

Chapter 7

LEARNING ABOUT NATIONS

ELEVEN DIVERSE NATIONS

Quebec has 11 Aboriginal nations that are divided into 54 communities varying in size from a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants. These communities are located in very diverse surroundings: some are near large urban centres and others are accessible only by logging roads, airplane or boat.

These 11 nations belong to three language and cultural families. The Inuit are part of the Eskaleut family, the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) and the Huron-Wendat belong to the traditionally sedentary Iroquoian family, and the eight other nations are part of the traditionally nomadic Algonquin family.

Diversity is the essence of the Aboriginal reality in Quebec, and this manifests itself in several ways, including language, traditions, lifestyles, and beliefs, and it forms the basis of the identity that is specific to each nation. Most Amerindians and Inuit define themselves by their nationhood: before being Aboriginal peoples, they are Innu, Atikamekw, Micmac, Huron, Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk), Inuit, and so on.

The Waban-Aki (Abenaki), the People of the Rising Sun

The Abenaki originated from New England, where some of their descendants still live. Beginning in 1675, a number of Abenaki took refuge in the St. Lawrence Valley because of their numerous conflicts with the American colonies. They settled in the Quebec City region before locating along the Saint-François and Bécancour rivers. The Abenaki subsisted partly on agriculture, but hunting and fishing occupied a very important place in their way of life.

Jean-Paul Nolet, who marked the beginnings of the Radio-Canada French-language television network, was a proud Abenaki from Odanak. In 1975, he also became the first Amerindian commissioner named to the Commission des droits de la personne du Québec.

Photo: CDPDJ



With the decline of hunting in the 19th century, the Abenaki developed their handicrafts on a large scale. Basketwork, in particular, brought them considerable income until the 1930s.

Today, the Abenaki live in a semi-urban environment and still engage in making handicrafts and sewing. Since 1986, they have been represented by the Grand Council of the Wabanaki Nation.



Annette Nolet of Odanak is a seamstress by trade. At times, however, she devotes herself to weaving baskets out of ash, a tradition that has been handed down from her mother and her grandmother.

Photo: Pierre Lepage

The Mamiwinnik (Algonquin), the People of the Land

The Algonquin traditionally lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering. Their territory extended from the Ottawa River basin to the northern boundaries of the Abitibi region. As of the 19th century, settlement and forest-industry development considerably hampered their way of life. They began to settle in communities with the creation of the first reserves on Algonquin territory in the 1850s, and this continued up to the 20th century, in particular with the opening of the Abitibi region to settlement.



James (Jimmy) Papatie from Kitcisakik poses proudly with his grandfather, Salomon Papatie.

Photo: Claudette Fontaine, MEQ collection

Today, the Algonquin are active in reforestation, trapping and handicrafts. Many of them still hunt and fish. Certain families even live a nomadic existence akin to that of their ancestors. There are two Algonquin communities in Ontario, but the majority of Algonquin live in Quebec and are represented politically by the Algonquin–Anishnabeg Nation Council and the Algonquin Nation Programs and Services Secretariat.

The Atikamekw, the People of the Bark

The territory of the Atikamekw is located in the northern part of the Saint-Maurice River basin. In years gone by, the nomadic Atikamekw lived by hunting, fishing and gathering. Their move to settlements, which began slowly in the early 20th century, resulted in large part from forest-industry development in the Saint-Maurice River basin.

Today, the Atikamekw are very active in the sector of reforestation and silviculture. The relatively isolated Atikamekw communities are accessible by logging roads. Despite major changes in their lifestyle, the Atikamekw are still very attached to traditional



Young Atikamekw girls building a bark canoe, Manouane, 1953.

Photo: O.F.Q., Archives nationales du Québec, Quebec City

life: many families regularly return to the forest to hunt, trap, fish, and gather. The Atikamekw are represented by the Atikamekw Nation Council.

The Nituuuuuiyuuch (Cree), the People of the Hunt

In the past, the Cree lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering. Their territory, located east of James and Hudson bays, was long sheltered from industrial expansion. However, the 1970s, which were marked by the James Bay hydroelectric mega-developments, were decisive for the Cree. Their opposition to the projects forced the Canadian and Quebec governments to negotiate with them.

In 1975, the Cree signed the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*, which granted them compensation and specific rights over vast territories on which the Cree could pursue the hunting, fishing and trapping activities that formed a large part of their culture and economy. The Cree are represented by the Grand Council of the Crees of Iyiyuu Istchee, and today the Cree live in modern communities. Their nation experienced strong economic development after the 1975 agreement was signed.



An important Cree rite of passage: the walking-out ceremony.

Photo: Claudette Fontaine, MEQ collection



F.X. Picard (Tahourenché), Grand Chief of the Jeune Lorette's Huron.

