Kaskinomatasowin

Transmitting through culture

Revitalizing ancestral practices regarding sexuality among Atikamekw fathers

Public Health Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé publique du Canada

AQUA RELLE

Chaire de recherche du Canada sur la violence sexuelle chez les jeunes vulnérables

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Atikamekw Sipi

KNOWLEDGE HUB
CENTRE DE
CONNAISSANCES

presents:

Innovations in Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Trauma- and Violence-Informed Health Promotion

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Oct 1–2, 2025

Atikamekw Niherowisi iskwew

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In Quebec

- 10 Indigenous nations and one Inuit nation
- Spread across 55 Indigenous communities, and the Inuit reside in 14 northern villages
- Represent approximately 1% of Quebec's population

Sexual violence

report having been sexually assaulted before the age of 18

1 in 5 girls

1 in 10 boys

Sexual violence among Indigenous peoples

25 to 50% of women and men report having experienced sexual violence before the age of 18.

(Collin-Vezina, Dion, & Trocme, 2009; Dion et al., 2018)

Indigenous Girls/Women

- **3x higher risk of IPV** compared to non-Indigenous women (Brownridge, 2008; 2017)
  - Women overrepresented among homicide victims
    - e.g., between 1997 and 2000: 7x higher (Statistics Canada)
- **More severe forms** of physical and sexual IPV (Brennan, 2011)
- **At least 2x higher risk of SV**

*IPV: intimate partner violence
SV: Sexual violence

Several historical traumas

- Indian Act (1876)
- **Residential schools** (130 from 1880 to 1996)
- Child placement (Sixties Scoop)
- And other colonial forms of violence…

