compilation by First Nations of data such as enrollment in or successful completion of training programs for employment and professional qualifications

<sup>5</sup> Toolkit of the FNQLEDC, *supra* note 3.

## 1.2. Liaison, guidance and support

Liaison programs aim to provide a direct link between businesses and Indigenous people seeking employment. This type of program also aims to promote natural resources sectors and employment opportunities within communities. This recruitment strategy is considered by Indigenous employees and employers to be the most relevant, particularly because of the human contact it offers. Essentially, a liaison officer provides support and personalized follow-up that continues even after hiring. To be effective, liaison measures must be combined with guidance and support services, so that applicants can engage in approaches that align with their interests.

The success of the liaison program largely depends on the liaison officer, since the confidence placed in them by the First Nation people is decisive in terms of whether or not they will be interested in the natural resources sectors and choose to avail themselves of their services.



### Testimonials from Indigenous people

*The liaison officer has a way of approaching people as well. I was impressed. Like he talks to everybody. At the store... At community gatherings he'll approach young people and just talk to them.*

*There is no feedback! I applied, over the past few years, to four places. They say, "apply through the Internet". (...). They say there are opportunities, we apply on their site, and then nothing happens.*

### Best practices

- Presence in the community of a liaison officer who acts as an intermediary between employers and the members of the First Nation
- Dissemination of information on employment opportunities on social media, community radio, postings in communities and at job fairs
- Guidance services within the community: one-on-one meetings and presentation of available positions and training and possible funding opportunities
- Support within the community for the enrolment processes for the required training, obtaining funding and applying for positions

### 1.3. Preparation for employment

Work readiness programs allow Indigenous job seekers to determine whether or not they are interested in the natural resources sector labour market and choose to become more familiar with it. The most comprehensive and effective programs consist of mandatory intensive one-to-two-week training to integrate the workforce, including a theoretical component and various individual and group workshops. The success of participants should only be conditional on their participation in the entire program, which provides access to the next step: a site readiness program (section 1.4).



#### Testimonials from Indigenous people

*I wish there was a preparation, kind of a pre-work training, to see if that's what you really want, if the mining industry is really for you, then don't waste your time.*

*They make you understand what you want to do with your life in one week. There are many topics that are looked at. It really helps people see what they want to do from there. (...). They got really close to (the instructor). She encourages them a lot.*

*People would like to take the work readiness program here but they don't understand English. (...) A literacy program would help.*

## Best practices

- Work readiness program offered within the communities
- Simultaneous participation of several Indigenous candidates in the work readiness program to promote motivation
- Selection of qualified trainers (understanding of cultural particularities; integration of various contributions; reception of questions and challenges; valorization of the development of one's own autonomy and skills and those of others, of engagement, of the well-being of the group, etc.)
- Comprehensive training:
  - Historical context
  - Self-esteem, well-being
  - Introduction to the industrial context
  - Presentation of employment opportunities
  - Compliance with occupational health and safety standards
  - Second language linked to the work context
  - Attendance, punctuality, honesty, efficiency
  - Awareness of issues related to alcohol and drugs
  - Job interview simulation and conditions for success
- Reasonable timeframes between the end of the work readiness program (section 1.3) and the start of the site readiness program (section 1.4)

### 1.4. Introduction to the resource exploitation site

A specific company-funded site readiness program is recommended in an Indigenous context. This type of program has several objectives, including professional integration, adaptation to the industrial context, understanding of company standards and policies and familiarization with the various possible trades with a view to career progression. Lasting one to two weeks, this integration program can include a variety of activities including presentations, online training modules, medical assessments, one-on-one interviews, provision of personal protective equipment and workplace visits, all of which can be followed by a trial period for potential trades. Upon completion of the program, participants who are ready to work should be added to a waiting list for a job interview.