Engraving: l'Opinion publique, 1879, collection of Pierre Lepage

The Huron-Wendat, the People of Trade

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Huron were living southeast of Lake Huron. They were a sedentary tribe that practised agriculture, but they nonetheless devoted a number of weeks a year to hunting and fishing. In 1650, the period of the Iroquois wars, approximately 500 Huron-Wendat settled near Quebec City, a region they had frequently visited for trade. They relocated a few times before settling in Wendake, in 1697. Hunting then became more important to the Huron, who hunted several months per year, primarily in the territories located between the Saguenay and the Saint-Maurice rivers.

In the 19th century, with the gradual shrinking of their hunting grounds, the Huron increasingly developed and marketed their handicrafts. These products have played a major role in their economy ever since. Today, the Huron form one of the most prosperous Amerindian communities in Quebec. They are represented by the Huron-Wendat Nation Council.

INDIAN AND INUIT POPULATIONS IN QUEBEC				2007
Nation	Total	Nation	Total	
ABENAKI		HURON-WENDAT		
Odanak	1 864	Wendake		3 006
Wôlinak	227			
Total	2 091	MALECITE		
ALGONQUIN		Cacouna and Whitworth		786
Hunter's Point	209	MICMAC		
Kebawek	807	Gaspé		506
Kitcisakik	437	Gesgapegiag		1 259
Kitigan Zibi	2 707	Listuguj		3 339
Lac Simon	1 620	Total		5 104
Pikogan	870	MOHAWK		
Rapid Lake	650	Akwesasne		
Timiskaming	1 630	(in Quebec only)		5 132
Winneway	715	Kahnawake		9 570
Total	9 645	Kanesatake		2 025
ATIKAMEKW		Total		16 727
Manawan	2 329	INNU (MONTAGNAIS)		
Obedjiwan	2 434	Betsiamites		3 570
Wemotaci	1 558	Essipit		416
Total	6 321	La Romaine		1 056
CREE		Mashteuiatsh		4 886
Chisasibi	3 813	Matimekoshe-Lac-John		846
Eastmain	656	Mingan		537
Mistissini	3 982	Natashquan		932
Nemiscau	623	Pakua Shipi		302
Oujé-Bougoumou	729	Uashat and Maliotenam		3 654
Waskaganish	2 396	Total		16 199
Waswanipi	1 790	NASKAPI		
Wemindji	1 361	Kawawachikamach		673
Whapmagoostui	821	GENERAL LIST Registered Indians not associated with a nation		84
Total	16 151	REGISTRED INDIANS		76 787
Nation	Total	Nation	Total	
INUIT				
Akulivik	545	Kuujuaq		1 770
Aupaluk	165	Kuujuarapik		551
Chisasibi	119	Puvirnitug		1 513
Inukjuak	1 406	Quaqtaq		343
Ivujivik	287	Salluit		1 250
Kangiqsualujuaq	738	Tasiujaq		253
Kangiqsujuaq	591	Umiujaq		408
Kangirsuk	525	Total		10 464
Grand total				87 251

The Mig'maq (Micmac), the People of the Sea

The Micmac traditionally lived by hunting, fishing and gathering. Their ancestral territory covered the southeastern portion of the Gaspé peninsula, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, much of New Brunswick, and southern Newfoundland. Micmac hunters and fishers also journeyed to Anticosti Island and occasionally the shore of the North Coast and the Magdalen Islands.



Photo: Félix Atencio, MEQ collection

Starting in the 18th century, settlement progressively restricted the hunting grounds of the Micmac, who became less nomadic and turned toward other activities to ensure their survival (handicrafts, forestry work, and so on). Today, the majority of Micmac live in the Maritime provinces. The Micmac of Quebec are divided into three communities and represented by three band councils. The forest industry, construction, tourism, handicrafts, and services related to sport fishing and hunting are their principal economic activities.

The Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk), the People of the Flint

The Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) belong to the Five Iroquois Nations, which have territories in the state of New York, Quebec, and Ontario. They were traditionally a sedentary tribe that practised agriculture. However, hunting and fishing remained major subsistence activities. The hunting grounds of the Kanien'kehaka extended to the south of the St. Lawrence River, where some of this tribe settled as of the 1660s, giving rise to three communities: Kahnawake, Kanesatake and Akwesasne.

A troupe of Mohawk dancers from Kahnawake at the annual *Présence Autochtone Festival* in Montreal.