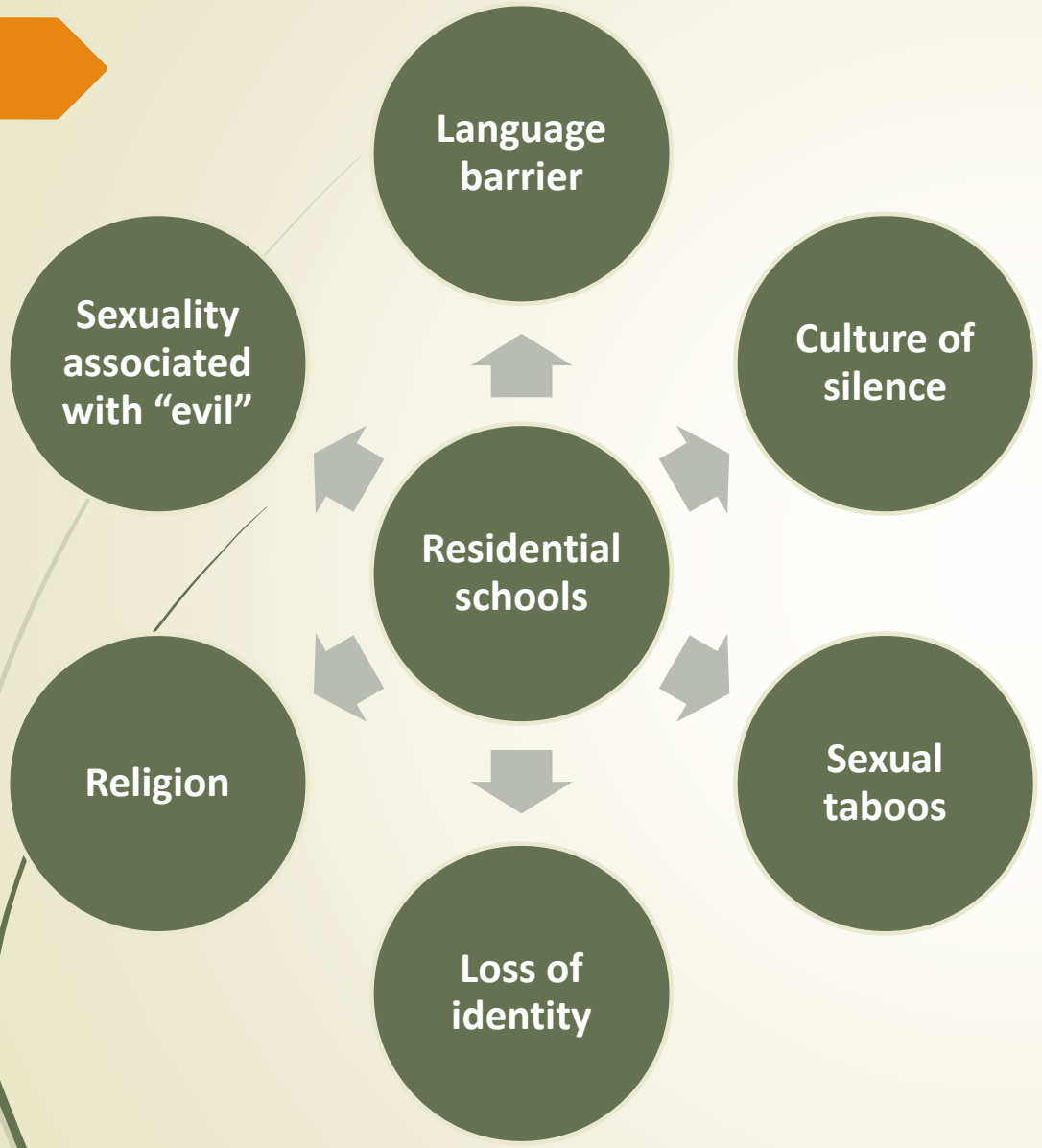
⇨**Trauma history**

⇨**Genocide**

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)

Residential schools: a turning point in acculturation and loss of identity

- Numerous residential schools across Canada
- Numerous children torn from their families at a young age
- Numerous children experienced sexual abuse by clergy members
- A turning point in the uprooting and acculturation process of the Atikamekw communities (genocide)



After / perceived impact

Objectives of the Kaskinomatasowin project

Overall:

- **PREVENT sexual violence**
- **Support parents in educating their children about sexuality**

Specifically:

- Revise the Lantern|Awacic Program
- Co-create new tools
- Enhance parental skills in sexuality education
- Reach out to men (but also understand their disengagement)

Kaskinomatasowin

Results

Qualitative analysis to better understand the perception of sexuality

Findings

→ Taking post-traumatic shock into account

Creating a trust relationship
before reflecting on the future

→ Sexuality: before and after residential schools

→ Concerned about reaching men - difficult

Perception of sexuality before and after residential schools

Before

- Teachings from Elders and matriarchal culture
- Family and territory
- Sexual customs and traditions
- Rites of passage ceremony

After

Sexuality associated with evil
What the Elders say

- “The elders said: when we say kickwein it sounds sinful”

- “It's as if sexuality, it's not fun in the end, because it's related to aggression rather than to what it should be”

After

Negative impacts of residential schools
What the Elders say

- "...and then at the residential school, they told us to wash ourselves, or it was the priest who was going to wash us, but the brother played with our parts! So then... I started to feel very ambivalent about that".

- "...(my mother), I couldn't confide in her about things I experienced at the residential school, because she was very Catholic, for her, he (the priest) can't do that to you! He's a representative of God! I kept that for years, maybe twenty years".

