First Nations of Quebec and Labrador
Sustainable Development Institute

Annual Report

2023-2024

Photo credit : Isaac Trapper

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Photo credit : Theresa McLoed Loon

Message from the Director

It is with great pride that I present the 2023–2024 Annual Report of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI).

This year has been marked by both significant challenges and remarkable achievements. All attest to our strength, expertise and commitment to the sustainable development of our communities.

This past year was a period of transformation and growth for the FNQLSDI. We launched many key initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of First Nations communities to manage their land and natural resources sustainably. Among our achievements, I'd like to highlight the nearly $6 million in funding secured to strengthen First Nations leadership in the climate transition, the guide on Aboriginal-Led Protected Areas submitted to the Quebec government to help First Nations establish protected areas aligned with their visions, and the steps taken to ensure that Canadian laws comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In 2023, we clarified and updated our mission, vision, values, and brand image. We now have a new logo, a streamlined image, and a new website where we present sustainable development initiatives led by First Nations communities. The work involved an organization-wide strategic reflection process that led us to reposition our services and renew our commitment to helping First Nations realize their vision of sustainable development.

That commitment saw us increase our support for First Nations Chiefs and the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador on key issues such as energy, natural resources, and the protection of biodiversity, including woodland caribou.

We have many exciting projects on the go and are determined to pursue them in the coming year with the same energy and commitment, as per our mission. I invite you to read through this annual report to find out more about what we've accomplished.

In conclusion, I'd like to express my deep gratitude to everyone who played a role in our success this year. I sincerely believe that by working together, we can build a prosperous and sustainable future for First Nations today and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Wliwni, Meegwetch, Mikwetc, Miikwehch, Tshinashkumitin, Niá:wen, Wela'lin, Chiniskomiitin, Tiawenhk, Woliwon, Thank you!

Our Mission, Vision and Values

Our mission

Work with First Nations to achieve their vision for sustainable development.

We support First Nations in their sustainable development efforts to have healthy territories and resources and sustainable communities; to fully exercise their rights, responsibilities, and jurisdiction; and to promote their cultures and languages.

Our vision

Increase the number of sustainable development initiatives led by First Nations in Quebec and Labrador.

Our goal: to ensure that First Nations in Quebec and Labrador have the necessary resources to exercise their self-determination and achieve their visions for sustainable development.

Photo credit : Theresa McLoed Loon

Photo credit : Theresa McLoed Loon

Our values: The fundamental principles that guide our actions.

Respect

We respect the land, resources, communities, and our partners. We respect their knowledge and cultures and recognize everything they contribute to our actions. We are mindful of the impact we have on the land, on individuals, and on the next seven generations.

Collaboration

We work with and for First Nations. Our decisions and actions are rooted in our willingness to come together and strive toward a common goal. We build strong connections and relationships with every individual, both inside and outside our communities, to move forward together on sustainable development initiatives.

Commitment

We make commitments and work hard to fulfill them, with due regard for our relationships. We take our promises seriously and dedicate all our resources and tools to meeting the needs of First Nations.

Unity

We bring stakeholders together to support the sustainable development actions of First Nations. We create spaces where they can join forces and achieve a common goal. We help mobilize Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and know-how.

The Four Main Pillars of Sustainable Development that Guide Our Work

Photo credit : JohnnyBoivin

Environmental

Maintaining ecosystem integrity

Legal

Respecting the rights of First Nations

Social

Preserving and further developing a social foundation and a healthy society that fights for its culture and way of life

Economic

Driving economic activity and growth without harming the environment

Our Areas of Focus

Defending the rights of First Nations

Respect for the rights of First Nations is vital to the sustainable development of land and resources.

We work with First Nations communities and organizations to have their Aboriginal and treaty rights are respected. We seek to amplify the voices of First Nations and make sure that they are heard and honoured.

We work together to ensure that the principle of free, prior and informed consent of First Nations is applied to decision-making on any project affecting their land or rights.

Consulting

We provide First Nations with personalized support for their sustainable development initiatives.

We serve 43 First Nations communities in Quebec and Labrador and are well aware that each has its own specific issues and priorities. We provide personalized support and custom consulting services for their sustainable development initiatives.

We collaborate with First Nations to plan, design and implement their projects and secure the funding. We bring our team’s professional knowledge and experience to bear on First Nations priorities and work together to create meaningful and lasting change.

Protecting land and resources

Protecting land and resources is key to sustainable development and First Nations identity.

First Nations are guardians of the land and have been protecting it since time immemorial. By continuing to do so today, they honour their cultural responsibility and preserve their identities, traditional activities, and ways of life.

We support First Nations in asserting their leadership and in working to protect, conserve, and sustainably manage their land and resources.

Providing spaces for sharing between First Nations

The act of sharing knowledge and experience is central to First Nations cultures.

Getting together, sharing experiences and knowledge, and making decisions collectively are a core part of First Nations identity. We make sure there are spaces that foster sharing and action by First Nations, for First Nations.

This provides opportunities to build ties and learn from the experiences of others in navigating sustainable development. They are places where local knowledge and experience are leveraged by people working together toward a common goal.

Looking to the Future

New visual identity and website: Better serving First Nations

The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI) launched a new visual identity and website in 2023—a major accomplishment for the organization. The new image is the result of an in-depth strategic reflection process. It reflects our updated mission and renewed commitment to First Nations. We would like to thank all those who were involved in the process.

The website

The modernized website now provides simplified access to essential resources, making it easier to implement sustainable projects in different communities. The website also has new sections for showcasing First Nations achievements.

Going deep into the heart of the land through First Nations art and photography

In redesigning our brand image and website, it was important for us to showcase Indigenous artistic talent. We are honoured to collaborate with photographers from different Nations and proudly display their art.

Their photographs open up a window onto their lands through contemplative shots of plants and animals and images that proudly represent their cultures. We encourage you to learn more about these artists and immerse yourself in their worlds by viewing their portfolios.