Photo: Jean-Yves Fontaine

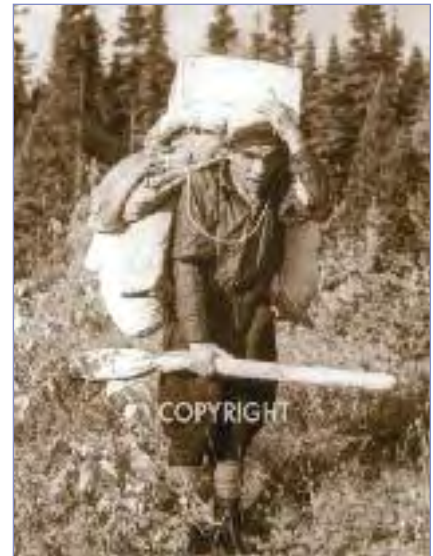


As of the 19th century, the Kanien'kehaka turned to other economic activities. Many work on construction sites, where their talents for high-construction work have earned them an excellent reputation. Today, the Kanien'kehaka form the most populous Amerindian nation in Quebec. They live in urban and semi-urban environments. Represented by three different band councils and by traditional councils, the Kanien'kehaka maintain ties with the other Iroquois nations.

The Innu (Montagnais), the Immensity of a Territory

The Innu were nomadic, depending on the products of hunting, fishing, and gathering for their subsistence. Their ancestral territory covered the entire region between Quebec City and Labrador and extended north of Schefferville. At the end of the 19th century, settlement and the forest industry led the Innu living in the South to become increasingly sedentary. More to the north, the process really did not begin until the 20th century and even, in certain cases, until after 1950.

Today, the Innu are actively developing tourism and natural resource management on their territory: their salmon rivers are among the most beautiful in the world. In the most northerly Innu communities, hunting and trapping are still important activities. Two political organizations now represent the Innu: Mamit Innuat and Mamuitun.



Jos Collar of Betsiamites portages
250-pound loads, about 1940.

Photo: Paul Provencher,
Archives nationales du Québec, Quebec City

The Naskapi, in the Heart of Caribou Country

The Naskapi nation has a single community, Kawawachikamach, in northeastern Quebec. Culturally very close to the Innu and the Cree, the Naskapi formerly lived by hunting and fishing. Every year, they covered territories extending from the coast of Labrador to James Bay, in pursuit of caribou herds. When the Naskapi settled in Schefferville in 1956 the process of the move to the sedentary life began.

The Naskapi have been developing adventure tourism and managing hunting and fishing outfitters for a few years. They are also active in road construction and maintenance. With the signing of the *Northeastern Québec Agreement* in

1978, the Naskapi acquired a high degree of administrative autonomy, as well as ownership rights over a 285-square-kilometre territory. They also have the use of a territory measuring 4,144 square kilometres for hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Bill C-31 Increases the Number of Registered Indians

We saw in chapter three that from its inception the ultimate objective of the *Indian Act* was enfranchisement—the loss of Indian status through emancipation. This act has meant a denial of identity for thousands of persons, especially Indian women who married non-Indians. This injustice was partially corrected,

in 1985, with the adoption of federal law C-31. Many persons and their descendants have been able to regain their Indian status and their association with Aboriginal communities. In only five years, the registered-Indian population has grown 19 per cent Canada-wide, and

this can be attributed to the change in the law (Canada, Commission royale 4, 1996, 38). It is estimated that the number of registered Indians in Quebec has grown by 9,000 for the same reason (Quebec, SAA, 1997, 8).



Johnny Piastitute's
family gets ready
for the hunt,
about 1940

Photo: Paul Provencher,
Archives nationales du Québec,
Quebec City

MÉTIS AND NON-STATUS INDIANS

As well as registered Indians and Inuit, Québec has a large population of Métis and non-status Indians. Non-status Indians are Amerindian persons who are not registered under the terms of the Indian Act, either because their ancestors were never registered or because they lost their Indian status under former provisions of the Act. Persons of mixed (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) ancestry are generally referred to as “Métis.” The situation of these two groups is not widely known and their numbers may vary between 15,000 and 45,000 in Quebec, depending on the source consulted (Quebec, SAA, 1998, 25).

The question of the Métis is especially complex in constitutional terms. Since 1982, the Canadian constitution has recognized the Métis as one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples. Who are the Métis to whom the constitution applies? The Supreme Court of Canada recently answered this question, laying out the essential criteria for recognition as Métis and enjoyment of related rights: “The term “Métis” in s. 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears. A Métis community is a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographical area and sharing a common way of life.” (R. v. Powley, [2003] 2 S.C.R. 207)

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN THE CITY

The number of persons of Aboriginal origin who are living in urban environments is becoming greater and greater. Some have simply chosen to make their homes in cities, but they remain Aboriginal persons who are aware and proud of their identity. Others are attracted by the cities because they offer employment opportunities that cannot be found in their communities.

Édith Cloutier, Executive Director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre and Oscar Kistabish, member of the Board of Directors of the Centre whose mission is to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people living in Val-d'Or, to promote Aboriginal culture and to encourage harmonious relations with non-Aboriginal people.