After - healing

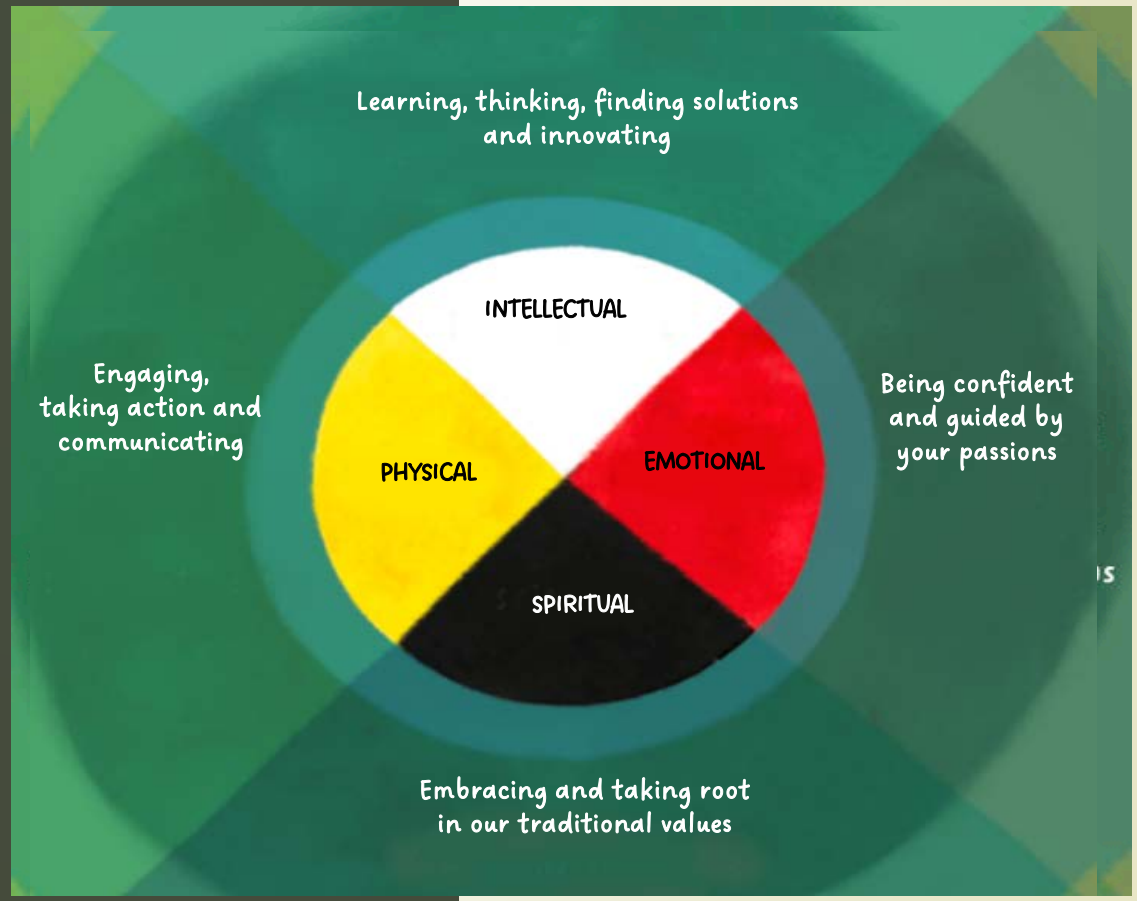
Culture for prevention and support

- Fosters inclusivity
- Includes all Atikamekw individuals (mothers, fathers, and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons)
- Valuing Indigenous knowledge
- Healing ceremonies
- Sharing circles on the land
- Spiritual helpers

After - healing

Valuing knowledge
Approaches - holistic and Atikamekw

- Centered on the Nin
- Being in balance
- Medicine wheel and its 4 directions
- Physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual



Before and after

Parental roles and the place of Elders

"In the old days the elders used to say, let the women raise their children."

"A man said that sexuality should be discussed with the mother and not with me. If she comes to me, I will send her to the mother."

"But that could be a great opening, for example... do you have a boyfriend ... maybe it should be up to you to talk to her guy."

Before and after

Parental roles

Man	Woman
• Less involved in sexual education • Speaks mainly to his sons • Education (rites of passage) related to masturbation, consent, and respect for the woman in marriage	• Traditional role • More open to discussion • Education (rites of passage) related to sexual development, menstruation, contraception, social relationship and violence

Father's role

- Actively wish to contribute to their children's education, by transmitting knowledge related to respect, balance, consent, and healthy sexuality.

