



COMMITTING

TO ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION WITH
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

DOCUMENT INTENDED FOR QUEBEC BUSINESSES,
ORGANIZATIONS, AND POLITICAL BODIES

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Grand Economic Circle of Indigenous Peoples and Quebec

Many businesses, organizations, and political bodies in Quebec want to invest in the movement for economic reconciliation and the renewal of business relations with Indigenous peoples but don't know where to start. What is the right approach, and more importantly, where should they begin?

In 2021, Indigenous peoples adopted a vision for the future in terms of economic development. A vision in which their strengths, combined with those of the business community and civil society of Quebec, would allow all their ambitions to come to fruition. A vision, which when realized, will change not only the economic situation of Indigenous peoples, but also Quebec's.

Inspired by this vision of the future and the observations made since the beginning of the GECIPQ Movement, this document contains suggestions for commitments with the potential to generate measurable, tangible, and significant benefits for a better inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the Quebec economy, particularly in the areas of economic development, employment and training, entrepreneurship, housing and tourism.

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The **5** quality criteria of a commitment

Do you have an inspiring idea that you want to transform into a commitment in the context of the GECIPQ Movement, but are wondering how to formulate it properly? Starting from the principle that all ideas are good, your commitment will benefit from being well thought out to ensure its successful realization on all levels.

Inspired by the SMART method, here are the five quality criteria you should keep in mind when formulating an optimal commitment.

**Note that these are not presented in order of importance. Each has equal value in raising the quality of a commitment.*

Tangible

The commitment is clear, specific and unambiguously states what will be accomplished.

Profitable

The commitment provides for positive spin-offs from which Indigenous peoples will be able to benefit.

Aligned

The commitment is relevant and consistent with the Vision of the Future of Indigenous peoples.

Collaborative

The commitment calls for the contribution and participation of Indigenous peoples to be achieved.

Unifying

The commitment contributes to rapprochement and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

In an ideal world, each commitment would meet these five criteria. However, since this is not always realistic, we encourage you to consider as many of these criteria as possible. Basing a commitment on one, two or three of these criteria already goes a long way towards ensuring its quality.

An essential step before making a commitment is the reflection that leads to it.

Know that we are available to support you from the very beginning of your process (initial reflections, questions, advice, etc.).



1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Background

Current situation

For a long time, Indigenous peoples have been placed on the sidelines of economic and social development in Quebec or, at the very least, they have not participated as fully as they should. Among other things, this prevents us from exercising our right to development in accordance with our own needs. The current situation does not allow us to eliminate the enormous gap that separates our living conditions from those of Quebecers.

Although our population is large in certain regions in Quebec, our participation in discussions surrounding development remains limited (*and sometimes nonexistent*)

Issues related to the occupation of the land and the exploitation of its resources prevent Indigenous peoples from fairly participating in territorial development and the resulting major projects.

Vision of the future

Indigenous peoples are recognized as active participants in Quebec's economy—rather than as minorities who must be considered. We have fair and equitable access to opportunities that generate sustainable economic and social benefits, such as land development projects, natural resource exploitation, and the major projects that stem from them

Indigenous businesses are an integral part of the regional business environment. Large companies and governments have procurement policies that promote the development of our businesses and their inclusion in Quebec's economy.

The Indigenous workforce is recognized as one of the solutions to the labour shortage in Quebec—we are included in strategies to address the shortage of workers.



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Concrete examples

COMMITMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Partnerships and Procurement

- Add one or more Indigenous businesses to the list of your suppliers and/or create long-term partnership agreements with these businesses.
- Add a clause to procurement practices that encourages purchasing from Indigenous businesses.
- Make your market more accessible to First Nations, Inuit and Métis businesses and increase opportunities for Indigenous-owned businesses.

2. Consultation

- Commit to creating a local economic development consultation committee in collaboration with neighbouring Indigenous communities.
- Commit to exchanging and communicating on a regular basis with elected officials from Indigenous communities located near your municipality or business.
- Identify an elected official within your council or a representative of your administration and make them responsible for relations with Indigenous peoples.

3. Accessibility and Representation

- Promote accessibility for remote regions by improving the quality and diversity of the road and air network.
- Increase the participation and representativeness of Indigenous people within consultative and decision-making bodies.

4. Land and Natural Resource Management

- Conclude agreements aimed at resolving land occupation and resource exploitation issues.
- Integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge into the development of strategies for the development and protection of the land and natural spaces.

EXAMPLES OF REAL COMMITMENTS

Hydro-Québec is developing and implementing a procurement strategy with Indigenous businesses, in collaboration with Indigenous economic stakeholders.

The Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) of Global Affairs-Canada (GAC) for Quebec and Nunavut provides services to Indigenous businesses ready for export. It also includes Indigenous businesses from Quebec in the Indigenous and Northern Artists and Creators Directory to promote their creations and products in international markets.

2. EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Background

Current situation

Currently, more than a quarter of Indigenous workers are between the ages of 15 and 24. This age group represents a real strength for Quebec, but also a group that is particularly vulnerable to the many barriers to employment that have previously been experienced by workers in older age groups.

More than half of Indigenous workers say they are in an uncertain professional situation. This precariousness often requires multiple jobs made up of part-time, seasonal, casual or temporary employment.

This precariousness is also reflected in the remoteness factor that a large majority of Indigenous communities face. Access to certain services, such as public transportation and educational institutions, is more difficult compared to major urban centres.

More than one in five First Nations people are victims of harassment or discrimination in the workplace (FNQLHSSC, 2021).

Finding employment is a major challenge, with many people of working age remaining unemployed after unsuccessfully trying to find a job.

Vision of the future

Our population, whose average age is lower than Quebec's, is an integral part of the solution to alleviate the labour shortage that Quebec is currently facing. The unemployment rate in our communities has significantly decreased thanks to the creation of new jobs. Young people are supported in pursuing their studies and the graduation rate is on the rise.

Our members and our businesses participate in the realization of major economic development projects in Quebec. They hold quality jobs in various fields.

Quebec businesses are made aware of our realities and our members are effectively integrated into their work teams. The business community relies on the knowledge of our organizations to ensure that our members are properly integrated into their jobs.

Concrete examples

COMMITMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Access to employment

- Increase representativeness and promote equitable access for Indigenous peoples to jobs, management positions and professional development opportunities.
- Promote hiring, integration, and retention in terms of employment among Indigenous peoples, especially young people and women.
- Support the advancement and mobility of Indigenous employees among all sectors and employment levels.
- Create positions specifically for Indigenous people.

2. Student support

- Offer scholarships to Indigenous students to encourage continuing education.
- Offer or financially support summer jobs for Indigenous students.
- Develop or support the creation of training adapted to linguistic, cultural, social, and individual realities that are conducive to academic pursuits.
- Create internships specifically for Indigenous people.

3. Raising awareness

- Offer workshops to raise awareness of Indigenous realities to employees to promote the maintenance of inclusive workplaces.

4. Work-life balance

- Establish accommodation and support measures for the work-study-family life balance of Indigenous employees or students.

EXAMPLES OF REAL COMMITMENTS

The company **Aluminerie Alouette** aims to double its number of First Nations employees by 2028.

The company **ROACTION Côte-Nord** is adopting a hiring policy for Indigenous workers.

Quebec Iron Ore is increasing the integration of Indigenous workers within the company.



3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Background

Current situation

Our businesses are numerous and diverse, but not well known. They are active mainly in our communities and their services are mostly used by our members.

Several factors hinder the development of our businesses, including difficulties associated with access to financing. Interest rates are higher, and some assets are more difficult to finance in our communities. Cultural and identity appropriation also impact our businesses and their access to public and private contracts



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Vision of the future

Our businesses and the overall economic contributions of Indigenous peoples to the Quebec economy are known and recognized. Our businesses can benefit from the same advantages as Quebec businesses (technologies, access to financing, etc.), allowing them to grow and develop.

Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses operate in conditions that allow them to prosper. Large companies and governments have procurement policies that take into account the specificities of our businesses and promote the development of their capacities and their inclusion in the Quebec economy.

Concrete examples

COMMITMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Support for Indigenous Entrepreneurship

- Create scholarships or competitions to encourage and promote Indigenous entrepreneurship, especially youth and female entrepreneurship.
- Establish incentives, including funding, internships, and scholarships, to increase Indigenous participation in entrepreneurial training and certification.
- Support the development of the capacities of Indigenous entrepreneurs.
- Create conditions in which Indigenous entrepreneurs can thrive locally and regionally through mentoring programs to support the launch and growth of their businesses.
- Adopt a minimum annual rate for awarding contracts to Indigenous businesses.
- Develop tools to support business acquisition (the takeover or purchase of local businesses by Indigenous people).

2. Access to Funding

- Implement measures that make it possible to facilitate access to financing and insurance products for Indigenous businesses.

3. Promotion and Visibility

- Support the promotion of Indigenous products and services, especially through the IDIN movement that is specifically intended for them.
- Provide networking opportunities and visibility to Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs as part of your local or regional events

4. Collaboration and Inclusion

- Create a consultation committee to promote the inclusion of Indigenous businesses in the regionaleconomy.
- Develop a procurement strategy with Indigenous businesses, in collaboration with economic players and Indigenous nations.

EXAMPLES OF REAL COMMITMENTS

The Indigenous Markets team at the **Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)** advises and supports Councils, organizations, and First Nations & Inuit entrepreneurs in their efforts to facilitate access to financing.

The **Chambre de commerce et de l'industrie de Manicouagan** is creating a consultation table to promote the inclusion of Indigenous businesses in the regional economy. It provides networking opportunities and visibility to Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs at local events. Additionally, it is developing a local mentorship program to support the launch and growth of Indigenous businesses.