Isaac Trapper, Johnny Boivin,
Theresa MacLeod Loon,
Annie Hervieux

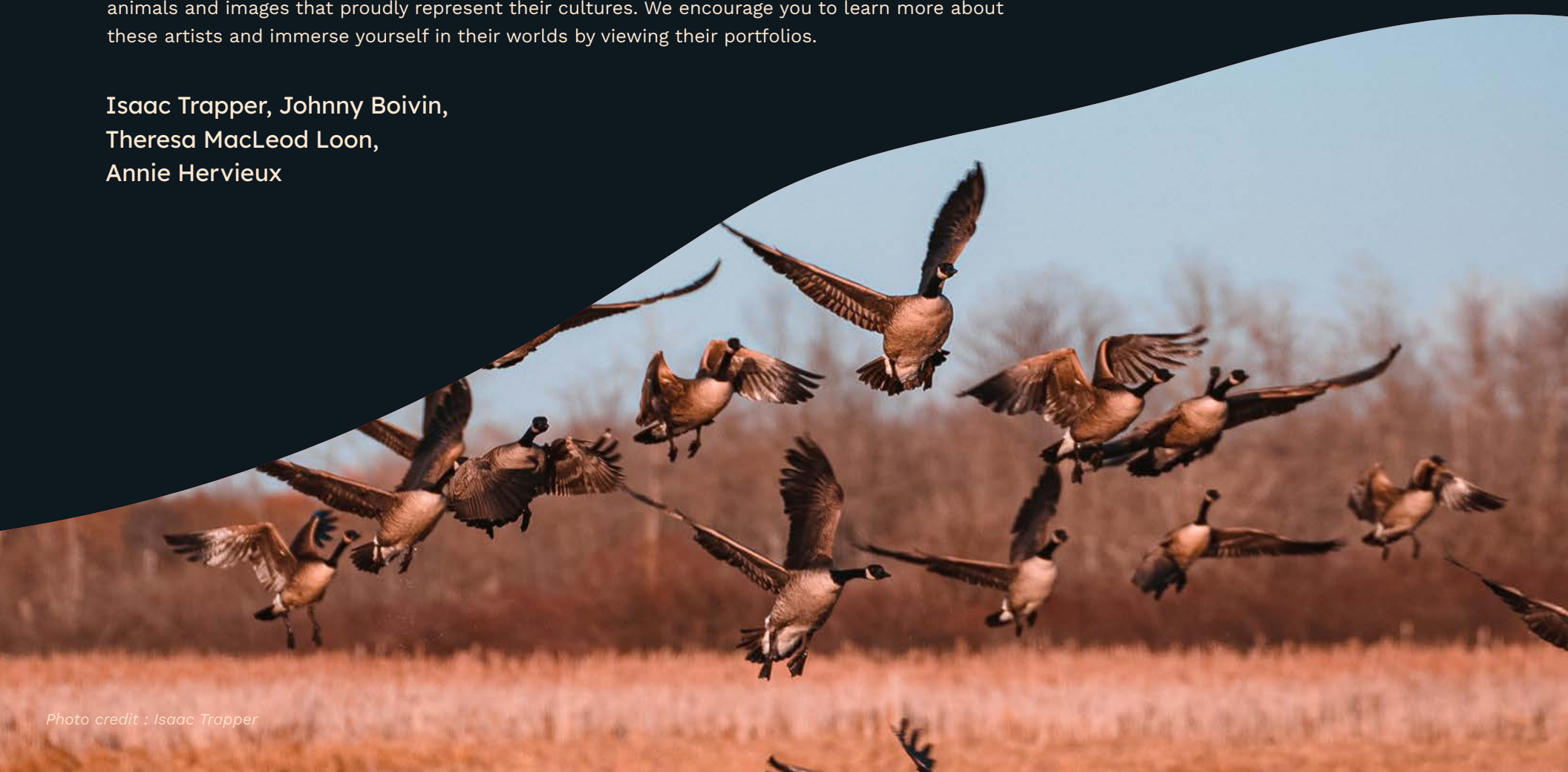
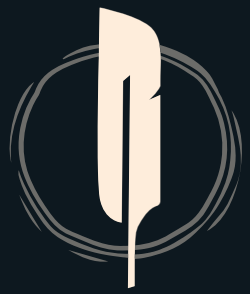


Photo credit : Isaac Trapper

The logo

The new logo symbolizes the rich history of First Nations while also conveying a vision that is turned to the future.



The feather

The feather is a strong Indigenous symbol of courage, strength and respect used in many First Nations cultures.

In our logo, the feather asserts our Indigenous identity and illustrates our commitment and respect for different cultures, while also representing nature and wildlife.

Tree rings

The tree rings in our logo represent a connection to the land and evoke the unbreakable bond between past and future generations.

Everything we do is rooted in the knowledge and traditions of past generations and done with thoughtful consideration for the impact on the land and future generations.

Rippling water and beating drum

The same visual element represents both rippling water and beating drum. The rippling water reminds us that our actions have repercussions on the land and on living things. The beating drum evokes the unifying power of the drum and the inseparability of land and culture for First Nations.

We are recognized for our ability to bring different players together and help them join forces to achieve the common goal of supporting First Nation sustainable development actions.

The circle

The circle is a powerful symbol. It has no beginning and no end. It represents the cycles of life and the seasons, as well as notions of equity and interconnectedness between people, animals, and the land.

We recognize this interconnectedness and the fact that everyone has a role to play in achieving sustainable development goals. That’s why we do everything we do in collaboration with all stakeholders and with respect for different knowledge and cultures.

Defending the Rights of First Nations

Consultation

Summary	13 provincial consultations	12 analyses	2 statements of principles	1 brief

Over the past year, we produced a number of analyses and reports tailored to the needs of First Nations consultation offices to help them respond to the numerous requests for consultation they received from the provincial and federal governments.

Our team produced analyses of the situation regarding caribou protection, as well as for a number of provincial consultations, including on the regulatory framework for socially acceptable mining activities, the government's new strategy and initiatives for land-use planning, its 2030 Nature Plan, the province's regulatory framework for clean energy and plans to develop more, and the future of forests in the province. We also worked on federal consultations, including the consultation on the implementation framework for the right to a healthy environment.

Strategic consultation meetings

Consultation experts from W8banaki, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, and Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk First Nation discussed consultation issues at our two meetings in Montreal on June 15, 2023, and February 15, 2024. At the February meeting, seven participants attended a presentation by Gordon Grey of the Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick on black ash.

The discussions on best practices were fruitful. In particular, we learned how to better support First Nations consultation offices. We'll certainly be holding further meetings with other communities.

First informal meeting between consultation offices

First coffee meeting between First Nations and our consultation team

Fourteen participants from nine First Nations met to share information between consultation offices and provide summaries of current consultations. We plan to hold more of these informal meetings over the coming year.