- Express the need to be recognized as positive role models and not solely perceived through the stigmas of marginalization or victimization.

- For many, reconnecting with their Atikamekw identity and ancestral traditions is seen as essential to becoming “full-fledged actors” in educational transmission.

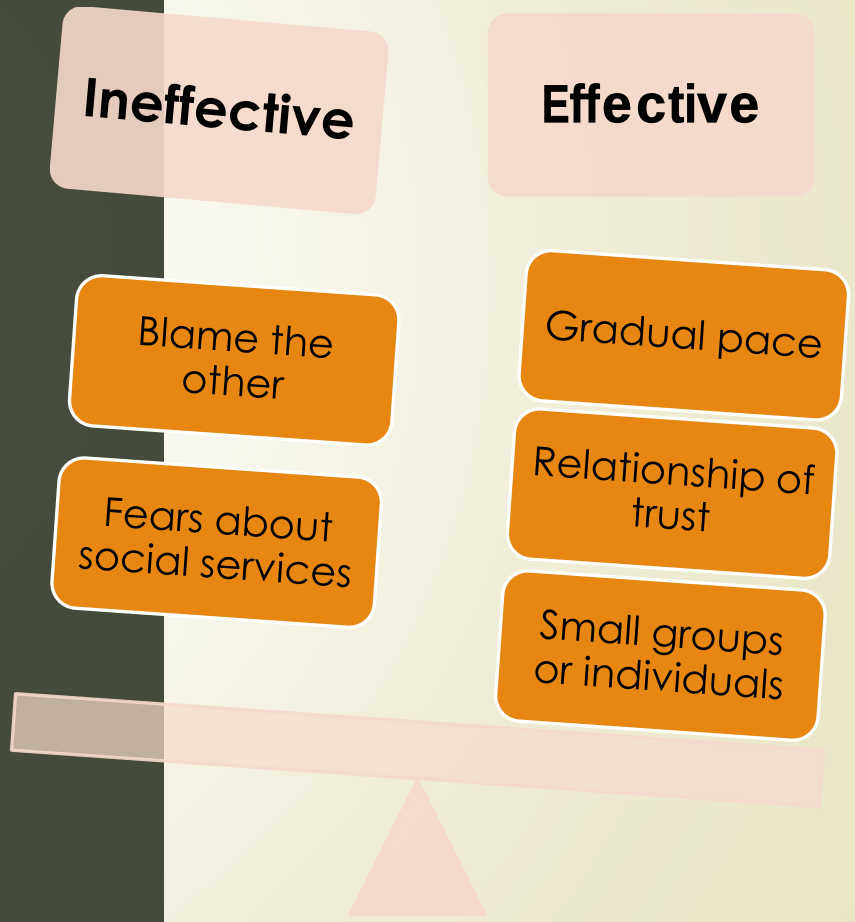
After - healing

Strategies and approaches

"It is part of Atikamekw values...
it takes a whole community to raise a child"

Who can talk about sexuality?

- Practitioners
- Council of Elders – the Elders
- Extended family
- Schools, daycares
- Friends and siblings



Recommendations Arising From This Analysis: Culturally Safe Strategies Rooted In Community Strengths

- Using sharing circles
  - Sharing practices and traditions
  - Sharing difficulties and connecting
- Continuing training, developing new tools
- Community video capsule

Training

- Training for practitioners and parents in communities (2024-2025)
  - Upstream sharing circles
  - Sexuality education
  - How to receive a sexual assault disclosure

Capsule

- Here's a snippet!

What's next!

- Disseminate the capsule
- Continue the trainings/workshops and sharing circles
  - Sustainability...

Ekote, tan e iki iteritaman,
e iki iterimowin
Question and exchange periods
... reflections ...emotions
Mikwetc kaskina, mikwetc mictai
For hope, for our children's future