4. HOUSING

Background

Current situation

The strong growth of the Indigenous population is generating ever increasing housing needs, which leads to problems such as homelessness and overcrowding

In 2012, the AFNQL noted a need **to build 9,400 housing units** and **renovate 5,000 housing units** (AFNQL, 2014). The housing shortage forces many Indigenous people to leave their communities and move to the city.

Indigenous property cannot be seized on reserve according to the Indian Act. This complicates obtaining loans from financial institutions for First Nations entrepreneurs since their property cannot be used as collateral.

Certain types of insurance, such as surety bonds, require guarantees. This complicates First Nations' access to this insurance, which is essential for bidding on and carrying out major construction projects

Vision of the future

Housing catch-up efforts are gaining momentum and construction activities in our communities are substantially increased. Indigenous people are important players in this growth with the support of committed partners.

Our members have access to safe, adequate, and healthy housing that meets their needs in sufficient quantities. They have barrier-free access to individual property.

Indigenous suppliers in the field of construction and related fields operate in a viable environment with prospects that go beyond the short term; opportunities are available to them both inside and outside our communities.

Concrete examples

COMMITMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Access to Funding and Ownership

- Establish measures to facilitate access to financing and individual property.
- Offer loans to Indigenous individuals or communities with borrowing costs, deadlines, approval criteria and conditions that are similar to those available outside their communities.

2. Construction and Renovation

- Support financially (or in any other way) the construction of housing that is adapted to the needs and realities of the Indigenous populations in communities or in urban areas.
- Support the renovation, repair, and decontamination of housing.
- Support and simplify the process for the building of social housing for Indigenous people in urban areas.

3. Shared Infrastructure

- Conclude agreements with a neighbouring Indigenous community to allow for the sharing of services and infrastructure such as water supply networks, waste collection, street lighting, etc.

4. Housing and Support for Vulnerable Populations

- Create partnerships to support housing for homeless or low-income Indigenous people.
- Support affordable and culturally adapted social housing projects intended for certain targeted Indigenous groups (transitional housing, shelters for women and families, accommodations for students, etc.).

EXAMPLES OF REAL COMMITMENTS

The **City of Gatineau** and **Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg** joined forces to address housing issues. This commitment aims to initiate discussions on social housing.



The **City of Montreal** as part of its Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, is implementing one of its commitments made in 2023, namely through an urban planning action plan.



5. TOURISM

Background

Current situation

There are more than 200 Indigenous tourism businesses in Quebec, spread across 17 of the 21 tourist regions and in 40 of the 55 Indigenous communities. These businesses are active in four major sectors, namely arts and culture, accommodations and food services, nature and adventure, and hunting and fishing.

However, Indigenous tourism businesses face challenges that limit their prosperity, such as difficulties in accessing funding or issues related to remoteness.

Vision of the future

Indigenous tourism continues to grow and is one of the most important economic sectors within our communities. Indigenous tourism is indispensable and a strong vector of rapprochement and one of the greatest strengths of the Quebec tourism destination.

Access to regions and communities is greatly improved and Indigenous communities are clearly visible as part of Quebec's tourism offering. Investment in Indigenous tourism is made easier thanks to new programs dedicated to this sector.



Concrete examples

COMMITMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. Visibility

- Promote the integration and representativeness of Indigenous communities in the iconography and strong points of local and regional tourism.
- Provide greater visibility for Indigenous tourist attractions among the main gateways to international tourism, Quebec City and Montreal.
- Promote the presence of Indigenous tourism businesses during national and international events.
- Support and promote Indigenous tourism businesses officially recognized by the IDIN.
- Improve signage and directions to Indigenous tourist attractions and nearby communities.

2. Access to Funding

- Create more accessible financing measures for Indigenous tourism.
- Establish new financing mechanisms such as “*loan guarantees*” to compensate for the unseizable nature of “*on-reserve*” promoters.

3. Collaboration and Partnerships

- Establish a lasting partnership with a neighbouring Indigenous community to promote mutually beneficial local impacts.
- Collaborate with Indigenous tourism businesses to offer local or regional tourism circuits.

4. Promotion of Indigenous Culture and Arts

- Support the promotion, development and influence of Indigenous cultures, contemporary artists, and artisans.
- Support the organization and holding of Indigenous cultural and artistic events.
- Collaborate in the creation and dissemination of exhibitions on Indigenous history.

5. Education and Awareness

- Integrate elements of Indigenous history and culture into the training of tourist guides.

EXAMPLES OF REAL COMMITMENTS

The **Coopérative de développement régional du Québec (CDRQ)** is collaborating with Indigenous Tourism Quebec as part of the Plan d'action secteurs stratégiques tourisme et loisir (PASTEL).

The **Port of Baie-Comeau** is developing a partnership with the Innu community of Pessamit in the fields of tourism (international cruises) and economic development (co-investment and support for the projects of Indigenous businesses).



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