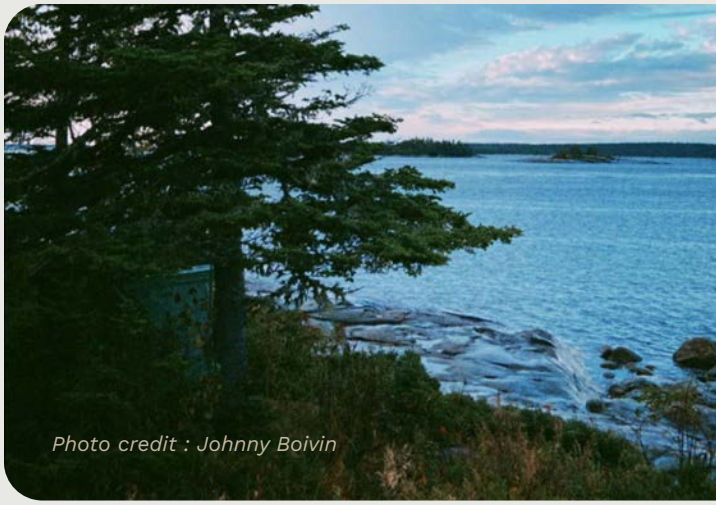


Photo credit : Johnny Boivin

Consultation on Quebec’s clean energy sector

First Nations stakeholders worked with our team throughout the year on a consultation regarding Quebec’s legislative framework and development strategy for its clean energy sector. We produced a number of analyses to help them with their responses.

Working with the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), we developed a statement of energy principles common to all First Nations, which was adopted by the Chiefs-in-Assembly on January 25, 2024.

In preparation for the upcoming tabling of the energy bill, First Nations experts attended our December 7 meeting and presented an overview of the legislation under study. We held roundtable discussions about energy-sector issues and the roles that First Nations communities would like to play.

Impact and benefit agreements (IBA)

Training on impact and benefit agreements (IBAs)

To meet the needs of First Nations, we developed on-demand training sessions and made them available on our website. The sessions cover topics such as:

- Legal structures for renewable energy partnerships
- The life cycle of a mine
- Impact and benefit agreements (IBAs)
- Ancestral rights and land planning
- Negotiating an IBA in the context of an existing mining operation
- Forestry in Quebec and its impact on First Nations rights

We also provide custom training sessions to meet the specific needs of the First Nations who retain our services.

This year, we delivered eight training sessions in four First Nations to diverse audiences of negotiators, land guardians, elected representatives, and employees from various band council departments.

Voicing First Nations' concerns about critical and strategic minerals

In 2023 the Quebec government created a scientific research network on critical and strategic minerals. We participated in the network's September 2023 workshop on integrating environmental, social, governance and circular economy issues into research projects in order to make sure that First Nations' concerns are factored into the research projects it supports. Since then, we've been in regular contact with the network to follow its scientific developments.

An effective sample letter to mining promoters

One of our collaborators from Mashteuiatsh First Nation asked us to prepare a sample letter for mining promoters operating on his community's land. We drafted an easy-to-use sample letter so he could engage with them quickly. The band council approved it and used it immediately when a community member reported that drilling was taking place on their land. The council used the letter to inform the promoter of the First Nation's rights and the need for dialogue. The promoter responded quickly with an apology and a commitment to inform the First Nation of all project developments and engage in discussions to reach a collaboration agreement. This was a real victory for Mashteuiatsh.

"We used the sample letter when a promoter failed to consult us before carrying out work, which we learned about when one of our members reported it.

The letter made it possible for the promoter and the First Nation to connect quickly and agree on how to work together if work on the land continued."

- Jonathan Launière, Economic Development Coordinator, Mashteuiatsh

Working with Wemotaci First Nation to implement a mining agreement

Wemotaci First Nation is working with our team to implement an impact and benefit agreement. We held an in-person information session with land management office advisors and employees to go over the agreement details and next steps with the new council. Together with the council, we organized a public meeting to present a simplified version of the agreement to community members. The meeting was streamed live on the council's Facebook page. Around 25 community members attended the meeting online and in person.

Self-determination

Recognition and engagement around the UNDRIP

In April 2023, Chief Ghislain Picard asked us to deliver his speech on the UNDRIP at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN)'s special assembly in Ottawa. It was a fine recognition by the AFNQL of our UNDRIP expertise.

At the AFN Assembly in Halifax in July 2023, we were honoured to hear from First Nations across Canada about their ideas for setting the UNDRIP and the federal action plan in motion, as well as their aspirations for self-determination on issues such as water and climate change. We used their input to update our self-determination initiative, which we presented at the Assembly of Chiefs in Montreal and the Assembly of First Nations Executive Directors in Quebec City.

Supporting the AFNQL for First Nations self-determination

In 2022 the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) asked our team to support the Secretariat and the Regional Chief on self-determination issues. This year the AFNQL asked us to prepare five briefing notes. Collaboration between the AFNQL and our team has increased significantly over the past year and will no doubt continue as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is actioned.

An analysis of the UNDRIP federal action plan

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan was published by the federal government in 2023. Given the plan's size and complexity, we prepared a summary and analysis of the plan's main measures and our mandate regarding the UNDRIP.

"We need your involvement in order to ascertain your priorities and determine what practical steps need to be taken to implement the measures in the UNDRIP action plan."

- Extract from The Federal Action Plan on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Why is it important?

Photo credit : Annie Hervieux

Consulting

Climate Change and Energy

A popular solar training program for off-grid sites

This year, 100 participants from 10 First Nations communities participated in our circuit rider course on solar power. The two-day course covers the basics of solar power, how to assess a building's energy use and improve energy efficiency, as well as how to select, purchase and assemble the components of a solar power system.

"Thank you for visiting our community and braving a two-day blizzard with us. Your workshop was very interesting and informative and can really benefit our community. I hope you'll come back for part two, minus the blizzard."

- Joshua J Kawapit

Launching Kanehsatà:ke's climate change adaptation plan

In collaboration with the Ratishontsanonhstats Kanehsatà:ke Environmental Office, we finalized Kanehsatà:ke's first climate change adaptation plan. We're working together on one of the plan's priority actions: a feasibility study on solutions to protect the community's shoreline against future flooding. The study is underway, and the results will be available next year.

Photo credit : Annie Hervieux

Joint Committee on Climate Action

We've been an active member of the First Nations-Canada Joint Committee on Climate Action since 2017. The committee brings together First Nations representatives from across Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and the Government of Canada to discuss First Nations participation in climate change programs and policies.