## Testimonial from an Indigenous person

*They need (an Indigenous) person (to) welcome, to make feel comfortable... a person to whom (Indigenous employees) can go to if they have concerns.*

## Best practices

- Transport service from the place of residence to the place of work
- Designation of Indigenous employees responsible for reception
- Basic training (values, policies and security measures of the company, visit of facilities and offices, team introductions, presentation of the various professional training programs)
- Comprehensive site visit
- Matching with other Indigenous employees or a mentor
- Presentation of the various trades possible (with the possibility of trial periods)
- Event (e.g., lunch), involving company executives, to show their support and satisfaction regarding the arrival of new Indigenous employees
- Remuneration of candidates who complete the program

### 1.5. Selection process

Because collectivism is rooted in many Indigenous cultures, Indigenous applicants may be reluctant to showcase their individual qualities or accomplishments, as personal credit is often secondary to collective achievement. Since traditional values favour humility over self-promotion, conventional interviews should be avoided in the selection and recruitment of Indigenous employees. It is therefore preferable that a more informal interview style be applied.

## Best practices

---

- Assistance in preparing for interviews
- Situational and behavioural interviews allowing candidates to assert their interests and aptitudes, beyond diplomas
- Establishment of an inclusive selection committee that has received training on cultural diversity and includes at least one Indigenous member

## 2. Best practices regarding integration

The term “integration” is used in this information document to refer to the professional integration of employees into the work environment and must not be confused with the colonial integration of Indigenous people into mainstream society. Best practices for integrating Indigenous employees include training on cultural diversity, valuing Indigenous cultures in the workplace, and respecting the Indigenous family context and traditions.

### 2.1. Training on cultural diversity

Training on cultural diversity, with content developed in collaboration with the First Nations affected by the resource exploitation project, should be mandatory for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous managers, supervisors and employees of the company. These training courses aim to establish an understanding of cultural particularities, the obstacles faced by Indigenous Nations, the realities of other non-Indigenous cultural groups, as well as the skills necessary to communicate and collaborate effectively in the workplace.



#### Testimonial from an Indigenous person

*To integrate people once they are recruited, is to offer them a cross-cultural training. So that they can understand the [non-Indigenous] workstyle and to build that relationship. Same thing for [non-Indigenous workers], they need to understand (Indigenous colleagues). It's about sharing culture, values and a history, and to build the relationships and a better workforce.*

#### Best practices

- Targeted information, awareness and training intended for managers, supervisors and employees – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike – on the specific realities of different cultural groups
- Content developed in collaboration with the First Nations affected by the project
- Training offered within the communities and in the workplace



## 2.2. Cultural valorization in the workplace

The valorization of Indigenous cultures in the workplace allows for the establishment of quality relationships between Indigenous employees and non-Indigenous employers and employees and, consequently, a better work climate through cultural safety.



### Testimonial from an Indigenous person

*I think the companies are pretty sensitive to (Indigenous) values. (A company) had a cultural center (...). For me, I think a tipi is a place to share culture to the workers, for the (non-Indigenous) too. So that they can come in and have some traditional food once a week and stuff like that.*

## Best practices

- Organization of cultural activities (in general and to mark certain significant events such as National Indigenous Peoples Day)
- Establishment of a cultural centre on the project site
- Indigenous art and decorations in common areas
- Facilities for the storage and preparation of traditional food
- Evaluation of cultural safety measures by Indigenous employees
- Support for the learning of second languages and the promotion of Indigenous languages
  - Hiring of bilingual supervisors
  - Access to a translation service
  - Creation of glossaries of common terms
  - Provision of computerized language learning programs
  - In-house second language teaching sessions
  - Encouraging employees to speak to different cultural groups in their respective languages
- Deployment of concrete actions in connection with respect for the territory
  - Environmental accreditations (e.g., FSC, SFI, ECOLOGO, IRMA)<sup>6</sup>
  - Optimal management of environmental impacts
  - Restoration of exploitation sites
  - Recycling
  - Implementation of policies aimed at the appropriate use of resources

---

<sup>6</sup> Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): <https://fsc.org/en>  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI): <https://sfi-quebec.org>  
UL Canada ECOLOGO Certification for mineral exploration: <https://canada.ul.com/ulcprograms/explore/>;  
Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA): <https://responsiblemining.net>

### 2.3. Respect for Indigenous family context and traditions

Efforts to reconcile work and private life through respect for traditions and the family context are key factors that promote not only the integration, but also the inclusion and retention of Indigenous labour. Many Indigenous cultures consider family ties in a wider context to be important and make it possible to benefit from a broad social network, support in times of crisis, different resources, knowledge and a stronger cultural identity. Consequently, absences related to family obligations in the wider context must be authorized by the employer.