Photo : Pierre Lepage



As the table below shows, for some nations a significant number of persons live outside of their communities.

THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED INDIANS AND INUIT BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Nation	Population	Residents	Non-residents
Abenaki	2 091	18.0%	82.0%
Algonquin	9 645	57.8%	42.2%
Atikamekw	6 321	84.3%	15.7%
Cree	16 151	89.3%	10.7%
Huron-Wendat	3 006	43.6%	56.4%
Malecite	786	0.0%	100.0%
Micmac	5 104	49.8%	50.2%
Mohawk	16 727	82.7%	17.3%
Montagnais	16 199	70.6%	29.4%
Naskapi	673	93.2%	6.8%
Inuit	10 464	92.8%	7.2%
Total	87 251	74.7%	25.3%

(Source: Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs: Indian and Inuit Populations of Quebec, 2007.)

There are a number of Aboriginal organizations that are well placed in the city. This is the case, for example, for the Atikamekw Sipi (the Atikamekw Nation Council), who maintains an important Centre in La Tuque. The Quebec Native Women's Association is now based in Kahnawake. Waseskun House, a residential centre for Aboriginal persons who are in difficulty with the law, the Grand Council of the Crees, the Cree School Board, Makivik Corporation, the Kativik School Board, the Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec, and the Avataq Cultural Institute also have offices in the Montreal region.

There are a number of Aboriginal organizations in the Quebec City region as well, principally in Wendake: the offices of the Secretariat of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, the First Nations Education Council, the First Peoples' Business Association, the Société touristique des autochtones du Québec, and the Société de communication atikamekw-montagnaise, are just a few of the ones that are located there.

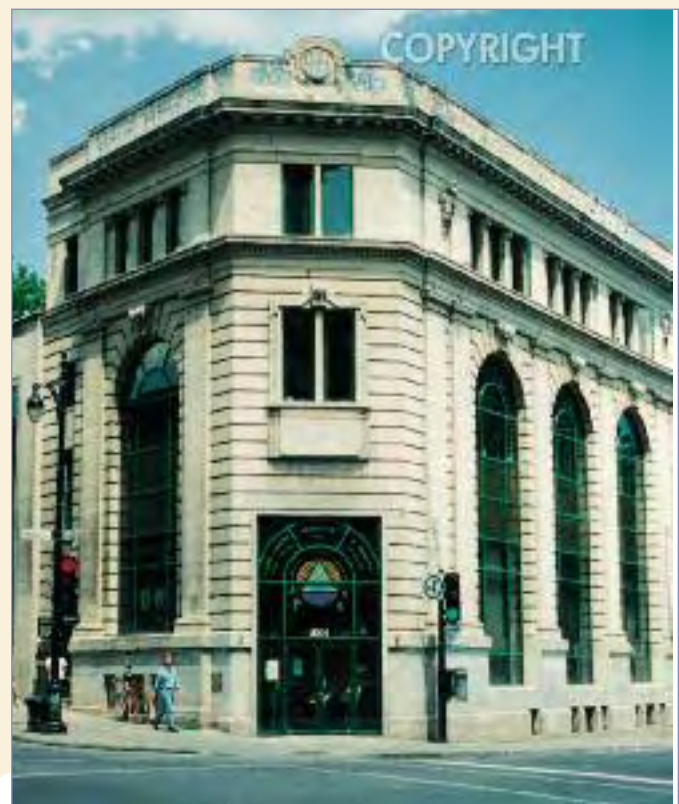


Eva Ottawa (centre) was elected in 2006 Grand Chief of the Atikamekw Nation. She is of great inspiration to many young Aboriginal people. The Council of the Nation, Atikamekw Sipi, has an important centre in La Tuque.

Photo : Pierre Lepage

essential role providing services to Aboriginal persons living in urban areas. La Tuque, Chibougamau, Senneterre, Val-d'Or, Loretteville, Montréal and Joliette all have one, and a centre recently opened in Sept-Îles. These are non-profit community organizations that offer a range of services, such as accommodation, references, social services, employment assistance, cultural and artistic activities, as well as many others. They are places where Aboriginal persons can get together and help each other. In Val-d'Or alone, the directors of the Native Friendship Centre indicated in 2004 that the Aboriginal population living in the city had doubled in ten years (Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre 2004).

The Native Friendship Centres play an



Montreal's Native Friendship Centre is located at the corner of Ontario and St. Laurent.

Photo: Pierre Lepage

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION, ed. *The First Nations and Inuit in Quebec at a glance*. Wendake, 20007. 87 p.

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A gathering during a lacrosse game in Kahnawake, 1913.

Photo: A. Mailhot, courtesy of the Geological Survey of Canada