**The committee's mandate does not replace or relieve the Crown of its duty to consult First Nations on climate change issues.*

Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)

Respectful support for Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)

The Cree Nation Government and 19 First Nations chose to work with our team this year on their Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP). To support them, we led nearly 100 activities, including:

- A two-day workshop with Abitibiwinni First Nation on analyzing community data and drafting the plan
- A course for the Listuguj planning team on how to hold online events
- A meeting with the Lac Simon leadership team to clarify their vision for community planning
- A brainstorming session with Cree Nation Government representatives to explore ways to support their Nation's CCP

"The FNQLSDI has been involved in Pikogan's CCP from the very beginning. They've helped us plan and lead activities, compile and categorize data, and draft the plan. Catherine and Émie are like guides for us. They coach us, help us navigate the process, and keep us motivated. They also mentor us and provide us with networking and collaboration opportunities, as well as tools and resources to help us move forward at our own pace."

– Kimberly Roy, CCP Coordinator, Abitibiwinni First Nation

Geomatics and digital mapping

Building and organizing land databases with Anishinabe First Nations

Two Anishinabe communities asked us to set up a geographic information system to better store, view, manage and organize geospatial data. We worked with the communities' natural resource department to build file trees and interactive layers.

Kitigan Zibi First Nation is also working with us to create an interactive map for its members. The map will show the nature and location of consultations on their traditional territory.

Photo credit : JohnnyBoivin

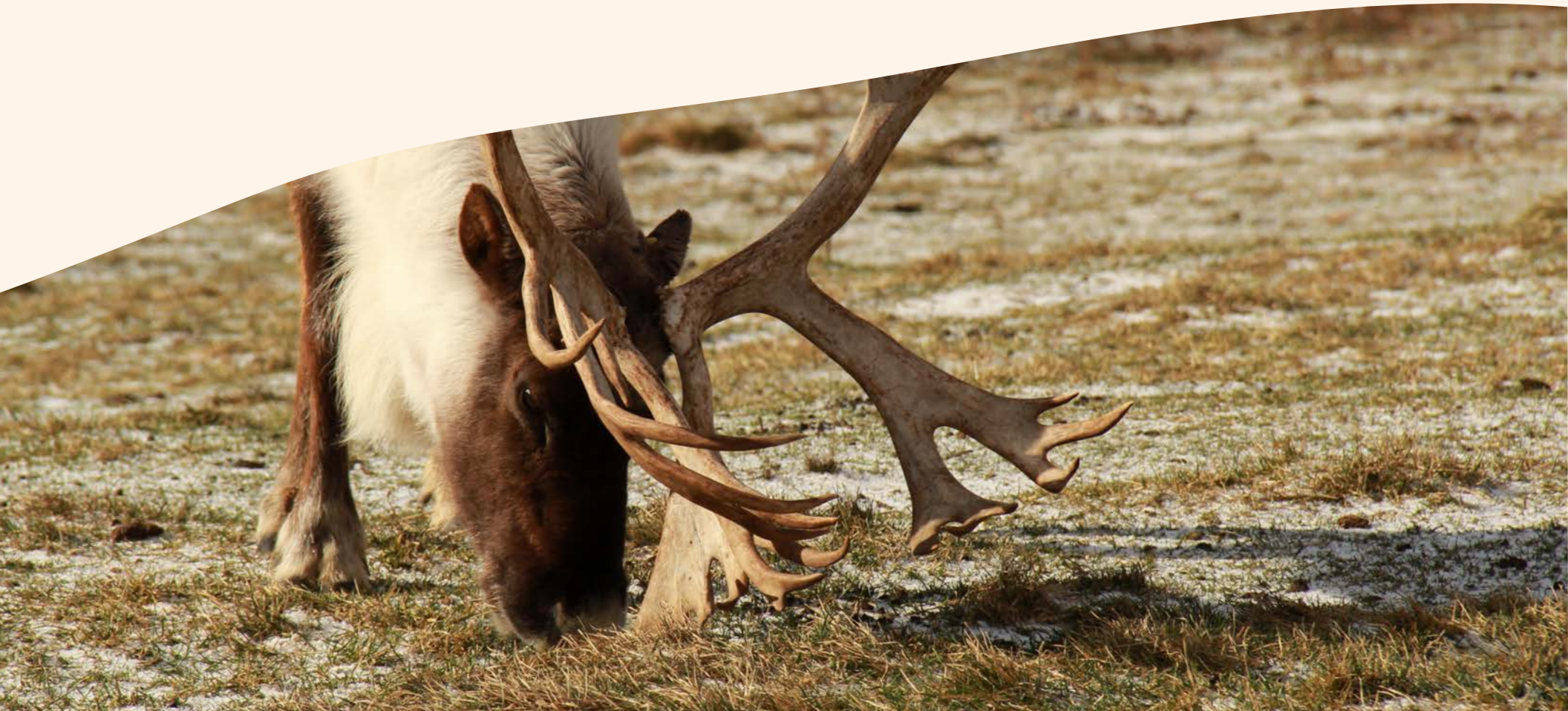
Interactive map for Opitciwan First Nation

The Atikamekw of Opitciwan Council wanted its members to be able to access data about the Gouin reservoir, such as water levels, weather conditions, and information from Hydro-Québec stations. So we helped them create a dashboard, a web map, an online form, and an automated script for acquiring and updating data.

Tools for analyzing campsites and collecting data on mountain caribou with Gespeg

The Gespeg community wanted to help its members identify the best spots for setting up camp and getting out on the land. We helped them develop a tool for analyzing campsite parameters.

As part of its mountain caribou depredation initiative, the Gespeg community wanted a database of animals trapped on the land. They also wanted an easy way to collect and process data from the field. We developed a data acquisition form for their field technicians to automatically record trapping data such as the species trapped and their location.



Waste management

Training recycling centre operators and public works staff from three Atikamekw communities

In 2023 eight recycling centre operators and public works employees from three Atikamekw communities travelled to La Tuque for specialized training on how to safely remove the valves from propane tanks in order to recycle them as scrap metal. They learned about the theoretical aspects and got to practice with an accredited trainer from the Canadian Propane Association.

Participants said they were pleased with the training, especially given the unique challenges faced by remote communities such as theirs, which don't have access to end-of-life propane tank reuse services. This initiative helps communities manage hazardous waste more safely.

The operators also received training on recycling centre management and operations and household hazardous waste, strengthening skills that will help them deliver better environmental management.

Elementary school children in Opitciwan explore waste management

More than 100 grade 3 and 4 students from Niska elementary school in Opitciwan attended waste management awareness workshops. Through fun educational activities, they learned about best practices in waste separation and why it's important to preserve the environment and avoid littering.

Wendake primary school children dig into composting

The Wendake council wanted to reduce the amount of contaminants in the compost bins at Watha' primary school. We ran lunchtime workshops on composting to raise awareness among students in eight classes. As a bonus, the cafeteria now uses compostable dishware.