The regular practice of cultural activities, including hunting and fishing, helps to maintain knowledge of and relationships with the territory. Reduced use of the territory by Indigenous employees can undermine the assertion of their identity and, consequently, reduce well-being.



#### Testimonials from Indigenous people

*You don't want to sacrifice your way of life for a mining company. It's good that they have time off during the Goose break, so people can go out.*

*They used to do family visits. Let's say during Christmas time. My husband would take me to the mining company to see how it is over there. It could happen more often.*

*When there is a death in the family, they ask us to list members that are part of the immediate family. But for us, family is like a big thing! Your aunt, your uncle... we still feel close to them.*

## Best practices

---

- Facilities to communicate with family and First Nation members
- Awareness and support for leave planning
- Leave for community and family events
- Leave for family responsibilities in the context of extended family (e.g., bereavement leave)
- Visits to the mining site for the families of Indigenous employees
- Leave for hunting and fishing (e.g., Moose Break, Goose Break, cultural weeks)
- Provision of a transport service from home to work

### 3. Best practices regarding retention

Retention of the workforce depends on the company's ability to provide working conditions that are conducive to retaining staff and securing their long-term commitment to the organization. In an Indigenous context, the key workforce retention factors are based in particular on career progression, mentoring and measures promoting a good work climate.

#### 3.1. Career progression

Career progression programs aim to promote the retention of the Indigenous workforce by developing skills and supporting employees in achieving their career goals. These programs are particularly important in an Indigenous context, where many employees are hired for entry-level positions and many steps may be necessary before they can achieve the desired level of employment. The absence of such a program, combined with the assignment of monotonous, redundant or unrewarding tasks, is likely to lead to aversion to work as well as a higher rate of turnover.



#### Testimonials from Indigenous people

*They have a list of jobs (...), but if you look at the requirements, it says college degree, university. So this is where people have less chances of getting in. But they can work as kitchen help or do janitorial work. (...) But it's not... how could I say it... rewarding I guess.*

*There was also evaluations that were carried out. Your supervisor would come in and say "ok, you were really good at this, but lacking in certain areas, we'll work on your weaknesses together and we'll make sure that you perform".*

*I just want to feel like I'm somebody in the company. That people see what I'm doing. That I can participate in decision-making (...), in the development of the company ... I would need stimulating tasks, and new challenges.*

## Best practices

- Identification of the professional aspirations of Indigenous employees
- Offering a variety of tasks and new challenges
- Pathway to reaching desired positions, including supervisory and management positions
- Possibility of following internal and external training
  - Participation of Indigenous employees and integration of the knowledge of elders in the development and implementation of training
  - Teaching style more focused on observation, practice and social interaction rather than theory
- Follow-up, encouragement, support, periodic assessment of career advancement and feedback
- Internal promotion regarding the progression of Indigenous employees
- Collaboration with educational institutions for the recognition of skills and training acquired within companies

### 3.2. Mentoring

Designed to support employees in the performance of their duties by offering them the support of a more experienced employee, mentoring improves the climate and overall performance at work. In some cases, the support provided by mentors goes beyond the confines of the organizational context and involves several other aspects, including family and community relationships. In some projects, mentoring has been found to be essential for Indigenous people in terms of developing self-esteem, motivation and leadership skills, while also reducing absenteeism and turnover.



## Testimonial from an Indigenous person

*We need to have programs where new (Indigenous) employees are trained through mentorship by the older workers that have a lot of experience. (...) If you start to see more and more young (Indigenous people) working there, then others will think: “hey it’s working! Maybe I should get into that”.*

## Best practices

- Establishment of a mentoring system: formal (planned), informal (on request) or in groups (bringing together several beneficiary employees)
- Roles and functions of the mentor: orientation, integration, support, motivation, encouragement, advice, accompaniment, knowledge transfer, training, facilitation, conflict resolution
- Hiring of mentors who are Indigenous or who are sensitive to the historical and cultural context, trained specifically in cultural diversity and who identify with the same gender as those being trained

### 3.3. Work climate

The quality of relationships between colleagues is considered necessary for the job satisfaction of Indigenous employees, especially since racist and discriminatory behaviour presents one of the most significant barriers to employment facing the Indigenous workforce. Although the integration measures described above, including training on cultural diversity and cultural valorization, contribute to this, other measures also promote the quality of the work climate.



#### Testimonials from Indigenous people – Conflict resolution

*I think they need to address conflicts right away. Like when the first incident occurs. You don't wait until it gets worst! And I think both employees need to be met. Maybe have a mediator intervene.*

*I think that Indigenous people prefer to confide in Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people in non-Indigenous people. Then, the two supervisors can work together to resolve the conflict.*



#### Testimonial from an Indigenous person – Relations with supervisors

*To have someone who gives us a reason to stay there, someone with whom we have a good working relationship who encourages us to stay (...). It is motivating to have someone who sees the positive, who encourages us and who is able to point out the positives.*



## Best practices

- Establishment of work teams made up of several Indigenous employees (critical mass effect<sup>7</sup>)
- Selection of qualified supervisors (understanding of cultural particularities; integration of various contributions; reception of questions and challenges; valorization of the development of the autonomy and skills of oneself and others, of commitment, of the well-being of the group , etc.)
- Organization of social and cultural activities involving all employees outside working hours in the communities and in workplaces
- Implementation of policies to ensure ethics and organizational inclusion and to counter racism, harassment and discrimination
- Conflict resolution mechanisms developed in collaboration with First Nations
- Meetings where team members are encouraged to express themselves on what they are experiencing
- Possibility of reporting conflicts to a manager who is also Indigenous
- Establishment of a multicultural committee with the mission of addressing issues relating to the work climate and finding solutions
- Creation of private groups on social media for work teams for information sharing and encouragement
- Offer of an employee assistance program (EAP) (confidential counselling service to help employees with personal difficulties that affect their performance)
- Annual survey on the level of commitment and sense of belonging with a view to continuous improvement

---

<sup>7</sup> The critical mass effect manifests itself when reaching a threshold of Indigenous employees promotes a good work climate by increasing intercultural contacts, reducing the propensity for prejudice, breaking down feelings of isolation and increasing motivation and well-being at work. In other words, the higher the percentage of Indigenous labour in a work group, the better the work climate.

## Bibliography

- Calder et al. v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, [1973] RSC 313, 1973 CanLII 4 (CSC).
- Caron, J. (2020). *Facteurs de succès liés au recrutement, à l'intégration et à la rétention des employés autochtones au sein de l'industrie minière*. Doctoral thesis in Indigenous studies. Rouyn-Noranda: Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. <https://depositum.uqat.ca/id/eprint/1045/>
- Caron, J., Asselin H., & Beaudoin, J.-M. (2018). *Attitudes et comportements des employeurs à l'égard de la main-d'œuvre autochtone dans le secteur minier*. Report submitted to the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and to the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS).
- Caron, J., Asselin, H., Beaudoin, J.-M., & Muresanu, D. (2019a). Promoting perceived insider status of Indigenous employees: a review within the psychological contract framework. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 5(4), 609-638.
- Caron, J., Asselin, H., & Beaudoin, J.-M. (2019b). Attitudes and behaviors of mining sector employers towards the Indigenous workforce. *Resources Policy*, 61, 108-117.
- Caron, J., Asselin, H., & Beaudoin, J.-M. (2020). Perception of Indigenous employees towards the strategies deployed by mining employers to promote their recruitment, integration and retention. *Resources Policy*, 69, 101793.
- Caron, J. & Asselin H. (2020). Evaluation of Indigenous employability programs in the Canadian mining industry. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 7(4), 1424-1437.
- Deschênes, É. (2022). *L'insertion sociale et professionnelle des travailleurs autochtones : des pistes claires pour contribuer concrètement et efficacement*. Montréal: Éditions JFD.
- FNQLEDC. (2019). *Indigenous Women and Non-Traditional Occupations*. Kahnawake: First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission. [https://cdepnql.org/en/boite\\_a\\_outils/indigenous-women-non-traditional-occupations/](https://cdepnql.org/en/boite_a_outils/indigenous-women-non-traditional-occupations/)
- Government of Quebec. (2019). *Aboriginal Community Consultation Policy Specific to the Mining Sector*. Quebec: Éditeur officiel du Québec. [https://mern.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/PO-consultation-mines\\_MERN-ANG.pdf](https://mern.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/PO-consultation-mines_MERN-ANG.pdf)
- Proulx, G., Beaudoin, J.-M., Asselin, H., Théberge, D., St-Jean, É., Bouthillier, L., Ben Mansour, J. & B. Fabi. (2018). *Regards sur les attitudes et comportements des employeurs à l'égard de la diversité de la main-d'œuvre autochtone (Secteur forestier)*. Report submitted to the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and to the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS).
- Proulx, G., Beaudoin, J. M., Asselin, H., Bouthillier, L., & Théberge, D. (2020). Untapped potential? Attitudes and behaviours of forestry employers toward the Indigenous workforce in Quebec, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*, 50(4), 413-421.