The workshops are based on our waste management teaching kit, which is available to teachers free of charge and contains ready-to-use games and activities to help students learn about waste management in a fun, practical way.

Environment

Environmental tools, training and support

Support for spill and contamination management

Last year Wendake and Opitciwan First Nations asked us to help them manage spills and contamination on their lands. The collaborations are ongoing.

Wemindji First Nation has long wanted to rehabilitate a contaminated site listed on the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory. Our team helped the community navigate the complex stages of the process in order to obtain the necessary funding under the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan.

Circuit rider training in environmental management of sites and spills

A total of 71 experts from Opitciwan and Cree communities received training in spill response and contamination management.

The Mistissini community hosted 27 members of Cree communities for a course on contamination sampling leading to certification.

Conservation

Ecology, culture and economic potential: Characterizing Pessamit Nitassinan coastal and marine environments

We’re fortunate to be working with the Innu First Nation of Pessamit to characterize the coastal and marine environments of the Pessamit Nitassinan, where nature, culture and economic activity exist in harmony. The aim of this project is to acquire knowledge that will serve to protect the community’s land and rights and promote the value of the marine Nitassinan.

In the summer of 2022, we surveyed the marine Nitassinan with community members and elders to map and document their knowledge. We also characterized and inventoried several salt marshes. In the summer of 2023, the fieldwork conducted provided the community with data on the species in the Nitassinan, including lobster and winter flounder, in order to assess the potential for a food, social and ceremonial fishery in the area.

“Having a clear portrait of the marine Nitassinan is key to deepening our understanding of the area and preserving our land and rights. Plus, it’s something we’ve never done before.”

– Anne Rock

“We’re really doing something special here.”

– Majoric Pinette

Knowledge transmission key to connecting with marine lands

As the first-ever environmental characterization of the Pessamit Nitassinan, this project provides a unique opportunity for community members to receive the knowledge of their elders—guardians of age-old traditions—to better connect with their marine lands. In sharing their knowledge and deep understanding of natural cycles, the elders play a key role in the project.

Protecting land and resources

Environment

Our role as Regional Water Coordinator for Quebec

We've been the Regional Water Coordinator for Quebec since the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) awarded us the mandate in 2020.

The coordinator's primary role is to engage with First Nations and facilitate the flow of regional information to the AFN in support of its wastewater and safe drinking water initiatives. We're active members of the AFN's Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure, which brings together chiefs from across Canada, and we share relevant information from the committee meetings with Quebec First Nations.

Wastewater and safe drinking water: First Nations submit brief with their recommendations

In February 2023 our First Nations partners participated in a consultation on the draft of Bill C-61 (*An Act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands*). Based on their comments and recommendations, we wrote a brief outlining the shortcomings of both the consultation process and the draft bill.

Freshwater working group

We continue to organize and participate in meetings of the freshwater working group we set up in 2022. The group is made up of five members with diverse freshwater expertise: a youth, a woman, a technician, an Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) representative, and an FNQLSDI representative. Group members share updates on freshwater and wastewater governance and management activities. With its wide-ranging expertise, the group helps guide the FNQLSDI's work on freshwater and groundwater issues.

Strategic portrait to help Quebec First Nations prepare for next St. Lawrence agreement

Several coastal First Nations spoke out about the lack of consultation on the previous St. Lawrence agreements. With Quebec and Canada set to begin negotiations on the next St. Lawrence Action Plan in 2024–2025, we've prepared a strategic portrait for Quebec's First Nations, with sample recommendations that they can draw on during the consultations for the next agreement.

Cleaning up abandoned sites in Nutshimit

Abandoned mine site restoration and circuit rider training

The FNQLSDI received funding from the Environmental Damages Fund (EDF) from 2018 to 2024, which was used to deliver a major two-part initiative:

01. Circuit rider training on mines;

02. Abandoned site restoration.

The goals were to :

Provide tailored training to First Nations communities;

Map abandoned sites on First Nations ancestral lands;

Dismantle the sites.

Last year of the initiative, this year alone :

85.5 tonnes of waste removed from the land

2.25 tonnes of hazardous waste removed

05 sites cleaned up, including 2 that presented significant logistical challenges

This year marked the end of the initiative. Our field team overcame huge logistical challenges and achieved great success, none of which would have been possible without the help of the Nutashkuan, Matimekush-Lac John, and Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam communities.

Despite forest fires, logistical challenges, and the remoteness of the sites, our teams and partners once again went above and beyond to dismantle old infrastructure and remove waste from the land. This year alone, more than 85 tonnes of waste were removed from Nutshimit, and more than two tonnes of hazardous waste were removed, protecting lakes and rivers from contamination.

Results of a six-year initiative :

Together, our team and the First Nations of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, Matimekush-Lac John, Ekuanitshit, Pessamit, Nutashkuan, and Essipit cleaned up 38 sites in Nutshimit.

Outcomes and key achievements :

+200 More than 200 community members received circuit rider training on mines and contamination

196 abandoned sites were identified

108 sites were visited

38 sites were cleaned up by our field teams

We’d like to acknowledge the hard work and expertise of the community members who supported us over the past six years. A full report on the initiative is available on our website.

Climate change adapation

Photo credit : Theresa McLoed Loon

Four First Nations study the effects of climate change on berries on the North Shore

For the past three years, we've been working with Ekuanitshit, Nutashkuan, Unamen Shipu and Pakua Shipu First Nations to study the effects of climate change on blueberries, cranberries and cloudberries on their lands. This year we focused on collecting and identifying pollinating insects. In partnership with Université de Montréal and McGill University, we identified 270 insects, which were then arranged into collections and given to schools in the four communities.

$6.3 million for climate leadership

First Nations will receive $6.3 million in funding to support community climate projects as part of the Quebec government's 2030 Plan for a Green Economy. A committee of members representing the eight eligible First Nations eligible will evaluate the projects and decide which ones to submit to the government for funding.

Conservation

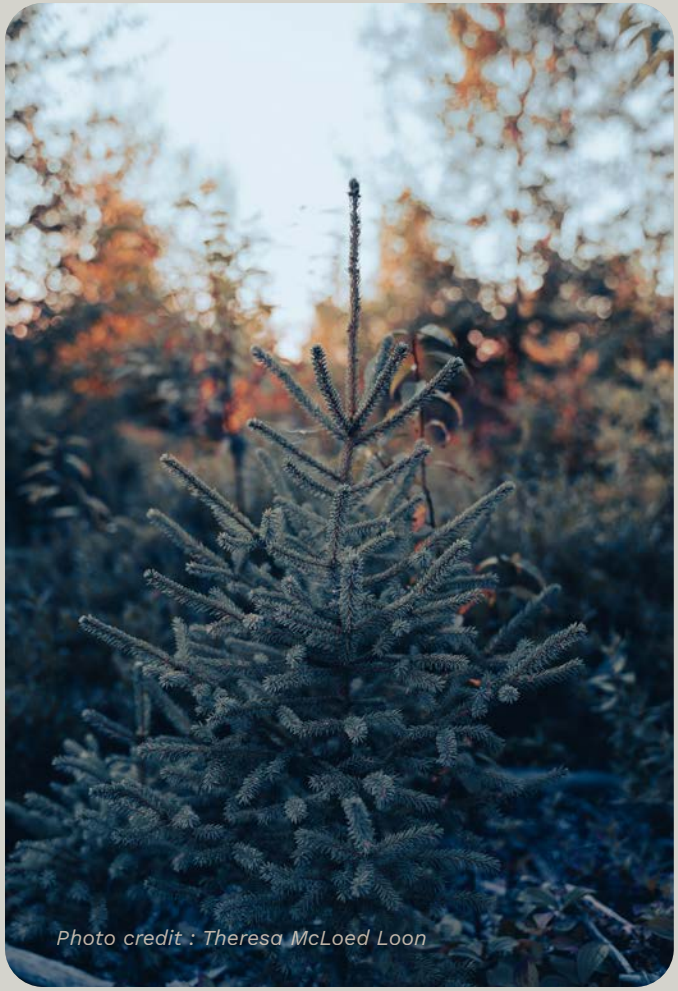


Photo credit : Theresa McLoed Loon

Toward First Nations-led protected areas

After a full year of close work and engagement with First Nations representatives, we finalized the report on First Nations-led protected areas in February 2024.

The First Nations' input and suggestions helped formulate key recommendations to the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP) on the definition of the new ALPA status and on how the ALPA guide should be developed.

The report is meant to further the MELCCFP's efforts to define the ALPA status and guide in close collaboration with First Nations in Quebec.

"We appreciate your open-mindedness, your flexibility, and your work on these important issues. Regardless of the outcome of the provincial process, our team feels that the exercise led by the FNQLSDI has generated meaningful conversations, both within the MCK and with other partners. Thank you for all you've done over the past year."

- Chief Ross Montour, Mohawk Council of Kahnawá:ke

Biodiversity

Monitoring breeding birds on Nitassinan

With support from the Innu Takuaikan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam (ITUM) and the Canadian Wildlife Service, we set up 109 listening stations on Nitassinan to monitor breeding birds. This provides valuable information about their numbers, distribution and diversity.

“Working with the FNQLSDI on the Pineshish project helps us strengthen our connection with Nitassinan while working on the land. We’re learning about the different Pineshish species and getting inspired for future projects. Tshinishkumitinan.”

- Marc-André Beaulieu, Head of the ITUM Nitassinan Guardians

Ekuanitshit seabird eggs found safe to eat

Members of the Ekuanitshit community conducted a traditional harvest of seven seabird eggs. We then worked with our colleagues at Environment and Climate Change Canada to analyze the eggs’ contaminant levels in a lab to help the CISSS de la Côte-Nord make recommendations on the safe number of eggs people can eat. The results are encouraging: based on current dietary habits in the community, Common Eider eggs are safe to eat!

Photo credit : David Turgeon

Online course on large wildlife inventories

Around 40 First Nations stakeholders took our online course on large wildlife inventories (caribou, moose, bear, etc.) on September 12 and 13, 2023.

The course answers the following questions: Why do we need an inventory? How do we get started? And which inventory method should we use? Some First Nations also presented real-life examples from their inventory initiatives. If you missed the course or would like to review it, it's available on our website!

Global framework on nature and biodiversity

COP15 in Montreal and the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework by the 196 countries represented there has created a great wind of hope and galvanized people around the world into action. The participation of First Nations was meaningful and their impact was memorable. Canada (through the national strategy) and Quebec (through Plan Nature) are mapping out how they'll work toward the Framework targets and will report back at COP16.

We attended and organized many events throughout the year to inform and support communities in protecting and restoring biodiversity on ancestral lands.

We also hosted two webinars (in English and French) to discuss the visions and concerns of communities around the Framework's 23 targets. You can watch them on our website.

Providing spaces for sharing between First Nations

Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)

Circles of grounding

We've been running the First Nations Regional Planning Circle since 2016. It has since grown larger and more diverse. This year, we welcomed participants at all stages of planning from at least 20 different First Nations. Together, we:

- Hosted ten bilingual regional circle meetings and two topic-specific webinars
- Welcomed speakers from different Nations and regional organizations
- Provided five regional mentors with a platform and celebrated their knowledge and expertise
- Shared countless tools, funding ideas, resources, stories, laughs, and solutions
- Facilitated networking with CCP circles in other regions.

"The CCP Circle keeps coordinators grounded. It reminds us what we are trying to do and helps us gain inspiration from other First Nations. It offers a wealth of information and resources."

- CCP Circle participant

“This course is very useful and something our leaders and our people should experience.”

- A participant

“The instructors were great listeners; they validated our input and really connected with all the participants. The course was very useful. I love learning from experience. I know I’ll be able to take a lot of what I learned and apply it to my work.”

- A participant

Intensive training on trauma-informed organizations: An inspiring safe space

For the first time this year, we teamed up with two Kahnawà:ke instructors, Karonhienhawe Linda Delormier and Emily Rice, to offer an intensive training course entitled “Trauma-Informed Organizations.” We had 20 exceptional participants from 12 First Nations and 14 First Nations organizations.

The three-day course explored the three pillars of trauma-informed organizations. Through knowledge-sharing, storytelling, and hands-on exercises, participants learned together as a class and in small groups. Since the course ended, many of them have contacted us to share how they’re putting what they learned into practice in their communities. They described the course as life-changing. We look forward to offering it again next year!

Building lasting collaborations, one connection at a time

We help build ties by creating all kinds of spaces for dialogue and collaboration, including by:

- Giving presentations to First Nations Executive Directors
- Inviting partners to CCP Circle meetings
- Participating in regional and national working groups (on information governance and wellness indicators at the regional level, and on the Indigenous Community Development National Strategy and planning coach training at the national level)
- Keeping in touch with community action partners, including the AFNQL, First Nations regional commissions and organizations, NADF, FNS, ISC, and SAJ

“We’re impressed with the work you’re doing and the community spirit you’ve managed to create in your region around the CCP. It makes us want to join!”