- Théberge, D., Beaudoin, J-M, Asselin, H., Ben Mansour, J., Bouthillier, L., St-Jean, É., & Fabi, B. (2019). *Regards sur les attitudes et comportements des employeurs à l'égard de la diversité de la main-d'œuvre autochtone (rapport global)*. Report submitted to the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and to the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS).
- Vallières, P., Beaudoin, J-M., Asselin, H. (2019). *Attitudes et comportements des employeurs à l'égard de la main-d'oeuvre autochtone dans le secteur des pêches*. Report submitted to the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) and to the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS).
- Vallières, P., Beaudoin, J.-M., Asselin, H. & Théberge, D. (2021). Rareté de main-d'œuvre : comment faire bonne pêche dans le bassin de travailleurs autochtones? In Gagnon, M. & Beaudry, C. (dir.) *Diversité en milieu de travail. De l'exclusion à l'inclusion*. Montréal: Éditions JFD.

## Appendix – Tables

**Table I – Best practices regarding recruitment**

<b>Collaboration</b>
Periodic meetings between representatives of First Nations, employers and relevant government authorities to identify actions to be taken to promote the increased participation of Indigenous employees and their professional well-being
Creation of partnerships between local Indigenous businesses and employers
Continuous participation of young people, women and elders in the reflections, decision-making and deployment of measures
School visits, presentations and videos highlighting reconciliation between the workplace and Indigenous cultures
Mine tours for students and other First Nations people
Raising of awareness regarding non-traditional professions among women and young people, in collaboration with training institutions
Promotion of “role models”: Indigenous employees who have successfully achieved professional fulfilment
Involve Indigenous employees who are already employed and integrate them into the promotion and recruitment plan
Keeping a register of job seekers: compilation by First Nations of data such as enrollment or success in job preparation training programs and professional qualifications
<b>Liaison, orientation and support</b>
Presence in the community of a liaison officer, acting as an intermediary between employers and members of the First Nation
Dissemination of information on employment opportunities through social media, community radio, postings in the communities and at job fairs
Guidance services within the community: one-on-one meetings and provision of information regarding available positions and training and possible funding opportunities
Support within the community in enrolling for required training, obtaining funding and applying for positions
<b>Preparation for employment</b>
Work readiness program offered within the communities
Simultaneous participation of several Indigenous candidates in the work readiness program to promote motivation
Selection of qualified trainers (understanding of cultural particularities; integration of various contributions; reception of questions and challenges; valorization of the development of autonomy and skills of oneself and others, of commitment, of the well-being of the group, etc.)
Comprehensive training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Historical context</li> <li>○ Self-esteem, well-being</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction to the industrial context</li> <li>○ Presentation of employment opportunities</li> <li>○ Compliance with occupational health and safety standards</li> <li>○ Second language linked to the work context</li> <li>○ Attendance, punctuality, honesty, efficiency</li> <li>○ Awareness of issues related to alcohol and drugs</li> <li>○ Job interview simulation and conditions for success</li> </ul>
Reasonable timeframes between the end of the work readiness program and the start of the site readiness program
<b>Site readiness</b>
Transportation service from the place of residence to the place of work
Designation of Indigenous employees responsible for reception
Basic training (values, policies and security measures of the company, tours of facilities and offices, team introductions, presentation of the various development programs)
Comprehensive site visit
Pairing with other Indigenous employees or with a mentor
Presentation of the various trades possible (with trial opportunities)
Event (such as lunch) involving company executives to show their support and satisfaction regarding the arrival of new Indigenous employees
Remuneration for candidates who complete the program
<b>Selection process</b>
Assistance in preparing for interviews
Situational and behavioural interviews allowing candidates to assert their interests and aptitudes, beyond diplomas
Establishment of an inclusive selection committee having received training on cultural diversity, and which includes at least one Indigenous member