- Partner, National Indigenous Community Development Working Group

Geomatics

Launching Réseau GéoEspace, a community of practice in geomatics

Geomatics experts from several First Nations wanted to create a space where they could talk to each other and strengthen their network of expertise.

That’s why, at an advanced geomatics workshop in Val-d’Or, we launched a new community of practice in geomatics, dubbed Réseau GéoEspace. Members of this network meet four times a year, virtually or in person, to discuss new trends, find solutions to challenges, and learn about the issues affecting their communities.

Waste management

EcoNation: 19 new awareness officers driving positive environmental change in their communities

This year, the FNQLSDI provided training and ongoing support to EcoNation officers. We delivered two EcoNation training sessions: an in-person session in Kina8at involving five communities and an online training session for those who were unable to attend in person. A total of 19 members were hired to become awareness officers and drive positive environmental change in their communities. Throughout the summer, EcoNation officers conducted community clean-ups, collaborated with Wapikoni to produce a land protection awareness video, initiated a paper recycling plan with their band council, and developed awareness materials for their communities, among other waste management initiatives. The EcoNation program continues to inspire Indigenous youth to take leadership roles in waste management and land protection within their communities.

EcoNation

EcoNation: New vision tied to Indigenous cultures and knowledge

Following a contest for the 2023 cohort, the EcoPatrol program has officially transitioned to the EcoNation program. This waste management awareness program now has a new name, vision, and approach, which were created by awareness officer John-Henlee from Opitciwan. The vision and approach focus on connecting waste management with Indigenous cultural perspectives and knowledge of the land. The new name and logo that were developed now belong to the EcoNation officers, who use them to identify themselves out in the field and to create their own awareness materials for their communities.

First Nations RWM Regional Committee prioritizes selective collection

Now in its fifth year, the First Nations RWM Regional Committee held its thirteenth and fourteenth meetings in person. Ten members were present at each meeting, representing two-thirds of the available seats.

A total of eight topics were covered, resulting in 22 actions and 21 recommendations. One priority identified was the modernization of selective collection. Six recommendations were also made to the FNQLSDI waste management team.

Modernizing selective collection was one of the committee's main initiatives in 2023–24. During a special meeting held on the topic, members expressed a number of concerns that have an impact on all communities, and recommendations were formulated to address these concerns. Another meeting is planned to develop a webinar tailored to the realities of First Nations.

Our Events

Consultation

Webinar series on the environmental regulatory gap

An average of 50 participants from 38 different Indigenous communities and organizations attended each webinar in this series on the environmental regulatory gap affecting reserve lands. Topics covered included:

- Federal environmental laws applicable to reserve lands
- Provincial environmental laws applicable to reserve lands and jurisdictional conflicts
- Land code development and the Framework Agreement on First Nations Land Management

We also produced four summary sheets explaining the concepts covered during the webinars. They are available on our website.

“All the information was new to me and very interesting. I now have a better understanding of the issues and our position as a community.”

– Comment from a participant after the first webinar

Together for Our Forests

A total of 80 First Nations experts gathered to take part in the “Together for Our Forests” event and discuss various topics related to forestry in Quebec. Through a series of presentations, panels and workshops, the participants strengthened their skills while sharing their experience and expertise.

Highlights

All participants who answered the feedback survey said the event was useful and a good networking opportunity. The event took place on February 27 and 28, 2024, in Lac-Beauport, Quebec.

Impact and benefit agreements (IBA)

Raising awareness for the future of mining

To foster better relations between promoters and Indigenous communities, we gave presentations on the importance of IBAs for students entering the mining industry.

In all, some 50 geology and mining engineering students from Université Laval attended, learning about the importance of taking the concerns of Indigenous peoples into account when developing mining projects. Participants enjoyed the presentations and particularly appreciated hearing one of our colleagues talk about what it was like to have a mine developed on her community’s land.

Lecture on Indigenous rights and land planning as part of a master's program at Université Laval

A lecture was given to some forty students in the Master's in Land Use and Planning program at Université Laval, with the goal of exposing them to the realities of First Nations and encouraging them to reflect on better tools and practices for the future.

The lecture explored the fundamentals of Indigenous rights and the constitutional duty to consult and accommodate First Nations as interpreted by the Canadian courts, highlighting the lack of effective governance and land planning tools for First Nations. It also made clear that current mechanisms impose a considerable burden of proof on First Nations while limiting their ability to influence decision-making, thus reiterating the need to overhaul these systems.

Self-determination

Webinar on self-determination and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

On November 9, 2023, around 30 people attended our webinar on self-determination and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIPA)*. The webinar was aimed at Indigenous communities across all of Quebec. We were honoured to have several Chiefs attend, including the Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, Ghislain Picard, who opened the event. After Picard's remarks, the Canadian Department of Justice presented the federal UNDRIPA action plan. This was followed by a question and discussion period, after which elected representatives shared their experiences with various self-determination initiatives in their communities. Our team then presented our project to conclude the event.

Climate Change and Energy

Strategic workshop on renewable energies

This strategic workshop saw 60 participants gather to learn about the current energy context and prepare for the potential development of energy projects on First Nations land. Highlights of the event included a panel discussion on First Nations leadership in renewable energy, a presentation by the Chair in Energy Sector Management at HEC Montréal, Pierre-Olivier Pineau, and a tour of Hydro-Québec's Gabrielle-Bodis solar generating station.

Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)

Mackawisiwin ka otcian: Strong roots

The Abitibi8inni First Nation welcomed us to their community for a two-day CCP workshop. Mentors gave talks on safe spaces, self-determination, youth empowerment, mobilization, and implementation, inspiring participants from 14 First Nations.

Action strategies: From planning to implementation

Dana Moraes, planner and CCP coordinator for Skidegate Haida Nation, hosted a moving bilingual webinar on action strategies. Participants enjoyed hearing about CCP and getting practical advice and concrete examples of how to turn dreams into reality.

First Nations wellness indicators

Our colleagues from the FNQLHSSC were invited to lead a workshop for the CCP Circle on their approach to First Nations wellness indicators. Participants appreciated hearing diverse perspectives on wellness and learning about the multiple data sources available through the FNQLHSSC and the organization’s involvement in information governance.

Weaving stories of healing: Community conference

We collaborated with the Kahnawà:ke Trainers’ Circle to create and facilitate a two day conference on the theme of healing. The thirty-odd participants explored a range of trauma related themes in a safe space steeped in the Kanien’kehà:ka land, culture and language.

Meeting lands

The planning team delivered two training sessions for their FNQLSDI colleagues on its trauma informed approach. Inspired by the teachings of mentors Suzy Goodleaf, Linda Delormier and Nancy Rother, the sessions presented the team's thoughts and ideas on how to create safe, circular spaces.

Geomatics

Advanced geomatics workshop in Val-d'Or

On September 19 and 20, 2023, we held an advanced workshop to foster dialogue and knowledge-sharing between First Nations geomatics and data experts and Indigenous Guardians. The two-day event included masterclasses, hands-on workshops, and demonstrations. The participants were unanimous about the importance of gathering to discuss geomatics-related issues and staying abreast of new GIS tools and technologies. The workshop saw many fruitful conversations and was a great networking opportunity for the 17 participants, who hailed from six different communities and represented five different Nations.

Waste management

2023 RWM Symposium

This year, over 60 First Nations experts in residual waste management (RWM) gathered in Odanak and Wôlinak, in Centre-du-Québec, to engage in conversations and share their knowledge at the RWM Symposium.

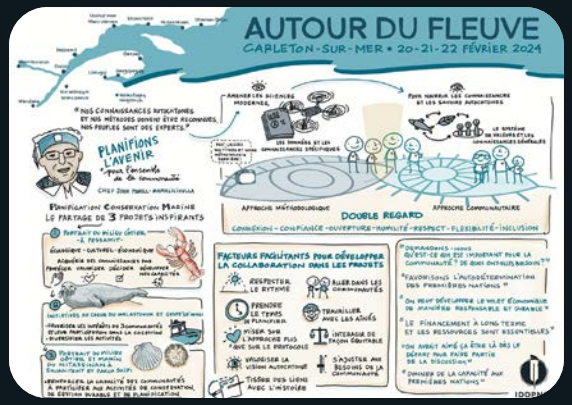
Over the course of two and a half days, participants were exposed to a wealth of information on a variety of topics, including how to raise community awareness on waste management and develop a communications plan. There was also a workshop on managing, handling and storing household hazardous waste. Other events included a tour of the Odanak recycling centre and a mentoring activity where participants shared specific waste management challenges in their communities and had the chance to discuss them with mentors who had worked on similar issues before. Inter-Nation knowledge-sharing was a central theme throughout the symposium, with many participants talking about successful initiatives in their communities, such as the new recycling centre in Kebaowek and the composting program in Listuguj. Two booths were open throughout the symposium to provide information on the community of practice and updates to the interactive map, as well as a draw participants could enter to win a paddle.

Composting: Getting started

Some 40 participants representing 20 communities dug in deep on how to set up a composting service at this composting fundamentals event co-organized by the Cree Nation Government, the Compost Council of Canada, the FNQLSDI, and the host community, Kahnawà:ke.

Discussions focused on the health benefits of composting, both for humans and for Mother Earth, as well as sustainable composting practices. Speakers shared valuable technical information on planning, setting up, and operating a composting facility. Local participants also shared their experience with projects in Eeyou Istchee and Kahnawà:ke and took guests on a guided tour of the community's composting facility.

Conservation



Around the River 2024: Back for a second year

This year's Around the River event drew a total of 65 participants, including Chiefs, elected officials and other First Nations representatives from the 13 coastal communities of the Innu, Mi'gmaq, Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk and Huron-Wendat Nations.

The participants networked, shared their experiences, and discussed a variety of topics related to the St. Lawrence River and Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The three main themes addressed were marine spatial planning, marine conservation tools, and future actions for First Nations.

“We really enjoy events like Around the River. It brings us together to have face-to-face meetings and discussions with people we wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to see.”

- Sandra Autef, Project Manager, Mi’gmaq Wolastoqey Indigenous Fisheries Management Association

Bringing federal and provincial governments together to discuss First Nations governance in marine conservation

Several communities had expressed a desire to bring the federal and provincial governments together to discuss Indigenous rights and governance in marine conservation. In light of this, a panel discussion was held featuring Chief Powell as an Indigenous expert, accompanied by Kenneth Paul of the Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick, Francis Bouchard of the Ministère de l’Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs, Laura Wilmot, Legal Analyst at the FNQLSDI, and Alain Guitard, Director of Marine Planning and Conservation and Species at Risk Management with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The panel was well received by participants and prompted a rich discussion.

“[...] I challenge you to challenge the government to meet the needs of your community, and I would suggest that partnerships and relationships are the way to get there.”

- John Powell, Chief of Mamalilikulla First Nation in British Columbia

As the Water Flows

On December 5 and 6, 2023, we welcomed 30 participants representing seven Nations and 17 communities to the Grand Lodge Hotel in Mont-Tremblant for a First Nations event entitled “As the Water Flows.” The workshop gave participants a chance to share their knowledge and experience of Indigenous leadership in aquatic environmental restoration. The discussions covered issues, threats and priorities in aquatic restoration, and participants got to network with the directors of the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program at Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Workshop participants voiced their concerns about the safety of fish consumption and the decline in fish abundance when habitats are disturbed. Although some initiatives were discussed, the lack of consistent financial support was identified as a major obstacle to the success of restoration projects. A follow-up workshop is already in the works, scheduled for late November 2024.

Our Team

April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

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Operations Director

Communications

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Marlène Wapistan
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Véronik Bureau
Human Resources Intern

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Stéphanie Boulais
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Marjolaine Mckenzie
Relations Officer

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Climate Change Project Leader

Jérémie Caron
Climate Change Project Leader

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Climate Change Project Leader

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Interim Conservation Coordinator

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Interim Biodiversity Coordinator

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Caroline Côté
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Amélie Gagnon
Conservation Project Officer

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Biodiversity Project Officer

Ève Larivière
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Laura Wilmot
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Mathilde Butler
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Policy Analyst

Sylviane René
Lawyer

Flavie Riou-Routhier
Lawyer

Margo Burgess-Pollet
Consultation Project Leader

Impact and Benefits Agreements

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Flavie Ferrer
Forest Engineer

Karl Masson
Mining Analyst

Kellyane Levac
IBA Environmental Project Leader

Laurence Cloutier-Pouliot
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Noémie Després Tassé
Lawyer

Nancy Fillion
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Environment

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Marie-Philippe Ménard
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Planning Coordinator

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Our Financial Partners

Government of Canada

Indigenous Services Canada
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
Natural Resources Canada
Transport Canada
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Government of Quebec

Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs
Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit

Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador

Assembly of First Nations

Indigenous Community Development Nation Strategy

Secrétariat de la Nation Innue

Innu of Ekuanitshit Council

Photo credit : Annie Hervieux

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