**Table II – Best practices regarding integration**

<b>Cultural diversity</b>
Targeted information, awareness and training for managers, supervisors and employees, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, on the specific realities of different cultural groups
Content developed in collaboration with the First Nations affected by the project
Training offered within the communities and in the workplace
<b>Cultural valorization in the workplace</b>
Organization of cultural activities (in general and to mark certain significant events such as National Indigenous Peoples Day)
Establishment of a cultural centre on the project site
Indigenous art and decorations in common areas
Facilities for the storage and preparation of traditional food
Assessment of cultural security measures by Indigenous employees
Support for second language learning and promotion of Indigenous languages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hiring of bilingual supervisors</li> <li>○ Access to a translation service</li> <li>○ Creation of lexicons of common terms</li> <li>○ Provision of computerized language learning programs</li> <li>○ In-house second language teaching sessions</li> <li>○ Encouraging employees to speak to different cultural groups in their respective languages</li> </ul>
Deployment of concrete actions in connection with respect for the territory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental accreditations (e.g., FSC, ECOLOGO, IRMA)</li> <li>○ Optimal management of environmental impacts</li> <li>○ Restoration of operating sites</li> <li>○ Recycling</li> <li>○ Implementation of policies aimed at the appropriate use of resources</li> </ul>
<b>Respect for family context and traditions</b>
Facilities for communicating with First Nations family and community members
Awareness and support for leave planning
Leave for community and family events
Leave for family responsibilities in the context of an extended family (e.g., bereavement leave)
Visits to the mine site for the families of Indigenous employees
Leave for hunting and fishing (e.g., Moose Break, Goose Break, cultural weeks)
Provision of a transport service from home to work

**Table III – Best practices regarding retention**

<b>Career progression</b>
Identification of the professional aspirations of Indigenous employees
Offering a variety of tasks and new challenges
Pathway to reaching coveted positions, including supervisory and management positions
Possibility of following internal and external training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participation of Indigenous employees and integration of the knowledge of elders in the development and implementation of training</li> <li>○ Teaching style more focused on observation, practice and social interaction rather than theory</li> </ul>
Follow-up, encouragement, support, periodic assessment of career advancement and feedback
Internal promotion of the progression of Indigenous employees
Collaboration with educational institutions for the recognition of skills and training acquired within companies
<b>Mentoring</b>
Establishment of a mentoring system: formal (planned), informal (on request) or in groups (bringing together several beneficiary employees)
Roles and functions of the mentor: reception, integration, support, motivation, encouragement, advice, accompaniment, knowledge transfer, training, facilitation, conflict resolution
Hiring of mentors who are Indigenous or sensitive to the historical and cultural context, trained specifically in cultural diversity and who identify with the same gender as the trainees
<b>Work climate</b>
Establishment of work teams made up of several Indigenous employees (critical mass effect)
Selection of qualified supervisors (understanding of cultural particularities; integration of various contributions; reception of questions and challenges; valorization of the development of autonomy and skills of oneself and others, of commitment, of the well-being of the group, etc.)
Organization of social and cultural activities involving all employees outside of working hours, in the communities and in the workplace
Implementation of policies to ensure ethics and organizational inclusion and to counter racism, harassment and discrimination
Conflict resolution mechanism developed in collaboration with the First Nation
Meetings where team members are invited to express themselves on what they are experiencing
Possibility of reporting conflicts to a manager who is also Indigenous
Establishment of a multicultural committee whose mission is to address issues relating to the work climate and find solutions
Creation of private groups on social media for work teams for information sharing and encouragement
Offer of an employee assistance program (EAP)
Annual survey on the level of commitment and sense of belonging with a view to continuous improvement



📍 174, rue Chef-Aimé-Romain  
Wendake (Québec)  
GOA 4V0

☎ 418 843-9999

📠 418 843-3625

✉ info@iddpnql.ca

🌐 www.iddpnql.ca



**FNQLSDI**  
FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE