POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN QUEBEC

Research results

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Cover picture : Marie-Raphaëlle LeBlond. Minwashin.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
NWAC	Native Women's Association of Canada
AFNQL	Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
QNW	Quebec Native Women
WAGE	Women and Gender Equality Canada

1. INTRODUCTION

In pre-colonial Canada, the traditional governance systems of Indigenous Peoples were based on cooperation, autonomy, complementarity and inter-connectedness (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009). With respect to Indigenous women in particular, they were autonomous and held key positions within Indigenous governance systems. The introduction of colonial policies disrupted their roles (Basile, 2017). The introduction of the *Indian Act* of 1876 shut out women from any political activities within their communities, and forbade them from seeking office, voting or even speaking at public meetings (Anderson, 2009; Voyageur, 2011). The objective was to relegate them to the domestic space, like European women, and to erase their power in the social and political organization as well as in local and territorial governance (Anderson, 2009). The *Indian Act* also ensured that Indigenous women who married non-status men lost their Indian status and property rights on the reserve. The same applied to children born of these unions. On the contrary, a white or non-native woman obtained *Indian* status by marrying a status man (Simpson, 2016). The provision of this law regarding the transmission of status had a clear objective of assimilation. Indeed, Indigenous women play a key role in the transmission of language, culture and values (Basile et al., 2017) so isolating women and their children for their community of belonging and culture aimed at progressively decreasing community populations and accelerating the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into colonial society. The political mobilization of Indigenous women is marked by multiple efforts, struggles and demands to recover their status. In 1974 alone, two associations for the defence of Indigenous women's rights were created, namely the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), and the Quebec Native Women (QNW) on the provincial level. The Indian Act was finally amended in 1985, giving bands the right to create their own membership codes and allowing Indigenous women to regain the status they had lost through marriage to non-Indigenous men.

As far as the involvement of Indigenous women in politics, after they gained the right to participate in elections in 1951, there were only seven women chiefs and 107 women Councillors out of 557 bands in Canada in 1964 (Séguin, 1981). The Indian Act has had the effect of valuing and increasing men's roles in the governance, economic and cultural life of communities, while women's participation in these areas has been diminished and devalued (Barker, 2008). In this way, male domination within band councils was eventually normalized and legitimized.

Today, the situation seems to be changing. In 2020, in Indigenous communities in Quebec, there were 80 female Councillors out of 236 (34%) and six female chiefs out of 40 (15%) (CIRNAC, 2020) . To the best of our knowledge, there is only one Indigenous woman mayor of a municipality in Quebec, Senneterre-Paroisse in Abitibi-Témiscamingue (Poulin, 2021). By way of comparison, in 2017, women represented 26% of elected women in the House of Commons (Canada), 27% in the National Assembly (Quebec) and 32% at the Quebec municipal level (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2018; HillNotes, 2019; UMQ, 2017).

This research stems from the fact that there is little literature available on the place of Indigenous women in past and present Indigenous governance structures in Quebec. While some authors have examined the experiences and the reasons why Indigenous women enter politics, these studies are over a decade old and have been conducted primarily in Western Canada. In general, there has been little interest in Indigenous women's experiential knowledge to date and this research aims at contributing to the reclaiming of this knowledge (Gentelet, 2009; Smith, 2021).

The objectives of the research were:

- To document the past and present political involvement of Indigenous women in Quebec;
- To provide a portrait of the leadership and issues of Indigenous women politicians in Quebec;
- To highlight the factors that promote or hinder the participation of Indigenous women in political bodies;
- To develop guidelines to promote the political involvement of Indigenous women.

[1] The data provided for the year 2020 comes from a list dated February 23, 2020. The Kanienkehà:ka community of Akwesasne was not taken into account in these results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Colonialism as a system excluding Indigenous women from political affairs

Colonialism's logic of elimination seeks to erase Indigenous political, legal and economic orders that stand in the way of settlers' access to Indigenous lands and resources (Kuokkanen, 2019). Early colonizers did recognize the crucial role of Indigenous women in reproducing societies not only through giving birth but as importantly, through land governance (Kuokkanen, 2019). Notably, they were responsible for keeping an oral register of births and deaths, and for transmitting identity, language and culture (Basile, 2017; Simpson, 2016). The Euro-Canadian settlers and clergymen therefore quickly understood that Indigenous women represented an obstacle to their domination and to the imposition of a heteropatriarchal model (Simpson, 2016). As a result, Indigenous women were the primary target of colonial conquest, as their conversion to Western values helped gain control over men, destabilize societies, and consolidate colonial control (Coulthard, 2014).

The French Jesuits, upon arriving in North America, were confronted with societies in which women held, to varying degrees, central positions in the political, economic, and spiritual spheres, which they judged negatively (Perreault, 2015). Indeed, they disapproved of the authority women had within their families and communities (Brodribb, 1984). With this in mind, the French Jesuits sought to replace the relative reciprocity that existed in the relationship between Indigenous women and men by hierarchical relationships, such as those that existed in France at the same time. They also wished to regulate relations between women and men by imposing Christian marriages (Anderson, 1991). They then taught them that women should submit to the authority of their husbands and that sexuality outside the bonds of marriage should be outlawed (Federici, 2017; Kermoal, 2006).

Consequently, colonization led to changes in the relationship between Indigenous women and men, but above all it greatly contributed to the transformation of Indigenous women's roles (Emberley, 2001). The European system of thought and religion had legitimized gender distinction with respect to roles at work, in family responsibilities, and in politics (Basile, 2017; Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009). The efforts of colonial authorities stemmed from a deliberate attempt to minimize Indigenous women's political agency (Starblanket, 2020). The implementation of colonial policies such as the Indian Act of 1876 legally enshrined the exclusion of Indigenous women from the political sphere and disrupted the role of women (Lawrence, 2003; Monture-Augus, 1995; Turpel, 1993).

In this way, the colonial government legally imposed a patriarchal and patrilineal system of governance. It constituted a "legal femicide" of sorts, not of physical bodies, but of Indigenous women as political entities (Simpson, 2016).

2.2 The Political Experience of Indigenous Women in Western Canada

The research on Indigenous women politicians in Western Canada focused on women who served as chiefs. A common thread among the women interviewed was that they came from politically involved families and were politically involved themselves before becoming chiefs. For many, they were asked to run by other members (Sayers et al., 2001b; Voyageur, 2008). Women's main motivations for entering politics were to improve living conditions and to change the way the community is run (Voyageur, 2008). It was established that women's leadership was based on community, action, transparency and was often rooted in a traditional discourse of motherhood (Anderson, 2009). It was found that women tended to prioritize social issues, while men were more focused on resource and territorial issues (Anderson, 2009). Numerous obstacles to Indigenous women's political involvement have been identified, such as reconciling family and political life, lack of recognition and support, and little respect and credibility (Sayers et al., 2001b; Voyageur, 2008). Women have also pointed out other challenges, such as the high level of involvement that political office requires or the problems of favoritism practiced by some elected officials in favor of their family members (Anderson, 2009; Sayers et al., 2001b; Voyageur, 2008).

2.3 The political involvement of Indigenous women since 1951

Although Indigenous women did not obtain the right to vote or hold political office in band councils until 1951, this does not mean that they did not have other forms of participation in the governance of their community or Nation before that year. Women's contribution was essential and was present in other spheres that were not directly associated with political power, such as education, crafts or social services (Séguin, 1981). However, in the context of this research, we have focused our attention on this key date in the political history of Indigenous women and their involvement in the official political bodies imposed by the *Indian Act*.

2.3.1 Early political involvement of Indigenous women in Quebec

According to the information obtained so far, the first Indigenous women to have served as councillors in Quebec would be Antoinette Gros-Louis and Bernadette Picard. They were elected in Wendake in 1953 (Picard, 2012). A little later, Marcelline Kanapé-Picard was elected in Pessamit in 1962 and Anna Awashish, was elected in Opitciwan in 1963 (Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw/Atikamekw Sipi, s.d.).

The first woman to be elected chief was An Antane Kapesh, who served as chief of Matimekush-Lake John between 1965 and 1967 (Delisle L'Heureux, 2015; Kapesh, 2019). Later, Violet Pachanos was elected chief in Chisasibi in 1989 (Grand Council of the Crees/Cree Nation Government, 2020; Morissette, 2007). Then, in 1992, Marcelline Kanapé-Picard was elected chief in Pessamit, Jocelyne Gros-Louis in Wendake, Brenda Gedeon Miller in Listuguj and Violet Pachanos was re-elected for a second term in Chisasibi (Bisson, 1998; de Mer, 2001; Picard, 2012). For purposes of comparison, Elsie Marie Knott was the first female elected chief in Canada, in the Mississauga community of Curve Lake, Ontario in 1952 (Voyageur, 2011).

This information shows that very soon after obtaining the right to run for office (1951), some Indigenous women became involved in their band councils, as councillors or chiefs. However, the percentage of women among Indigenous elected officials remained marginal for several years.

2.3.2 Recent political involvement of Indigenous women in Quebec and Canada

After these pioneers, other women have reached the position of Grand Chief of their Nation. Eva Ottawa was the first woman to be elected Grand Chief of the Atikamekw Nation in 2006, a position she held until 2013 (Morissette, 2007; Radio-Canada, 2016). She was also the first Indigenous woman to chair the Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec in 2016 (Radio-Canada, 2016). Alice Jerome was the first woman elected Grand Chief of the Algonquin-Anishinabeg Nation in 2012 (Parent-Bouchard, 2012). She served in this position for four years. Verna Polson then held the position from 2016 to 2021 (Guindon, 2021). 70 years after the amendment of the *Indian Act*, the year 2021 has been particularly fruitful for Indigenous women[2] in politics in Quebec and Canada. We have witnessed the election of RoseAnne Archibald (Taykwa Tagamou Nation) as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (Findlay et Kohen). She is the first female

[2] In general, the information contained in this report, both in the literature review or research results, only involve First Nations women, but based on practical considerations, we refer to Indigenous women throughout this report.

AFN National Chief. Mary Simon (Inuit) was sworn in as Canada's 30th Governor General. She is the first Indigenous person to be appointed to the role. Michèle Audette (Innu Nation) was nominated to the Senate. Mandy Gull-Masty (Eeyou/Cree Nation), former Deputy-Chief of the Waswanipi Cree community, then Deputy-Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees/Cree Nation Government, was elected as Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees/Cree Nation Government. She is the first cree woman Grand Chief. Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer (Kanienkehà:ka Nation) was elected Grand Chief in Kahnawà:ke. She is the first woman and the first two-spirit person to occupy this position. Theresa Chemaganish was elected leader of the Kawawachikamash Naskapi Nation. She is the first woman chief of this Nation. However, this gathering of recently elected Indigenous women must not let us forget the long obstacle-ridden journey of Indigenous political involvement experienced by women. Together, these appointments and elections indicate a positive evolution of the place of Indigenous women on the political scene. In Canada, in 2008, about 120 women (19%) were chiefs and more than 800 (30%) were councillors (Voyageur, 2011). To date, in Canada, slightly more than a third of the Council positions are held by women in First Nations communities (CIRNAC, 2021)[3] (Figure 2.1).

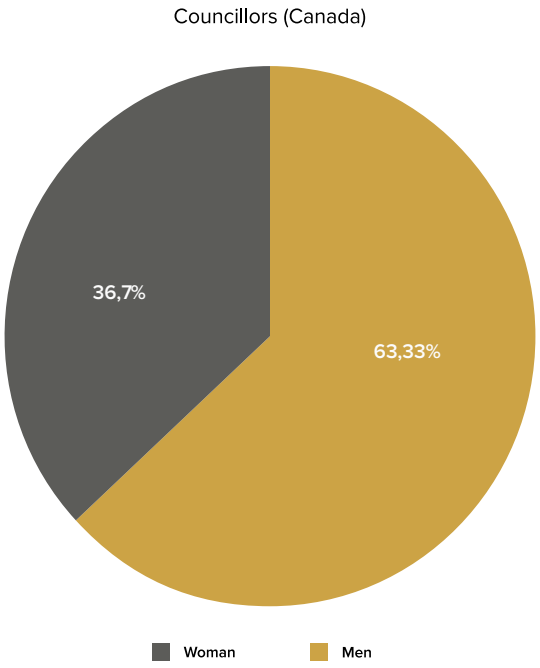

Figure 2.1 Gender distribution of councillors in Canada

[3] The data provided for the year 2021 comes from a list dated February 10, 2021.

The proportion of women chiefs is lower than that of women councillors, with women accounting for about one in four in Canada (CIRNAC, 2021) (Figure 2.2).

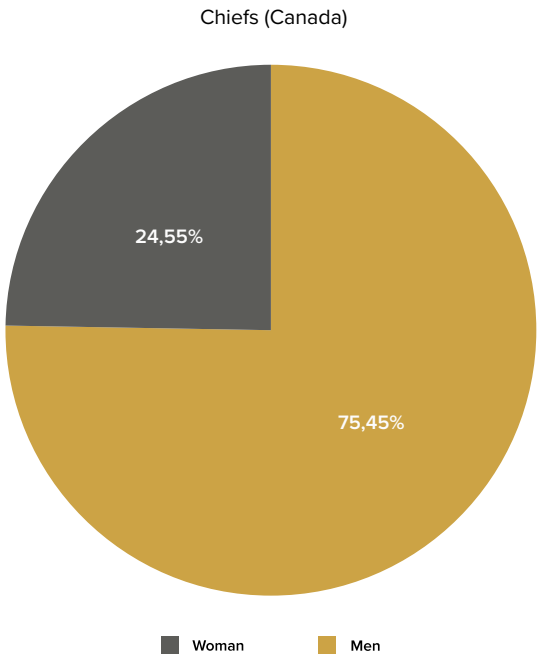

Figure 2.2 Gender distribution of chiefs in Canada

In Quebec, the distribution of women as councillors is the same as in Canada, at approximately 37%. However, for the position of chief, the representation of women is approximately 10% lower than in Canada (CIRNAC, 2021) (Figure 2.3).

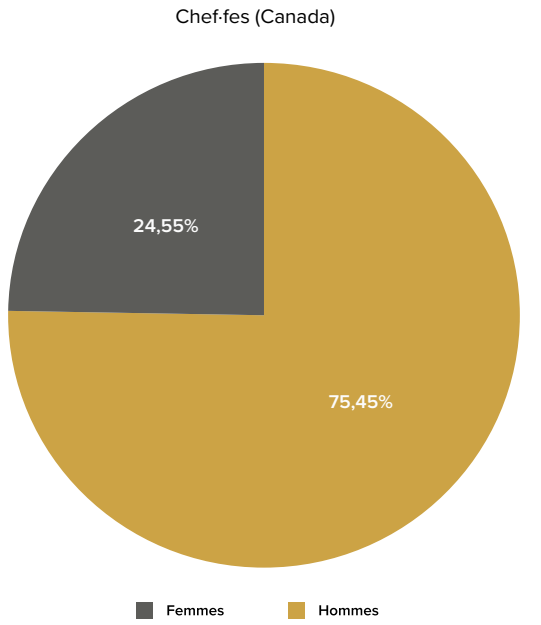

Figure 2.2 Répartition des chef·fes selon leur genre au Canada

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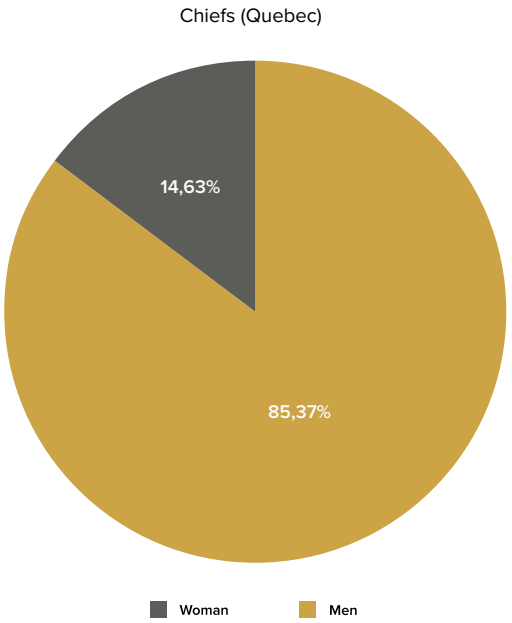

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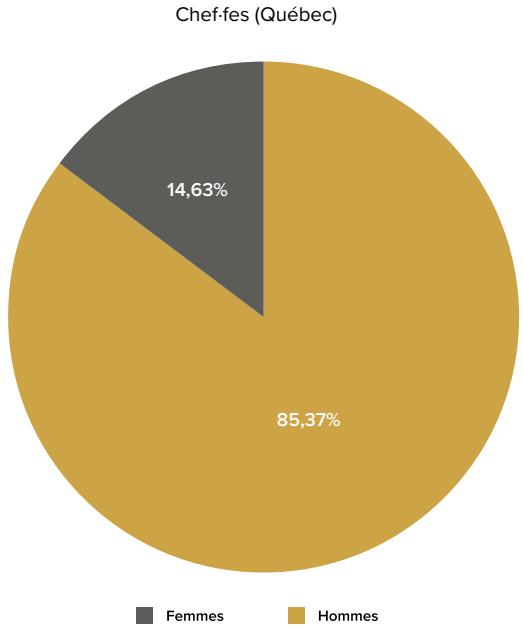

Figure 2.3 Répartition des chef·fes selon leur genre au Québec

Available data for 2009 and 2021 show that Indigenous women's political involvement in Quebec has increased from 27% to 37% over the past twelve years (CIRNAC, 2021; Lajoie, 2009) (Table 2.1).

Nation	Community	2009 (%)	2021 (%)
Anishinabeg	Barriere Lake	NA	14
	Kitcisakik	25	40
	Kebaowek	0	25
	Kitigan Zibi	42	14
	Long Point	33	60
	Lac Simon	66	40
	Timiskaming	42	71
	Wolf Lake	33	67
	Abitibiwinni	40	80
Atikamekw	Opitciwan	43	29
	Wemotaci	28	29
	Manawan	28	29
Innu	Pessamit	42	43
	Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam	20	0
	Essipit	0	50
	Ekuanitshit	40	40
	Pakua Shipu	20	20
	Unamen Shipu	0	43
	Pekuaka-miulnuatsh (Mashteuiatsh)	42	14
	Nutashkuan	0	0
	Matimekush Lac John	40	40
Eeyou/Cree	Chisasibi	30	46
	Mistissini	25	9
	Nemaska	30	29
	Wemindji	30	14
	Oujé Bougou-mou	30	43
	Whaskaganish	18	36
	Waswanipi	12	33
	Whapmagoostui	25	56
	Eastmain	0	40

Nation	Community	2009 (%)	2021 (%)
Mi'kmaq	Gespeg	25	60
	Listuguj	38	23
	Gesgapegiag	11	57
Kanienkehà:ka	Kahnawà:ke	16	33
	Kanesatake	57	29
	Akwesasne	38	54
Naskapi	Kawawachika-mach	0	33
Huron-Wendat	Wendake	11	0
Waban-Aki	Odanak	20	40
	Wôlinak	0	0
Wolastoqiyik Wahsipekuk (Maliseet)	Cacouna	40	20
Total (%)		27	37

Tableau 2.1 Percentages of women elected to Band Councils in Quebec in 2009 and 2021

2.3.2.1 The creation of the AFNQL Council of Elected Women

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) Council of Elected Women was founded in 2008, under the initiative of Marjolaine Etienne, then Vice Chief of the Innu Nation of Mashteuiatsh. She had been appointed by the AFNQL Regional Chief to represent the Indigenous women elected in Quebec at the AFN. At that time, there was no network of elected Indigenous women in Quebec and they did not know each other. Ms. Etienne worked to create a body that would to bring together Indigenous elected women so that they could be in contact and better represented at the national level. At the time of the creation of the AFNQL's Council of Elected Women, there were 86 women elected as councillors or chiefs in Quebec (Groupe Nekiera'ha, 2010).

The Council was created so that elected women could have a platform to bring their issues to the AFNQL Chiefs' table, as well as to create a network to break isolation and find support. This body also gives them access to training related to the function of elected officials. The Council has also allowed elected Indigenous women to create links with women parliamentarians in Quebec. Indeed, on February 18, 2015, a Protocol of Solidarity was signed between the Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec

and the elected women of the AFNQL. This agreement was concluded by Anne Archambault, who was at the time Grand Chief of the Maliseet and spokesperson for the elected women of the AFNQL, and by Maryse Gaudreault who was Vice-President of the National Assembly and President of the Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec. This agreement recalls the common values between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women such as solidarity, equality, non-discrimination and social justice (Figure 2.4).

PROTOCOLE DE SOLIDARITÉ
ENTRE
LE CERCLE DES FEMMES PARLEMENTAIRES DU QUÉBEC
ET
LES ÉLUES DE L'ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS DU QUÉBEC ET DU LABRADOR (APNQL)

PROTOCOL OF SOLIDARITY
BETWEEN
THE CERCLE DES FEMMES PARLEMENTAIRES DU QUÉBEC
AND
THE ELECTED WOMEN OF THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS OF QUÉBEC AND LABRADOR (AFNQL)

Parce que nous sommes désireuses de partager nos expériences, nos réalités, nos sensibilités, nos savoir-être et savoir-faire, basés sur le respect mutuel, la complicité, l'ouverture et le désir d'apprendre ;

Because we wish to share our experiences, realities, sensibilities, soft skills and know-how, based on mutual respect, collaboration, openness and the desire to learn;

Parce que nous avons à faire face à des défis communs, similaires, en tant que femmes d'esprit, de passion, de terrain, de décision, élues démocratiquement pour représenter nos collectivités et parce que nous avons à cœur leur développement actuel et leur devenir ;

Because we face common, similar challenges, as women, decision-makers, who are wise, passionate, working in the field, democratically elected to represent our communities, and because we have their current development and their future at heart;

Parce que nous souhaitons unir nos forces pour encore mieux nous faire entendre, additionner les voix, intervenir dans la sphère publique sur des enjeux communs, au service de la démocratie inclusive et de la prise en compte des réalités particulières vécues par celles et ceux que nous représentons ;

Because we wish to join forces and voices to be even better heard, to act in the public realm on common issues while serving inclusive democracy and the specific realities of the people we represent;

Nous, femmes élues de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador et du Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec, convenons de *nous rapprocher pour agir ensemble*, de créer des liens durables basés sur l'échange et nos valeurs communes de solidarité, de partage, de non-discrimination, d'égalité, d'équité, de paix et de justice sociale.

We, the Elected Women of the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador and the Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec, agree to *collaborate so we can act together*, to create lasting ties based on discussion and our common values of solidarity, sharing, non-discrimination, equality, fairness, peace and social justice.

Nous scellons aujourd'hui cette entente de solidarité pour nous et prenons l'engagement de nous rencontrer au moins une fois l'an, pour le bien-être actuel de nos collectivités et pour celles en devenir.

On this day, we seal this solidarity agreement and pledge to meet at least once a year, for the well-being of our current communities and for those to come.

Signé à Québec, Québec, le 18 février 2015

Signed in Québec City, Québec, on February 18, 2015:

Maryse Gaudreault
Députée de Hull
Vice-présidente de l'Assemblée nationale
Présidente du Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec

Member for Hull
Vice-president of the National Assembly
Chair of the Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec

Anne Archambault
Grand Chef
Première Nation Malécite de Viger
Porte-Parole des Élues de l'APNQL

Grand Chief
Viger Maliceet First Nation
Spokesperson for the AFNQL Elected Women

Figure 2.4 Protocol of solidarity between the Cercle des parlementaires du Québec and the Elected Women of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Literature search

We conducted a literature search to learn about the place of Indigenous women in traditional governance and the impact of colonization on their role. We also consulted previous research on the political involvement of Indigenous women in Canada. The work that was the starting point for this research is “Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century” (Voyageur, 2008). The publication presents the perspectives of sixty-four women Chiefs throughout Canada. It examines their political journeys and the challenges they faced along the way. We also relied on other research studies on issues faced by Indigenous women in politics, such as the research article “Leading by Action: Female chiefs and the Political Landscape” (Anderson, 2009) and the document “First Nations women, governance and the Indian Act: a collection of policy research reports” (Sayers et al., 2001). We have also considered the information included in the recent master’s thesis “Défis et réalités des femmes élues de Kahnawà:ke” (Strasbourg, 2018), and the report “Encountering Each Other: Discussions with Elected Aboriginal Women in Québec” (GTFE de l’APNQL et CSFQ, 2010). The database of the Research Laboratory on Indigenous Women’s Issues - Mikwatisiw, directed by the director of this research, also contributed to the literature search process. We also consulted the Autochtonia database of the DIALOG Network.

In order to obtain as much information as possible on the establishment of the AFNQL’s Council of Elected Women and on Indigenous women’s leadership in general, we called upon some of the participants in this research as well as the AFNQL Secretariat. We obtained a copy of the “Protocol of Solidarity” signed by the Elected Women of the AFNQL and the Cercle des femmes parlementaires du Québec (Archambault et Gaudreault, 2015), the report of the seminar “From Financial Autonomy to Political Leadership” held in Roberval in 2017 (Bastien et al., 2017), as well as the list of elected officials of the Huron-Wendat community of Wendake since 1951 (Picard, 2012). The latter document allowed us to see that there was a discrepancy with the information we had about the dates and names of the first Indigenous women who became involved in politics in Quebec.

Following this observation, we contacted the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) by email to obtain a list of elected officials in all Indigenous communities of Canada for the year 2021. These lists identified the councillors and chiefs by gender, allowing us to identify the number of women councillors and chiefs

across Canada. However, after closer examination of CIRNAC data, it appeared that the gender identification was often inaccurate. We then proceeded to verify the gender of the elected officials for each community by consulting the websites of the band councils where the membership of the band council is generally provided, as well as a photograph of the councillors and the chief. For example, in the province of British Columbia, there are 395 female councillors and 61 female chiefs, for a total of 456 elected women. However, of these 456 elected women, the letter “M” for “Male” was entered beside the names of 215 elected women. As a result, approximately 47% of the elected women in British Columbia were listed as “male” on the CIRNAC lists. The same was true for the province of Ontario where there were 324 elected women, including 290 councillors and 34 chiefs. Of these 324 elected women, 108 women were listed as “male”, representing 33.3% of the elected women in Ontario. Errors were also found in most other provinces. Despite this, and after reviewing the CIRNAC lists, it was possible to obtain more accurate statistics on the presence of women in Indigenous politics for the year 2021.

Once again, we contacted CIRNAC to obtain the lists of elected Indigenous women in Quebec from 1951 (the year Indigenous women obtained the right to vote and to be elected to band councils) to 1956 in order to find out what was the rate of political participation of Indigenous women in Quebec in the 1950s. It was difficult to obtain answers from CIRNAC, and we had to resort to the Access to Information Act (ATIA) to acquire these documents. Not satisfied with the answers we received; we reported the problem to the AFNQL’s Council of Elected Women. After sending a letter requesting access to the information signed by the representatives of the AFNQL’s Council of Elected Women, we obtained the lists of elected women from 17 communities in Quebec, between 1951 and 1975. These lists allowed us to confirm the presence of a few more women (than we had data for) in the band councils at that time. We made an additional information request to obtain data from the other 22 communities in Quebec. At the writing of this report, we have still not received a positive response to our request.

Did you know ?

The call for action nº 5 of the Public Inquiry Commission between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress - Viens Commission (CERP) recommends to:

"Make the necessary administrative and legislative changes to allow Indigenous authorities to access data about their populations at all times, in the health and social services sectors in particular". (CERP, 2019)

According to findings in the 2021 report tabled by the Follow-Up Committee of the Viens Commission aiming to track the implementation of the Viens Commission's calls to action, it appears that access to information still represents a challenge for Indigenous authorities (Brodeur-Girard et al., 2021).

3.2 Recruitment of participants

This research is a response to a need expressed several times by Indigenous women themselves during consultations conducted by the Research Laboratory on Indigenous Women's Issues - Mikwatisiw since its creation in 2017 and comes from the suggestion of several AFNQL women chiefs. Participants were recruited through a call-out to the network of contacts of the AFNQL Council of Elected Women during a presentation in 2018, as well as through snowball sampling, which consists of inviting participants to suggest others who correspond to the research criteria (Gamborg et al., 2012). The testimonies of Indigenous women elected or formerly elected in politics were collected during semi-structured interviews between August 2020 and March 2021. In total, 20 interviews were conducted, including a focus group with more than one elected woman. For practical reasons, the comments made by women during the focus group have been analyzed as one source of information since these statements were both complementary and incomplete in the sense that all participants did not systematically answer all questions. The selection of participants was made with a view to having as many First Nations represented as possible, for the purpose of drawing the most complete portrait possible[4].

[4] Women from the Kanienkehà:ka Nation are not included since their political involvement has recently been documented in a master's thesis (Strasbourg, 2018). In addition, for reasons beyond our control, the Naskapi Nation is unfortunately not represented, having failed to obtain an interview. Inuit women are not included

The selection of participants also targeted all types of political positions (Grand Chief, Chief, Councillor, etc.). Age and political experience were also factors in the selection of participants. It was important to have participants who were older or had extensive political experience, as well as younger participants or those with less political experience, to document the evolution of the place of Indigenous women in politics in Quebec throughout the decades since 1951.

3.3 Profile of participants

At the time of the interviews, the participants were between 40 and 80 years of age. Half of the women were between 50 and 59 years old (50%) (Figure 3.1).

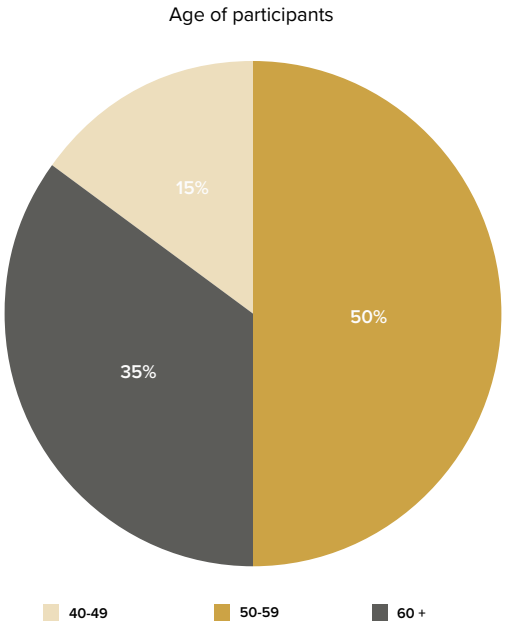

Figure 3.1. Distribution of participants by age group

When they served their first political term or they started their various political activities, the majority of the participants (80%) were between 30 and 49 years old (Figure 3.2).

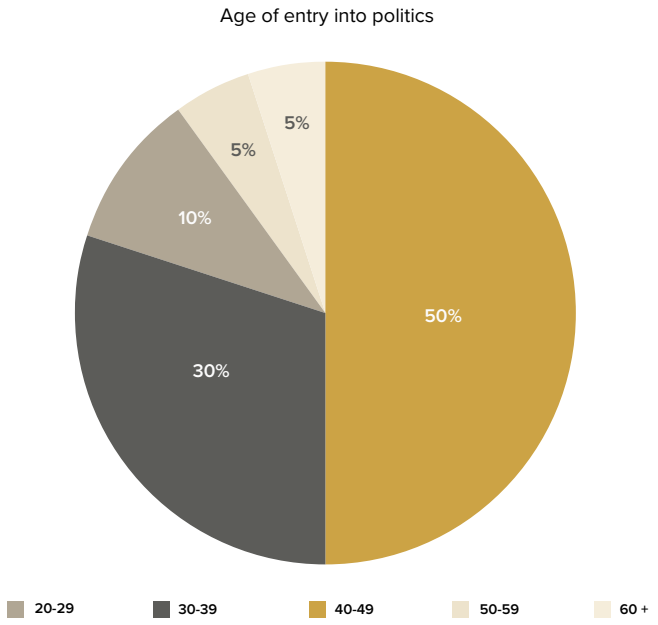

Figure 3.2. Distribution of participants by age of entry into politics

Half of the participants are or have been councillors and 40% chiefs (Figure 3.3).

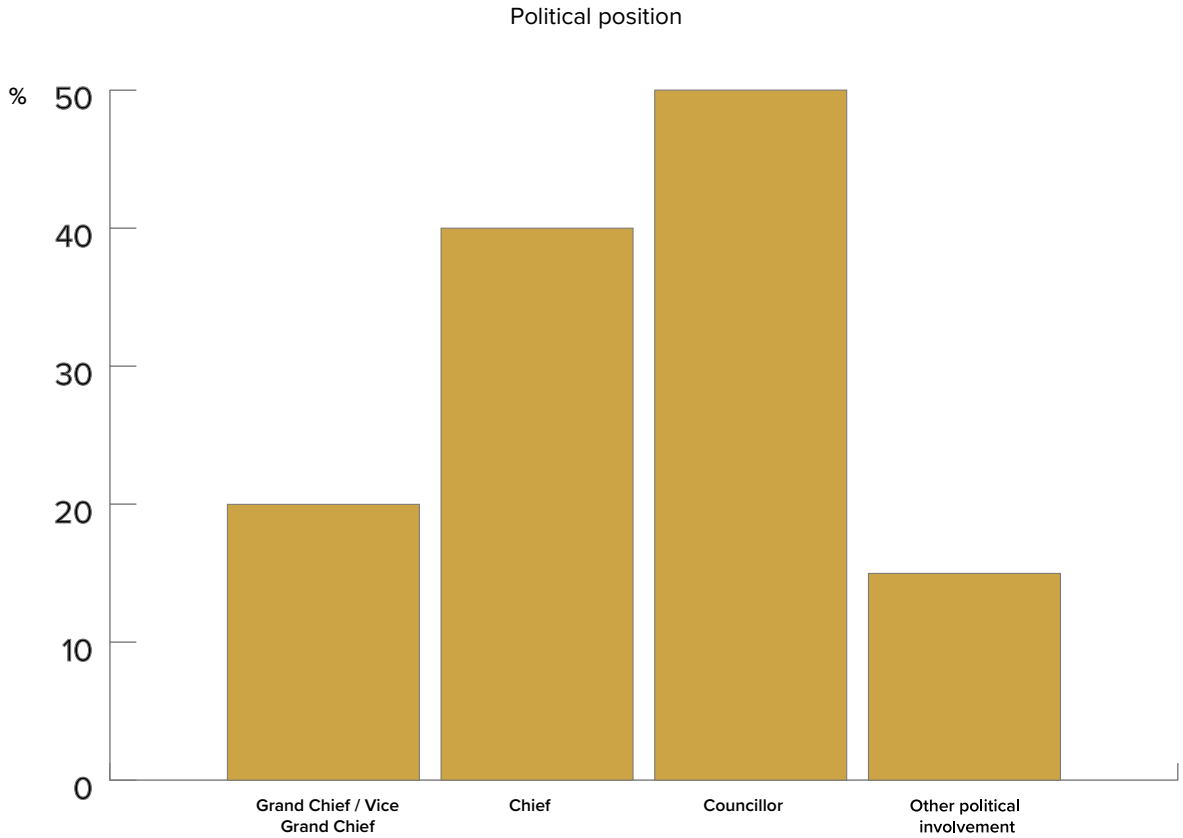

Figure 3.3. Distribution of political positions occupied by the participants

The 20 participants to this study came from 15 of the 39 communities and 8 of the 11 Indigenous Nations in Quebec[5]. The Anishinabe Nation is especially represented within this study. Out of 20 participants, 5 women were Anishinabeg (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

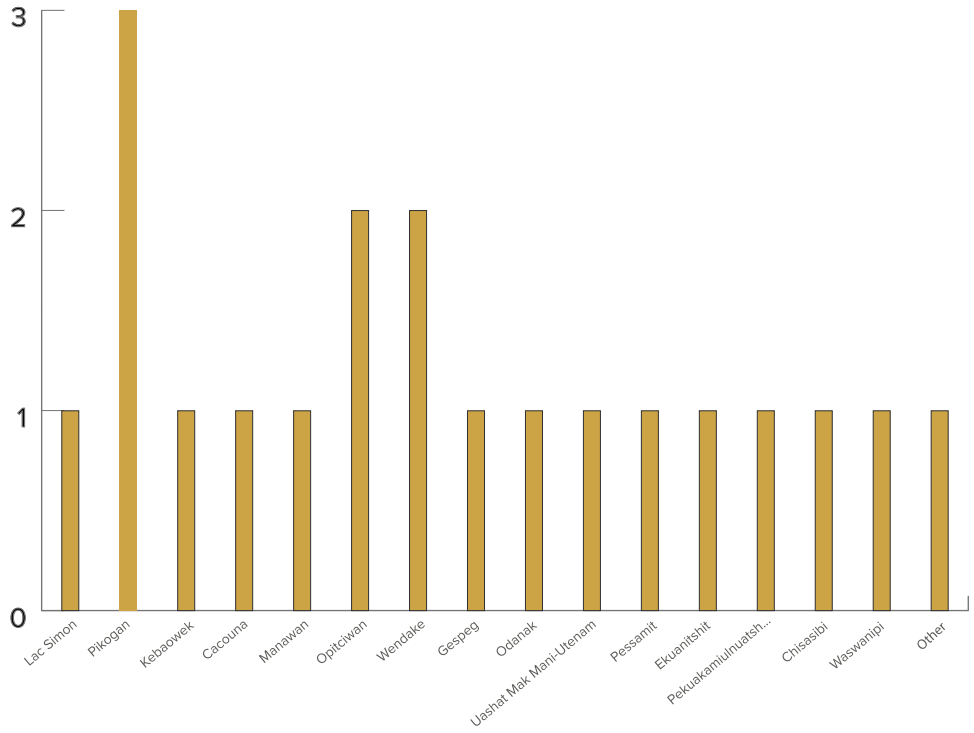

Figure 3.4. Community of origin of participants

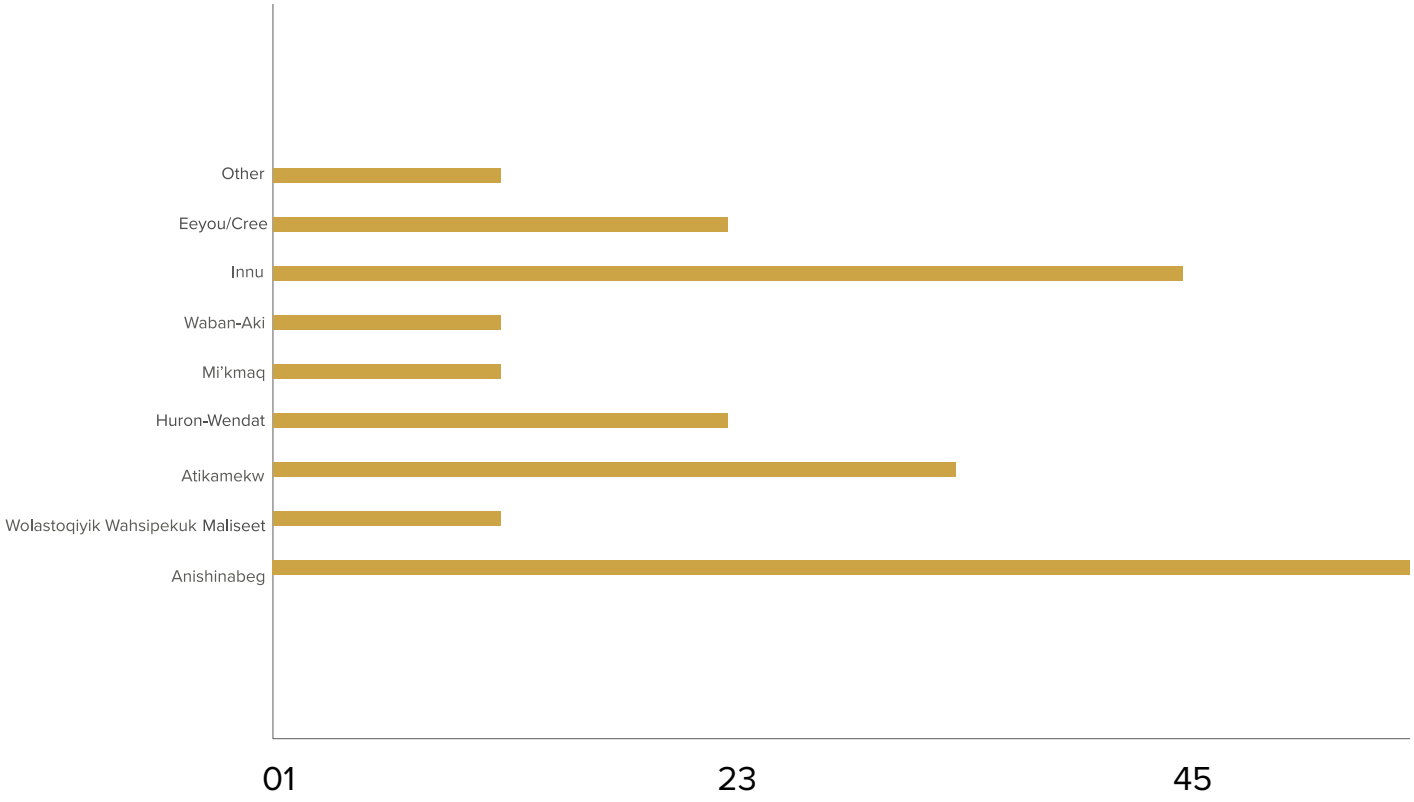

Figure 3.5. Nations of participants

[5] These tables indicate the community of origin of the participants, but not all participants were necessarily politically active in their home community.

3.4 Ethical conduct

In keeping with the principles of research ethics in Indigenous contexts, the project was developed in accordance with the *First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol* (AFNQL, 2014), *the Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal Women* (QNW, 2012), and the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans - TCPS 2* (SSHRC et al., 2018). It was also conducted according to the principles of decolonizing research practices, which include a focus on the needs of Indigenous peoples and individuals rather than the aims of the researcher, as well as the full inclusion of Indigenous perspectives (Asselin et Basile, 2018). The research project received a letter of support from the AFNQL Council of Elected Women (see Appendix 1) and was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Humans of the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue in August 2020 (certificate 2020-08, see Appendix 2). The interview guide (see Appendix 3) and the consent form (see Appendix 4) were submitted to the AFNQL Council of Elected Women for approval. The interview guide, which included questions on political background, challenges encountered, perception of the political role and the experience as a woman, was sent, as was the consent form, to the participants before the interview so that they could prepare. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted virtually and recorded. In the interest of consistency in data analysis and presentation of results, it was agreed to anonymize the words of all women participating in this research, including those who had consented to have their names disclosed. Participants are identified by the letters "FP", which are the initials of "female politician" in English, followed by a sequential number.

All participants received the transcript of their interview by email so they could verify the accuracy of their comments. This step also allowed them to add information that they considered necessary, to clarify certain comments or even remove certain elements that they no longer wished to share. The feedback rate from participants on their interview transcripts was 100%. Once the transcripts were validated by the participants, they were analyzed using the NVivo software (QSR International) to extract recurring themes. Following this step, we were able to write a preliminary results report. This report was written in French and translated into English. A copy was sent by email or by post to all participants so they could read it and comment on it. In order to obtain as much feedback as possible, two meetings to present and to validate the results were organized. A first meeting was held on March 4 and a second on March 18, 2022. These

two meetings brought 11 participants. Two participants who were unable to attend any of the meetings sent us their comments on the report by email. The rate of feedback on the report of preliminary results by the participants is therefore 65%. In addition, the two spokespersons of the AFNQL Council of Elected Women, Ms. Nadia Robertson and Ms. Adrienne Jérôme, also participated in one of the results validation meetings. These validation meetings made it possible to validate our interpretation of the results and to collect new recommendations which were then added to the final version of the report.

4. RESULTS

The themes presented in this report include 1) the journey towards politics, 2) women's leadership, 3) specific political office and/or community context related challenges, and 4) gender-related challenges. In conclusion, this report offers a list of recommendations that were prescribed by the participants during the interviews.

4.1 The journey towards politics

4.1.1 Family upbringing

Some participants mentioned that the influence of family upbringing was crucial in their journey towards politics. One explained:

> Ma mère était quand même fonceuse, elle n'avait pas peur. Je tiens ça d'elle aussi. Chez nous, on était cinq filles et on a été élevées du style : « je vais changer ton huile, je vais bûcher du bois… » Ma mère nous a élevées comme ça, de ne pas dépendre et d'être indépendante. (FP10)

Two other participants add that the women in their family played a determining role in their education. They offer an interesting nuance on the status of married women and the role of clan mothers: "But, fortunately, I still had people who encouraged me, and I still had role models in the family, clan mothers. I was inspired on that level." (FP15). The second remembers:

> I think because of my mom - she had been married for a while, but she was also a single mother for the majority of my life, I have had really strong women figures in my life, my mom, a lot of my aunts. They were married but

> they were still very strong women figures. My grandmother was also a very strong woman figure in my life. (FP11)

Equally important, the contribution of male family members in transmitting values and ways of doing things was critical for some participants. Two other participants add:

> My father was my idol. I used to watch him, how he made decisions. You have to think about why you're making these decisions, you have to think about the future, about the people who were there, and you have to consider everyone around you. (FP14)

> The [First Nations] may be called "patriarchal" but women have always had a big place and the way I was raised by my father and grandfather gave me that importance. I never felt inferior or "you don't have the right to speak". It's possible that because I was raised that way, I didn't feel any negativity or any sense of inferiority at the leaders' table because I was a woman. (FP20)

4.1.2 Solicitation from family, inner circle and community

Several of the participants had parents who were involved in politics. One participant said: "I grew up with politics in the background, but not much more than that. My dad was a politician, and I always knew my dad as being on the community council." (FP12), and another said: "My dad was a councillor who was very political. We always had big discussions around the table because he would speak to us about the issues of traditions, our rights and claims." (FP2). Participants also explained that they came from families where their forefathers had also been politically involved: "My maternal grandfather was chief for two terms.... Then my maternal great-grandfather was chief too." (FP7). However, they did not identify the political background of their family members as a determining factor in their own political involvement. On the contrary, several participants whose close family members had previously held political office expressed reluctance to run for office. This reluctance was often related to their concerns and knowledge of the difficulties associated with this type of position. However, even if their families expressed doubts, this did not prevent them from forging ahead:

> My husband didn't want me to run [...]. He said it only once; he didn't push it. [...] He himself was a counselor and his mother was a chief, so that's why. [...] We have had many people around us, ... in our families who have been in politics, and we see how the population treats politicians. I think that my husband's concern was to protect me from what he had experienced when he was on the council, so that this wouldn't happen to me. (FP14)

Only one participant explained that being from a family that had been politically involved for several generations worked in her favor. Community members encouraged her to run because they felt that she should continue the work of her ancestors:

> My father had been chief and was also a councillor for a long time, as were my grandparents. It's that family history that led people to encouraging me to become chief, it was in my blood. They [the family] would tell me that I could be a good chief. The elders would talk to me about what my grandfather [...] had done and the importance of continuing. So yes, that's kind of what got me into politics as well. (FP15)

For other participants, no one in their family had been politically involved before. One participant states: "No, not a single person in my family has ever been involved in politics." (FP11) and another said: "My family was never interested in politics." (FP19). However, while the fact that family members were involved or not did not seem to be a determining factor for the women, the urgings of family members to run for office did play an important role in their decision-making process to go into politics. For example, three participants reported that their mothers or fathers saw leadership potential in them and strongly encouraged them to apply for jobs that they had not initially planned to pursue. One stated: "It was my mother who pushed me, and I didn't want to hear anything about it." (FP19).

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> My father had been trying to get me to go into politics for almost a year. Every time he came to see me, it was always the same thing, he would ask me if I would go and I would say “No, I don’t want to go there, I don’t know how it works and it doesn’t interest me.” (FP17)

> My mom was really a big influence in my life and when she told me: “You know, maybe you could try this, you could do it”, I was like “No, you know, that doesn’t really make any sense to me, it’s not really my forte.” (FP11)

Other women also explained that it was important for them to consult their families before entering politics. One participant explained that, in her case, even though members of the community wanted her to run for chief, she did not run because her family preferred that she remain a councillor for the time being:

> A year before the elections last year, I was approached again. Some people wanted me to run for the position of chief, but I asked my family, my brothers and sisters, what they thought about it and they told me “For now, we want you to stay on as a councillor.” (FP1)

For most of the participants, it was because of community members who approached them that they decided to run for office: “People approached me again so I could run for councillor, and I said yes at that time because I felt ready to be a councillor.” (FP1). The support of elders may also be important to many, and even critical to their political journey: “I also think you need to be approached by elders, in my opinion. It’s important

to have elders on your side." (FP1). Another participant shares:

> Five minutes before the polls closed, an elder came up to me and said: "I see you there, as a councillor," and I said: "Well, I just showed up to have a look". He said: "Yes, yes, yes," and this elder took me by the hand. (FP7)

One woman adds that the kokoms[6] were very active in her political campaign:

> I've always enjoyed working with them [the elders] and sharing things about life in the community. I think it really helped me with the elections because kokoms were very involved and campaigned door-to-door. (FP15)

A quarter of the participants also specified that it was the urging from women around them that was the turning point in their decision to enter politics. For example: "When the women came to me, there were seven women that night, it was almost midnight and I think I was sewing when they came. They were looking for a chief" (FP10), and: "It was women who approached me to become chief, several of them said "Come on". So, eventually I said OK." (FP18)

These testimonies show that even if women are less represented than men in band councils, this is not synonymous with a lack of political involvement. On the contrary, women exert an influence on the political life of their communities, either by running for office themselves, or in a more informal way by approaching people they feel are capable of taking on political responsibility.

4.1.3 Professional background

For most participants, it is the strength of their professional background that gives them the legitimacy to bring about the changes they want to see in the community. Many explained that they saw their political involvement as a logical extension of their career paths. In the majority of cases, it is after having worked in different fields and after having accumulated many years of experience that they made the leap into politics: "but I think that it is also all the experiences that I have acquired through the years at the social, territorial and environmental level that brought me to politics." (FP15). This extensive professional experience allows them to be knowledgeable about the issues in their communities and to have the expertise to provide policy solutions:

[6] "kokom" means "grandmother" in several Indigenous languages (Atikamekw Nehiromowin, Anishinabemowin, etc.).

> I went even though I didn't know much about politics, but I knew what to do in the community politically. The reason I knew that is because I was involved in the field, socially and everything. I knew what the needs were and what was missing in the community, so I ran [for office]. (FP19)

> I said, "I know this, I know how it goes, how it works". And eventually I said "Yes, maybe I can do it" because I know how the local band worked and the regional office (too). (FP18)

Another participant explains that after holding leadership positions in various fields during her career, she became involved in politics to have a greater say in community decisions:

> Also, what you realize when you're a manager or a sector director, you kind of have decision-making power or influence over your sector, but where the decisions are really made is at the board level. That's where you can have influence on directions and decisions. (FP4)

4.1.4 Personal motivations of women to go into politics

Often women decide to enter politics because they want to make a change. Some participants said: "I nevertheless accepted to serve one term. I was employed, but I wanted to make a change in the political structure, the administration and the council." (FP2) and: "I wanted to create change! I was a little bit fed up because there were a lot of missed opportunities." (FP20).
For others, their willingness to become politically involved and their drive for change were motivated by a sense of injustice they felt at a very young age: "For me, what led me to become a person who defends her rights is because of my childhood, the abuse, both in violence and sexual abuse." (FP8). Another participant explains:

> What got me involved was the trauma, the injustices, the racism, actually discrimination more than racism, because it was happening within a same Nation. I was denied programs or services because my mother married a white man when I was young, around 11 years old. There was a lot of physical and verbal abuse towards me because my mother married a white man in my community. (FP16)

4.1.5 A path pre-destined by the Creator

In the interviews, three participants gave a spiritual explanation for their political involvement. For example, two participants mentioned their connection to the Creator to explain their destiny: “This is a big one because we always have a life plan given to us by the Creator” (FP3), and: “I had no intention to become a Grand Chief. Though, I do believe that the Creator or God has a destiny for us” (FP5). Another participant referred to the cosmology of the Anishinaabe people that Gzhwe Mnidoo[7] created the physical world and living things through the seven fires of Creation (Simpson, 2011). As it happens, this participant was asked by seven women to enter politics. She interprets this event as a sign from the Creator:

> My husband and I talked, and he said: “You know…the seven women who came to you are the seven fires”. He told me that among the Anishinabeg, the seven fires are very important. These women wanted to create change in the community. (FP10)

4.1.6 Factors for success

4.1.6.1 Support from spouse and family

Several women indicated that their success in the political arena was due in part to having a spouse who was willing to take on the family responsibilities that they were no longer able to handle because of their schedules:

> So, you have to have somebody who’s really supportive of what you do. And I don’t think I would be able to be where I am in my career today without a husband who was extremely supportive. For me, that was one of the cornerstones, the foundation for me having success in life: having a partner that truly believed in me, that was able to suck it up when I wasn’t there, do the dishes, cook supper […], etc. (FP11)

Along the same lines, another participant adds:

> My husband helped me a lot, he left his job and stayed at home. Basically, he was the one who raised the last two girls because they were not yet in school […] So that’s how we worked it out, I had a very supportive husband, and I wouldn’t have done half of what I did if he hadn’t been there. (FP12)

[7] Gzhwe Mnidoo (literally: “great spirit”) is an Anishinabeg term referring to the Creator

Two other participants noted that beyond spousal support, family support also plays an important role in their political success:

> At that time, I just had one daughter. My husband was there and babysat her, and then she was at home [in the community] at an older school age, so that helped. [...] I think the presence of the children has an impact as well as the support of the family, the spouse and the immediate family. (FP15)

> So, I was very lucky to have my family to support me, my family and my sisters as well, and my mom. [...] So, when you have that support around you, it makes a big difference when you decide to take a political seat and try to make a change for your community and Nation. (FP5)

4.1.6.2 Experienced mentors

Participants told of seeking help from colleagues early in their political careers to facilitate their learning journey:

> I was with other colleagues who had been in their political seats for a long time, and I learned with them. In this learning process, we must make sure that we are in contact with men and women who have expertise in politics. (FP17)

Others sought support from former elected officials, men and women:

> Because when I started, I had a supporter behind me, someone who has experience in politics, and I talked to him. He is someone who was always impartial [...] And I had another great female chief [...]. That's what you have to do, you have to reach out to people, you have to reach out to people who have had experience in politics. Among others, I had the former Grand Chief as a mentor. (FP1)

Another participant stated that being mentored by a male or female politician does not provide the same learning:

> I think the biggest thing is to have no fear about approaching somebody to mentor you. I had the opportunity to be mentored by a man; I learned a lot of really unique things. I think that had I been mentored by a woman; I probably would have learned other things that he would not have been able to offer me. (FP11)

4.1.6.3 The increasing presence of women in politics

Based on the interviews, the presence of a significant number of women reinforces their legitimacy and influence at the political tables. Indeed, the more women present at the political tables, the more they can strengthen their solidarity and consolidate their political clout. Consequently, the issues they bring to the table are given greater consideration, as illustrated by the comments of a former member of an Indigenous women's rights organization:

> I really saw a big difference when there were several women chiefs [...] It was in 1990 or I don't remember when, eight women chiefs around the table out of 40, that made a big difference. It made a difference in terms of solidarity. Because sometimes we would want to speak at the chiefs' table, to make a presentation [...] and most of the time we were not turned away, but we were always the last ones on the agenda. They never made it to our topic, so it never happened. But at some point, we had [...] a complicity with all of these women and when these women decided that yes we could bring a topic that would be on the agenda, well they made sure it was on the agenda. (FP9)

Another woman explains that she had used her position as an elected official to help a young woman get into politics:

> I had a recently elected woman [...] at that time, who I was able to bring to the political table with me. That's what women helping women is all about. I saw that she had certain skills to be a good politician. For me, it was my way of identifying women in the community who could move into decision-making positions. (FP17)

In order to increase the presence of women in politics, the introduction of parity may be a solution. For example, one participant testified that without this provision in her community's election code, she could not have been elected: "They wanted me to run and two seats were reserved for women, so I ran. I would never have won if it wasn't for those two reserved seats." (FP2)

Did you know ?

To this day, only two Innu communities have amended their election code to implement mandatory parity among elected officials:

- Unamen Shipu adopted parity in 2013 at a pre-election assembly where the amendment to the election code was put to a vote. Of the 80 persons present, 46 voted for, 15 against and 19 abstained (Morin, 2013).
- Ekuanitshit adopted parity in its election code in the early 2000s (personal communication, 2020)

4.1.6.4 The creation of the AFNQL Council of Elected Women

Another important aspect of increasing the presence of women in politics is the creation of bodies such as the AFNQL's Council of Elected Women. This organization is a space that allows women to share their experiences, to reinforce their solidarity, their self-confidence, as well as to talk about the problems specific to Indigenous elected women:

> If we're talking about assemblies, I really like going to the assemblies of elected women. [...] It's fun to see what's being done elsewhere, to share our experiences and at the same time to say to ourselves: we're not so bad after all. (FP7)

> And that's something I think we need as women leaders: we need a bigger support group. We need something in place for us where we can unwind of what's been going on, especially when you're having a tough day. We need to have that circle of women that we need to support one another. (FP5)

The Council of Elected Women was created with this objective in mind:

> That's how we started it, in the interest of creating a council of elected women of the AFNQL that would have allowed, along with the chiefs' table, to deal with and contribute to files of political nature, especially on the women's side and everything else. It was in that spirit. The goal was also to create a strong link between women. (FP17)

The Council of Elected Women was also founded with the aim that women pass on and share their competences:

> All this to find out, to my great surprise and to the surprise of everyone else, that there were 86 elected women and not 25-26. This meant that, in terms of parity, the number was higher than in Quebec politics. It was really very surprising. So that launched us into the idea of saying: there is something to be done, [...] these women must know they are out there, get to know each other, be able to exchange, share their experiences to always improve their intervention if we want. (FP13)

It is an authority that also allows Indigenous women politicians in Quebec to have more political weight:

> We need women who are more equipped in terms of mobilization, in terms of communication and political action. If there is one group that can do it, it might be the elected women's movement, if they don't let themselves be hindered in their efforts. (FP9)

It is a space where they can also appreciate the horizontal relationship between the many elected women, as explained by some of them:

> Women, when they are chiefs, it's all equal, it's like a big exchange, it's fun. They have exchanges and it helps the unity of women. For me, what I experienced was very productive [...] No one is more than the other, even if she comes from a small community or a large community, it has no impact. That's what I liked about the exchanges with the elected women. (FP19)

4.2 The leadership of women

4.2.1 An empathetic approach to their political role

When asked about the differences between women's and men's leadership, one-third of the participants said that women were more likely to rely on their emotional and empathic sides, while men were more "rational" in their approach:

> When things were stalled, I could see; I analyze a lot. I'm a woman who notices things a lot, so I looked at everything that was happening, and I think that men are much more rational than emotional. They don't like emotions. They don't want people to think they have emotions. (FP8)

> [A male councillor] is much more rational [...], he goes straight to the point. He uses his head, but it's not necessarily [in combination with] his heart or emotional side. He's really rational in what he says [...] Our sense of urgency or our sense of responding [as women] to needs is not the same as a man's. (FP14)

In fact, one participant explained that it is important to be a good listener and to have empathy to build a climate of trust when working in politics: "What is important is the people. You have to be a good listener; you need to have empathy. That's it, I'm speaking as a woman too, people have to feel like they can trust you and they can talk to you too." (FP7). Another participant added that, for her, it is a quality to be able to work with a rational approach as well as an empathetic one: "whereas for me, I think it's a strength to have both, to be able to work with your emotions and your head." (FP8)

4.2.2 An ability to solicit help and collaboration

Several participants stated that one of the important qualities of an elected [official] is the ability to ask for help: "I will say what Régis Labeaume said in Québec City: «I don't claim to know everything, but I like to surround myself with people who do». So, I surround myself with people who know about things I am less comfortable with." (FP7). Two other participants agree:

> Never be shy to ask for help when you need it. Because that's another thing with women leadership: sometimes it's our pride, we feel like we don't want to ask for help. But if you don't ask for help in any task that needs to be done, the trouble is it will never get done the way you want it. But, if you ask for that help, it will make a big difference, not only for yourself and

> self-esteem, it will also help you so much as a person, a leader, as a woman leader. (FP5)

> You know, for me, the qualities of a chief, and of a councillor as well, are to be a federator, to federate people, to be a great listener. [...] It means listening to the experts around you [...] because if you think that you have all the truth inside your head, that you know everything, nothing will work. (FP13)

One participant adds that women find it easier than men to seek the expertise of others to make an informed decision: “Because I think they [men] are afraid to ask for help, whereas a woman is not, she asks for help. Me I can ask for help, that’s why it was easy for me to be a leader.” (FP19).

One participant also explained that women were more likely than men to prolong discussions to ensure that all points of view were considered in a decision-making process, because for them it is important to seek consensus in a group:

> I think for women, more often than not, there’s a need to have consensus in the group. [...] Women are more nurturing, want to discuss longer, want to have the group agree, want to have a consensus in the group, ensure that everybody’s needs are met. And for men, it’s more: “Say your point, say your point. Ok, everybody’s spoken, let’s have a vote and this is the outcome, and we accept it”. That’s probably one of the biggest things that is different. (FP11)

4.2.3 An assertive and proactive female leadership

Some women reiterated that although it is important to listen to the opinions of the population, there will always be divergent positions, which means for them, being prepared to explain and stand by their decisions:

> You have to [...] stand up for what you believe in for the good of the community. You have to be steadfast and not let yourself be influenced. You can’t be a “yes-[wo]man” for someone, nor can you be a sheep. You have to take a stand; my decision is this one and it’s not anything else. (FP2)

> But you know, you have to expect that when you make decisions. You have to take responsibility and you have to expect that somebody in the population is not happy. [...] you obviously can't balance out all the differences, but you have to try as hard as you can. [...] But of course, when you make decisions, there are some who will not be pleased, but you have to be strong and be able to distance yourself from the emotion. (FP14)

Participants also defined their leadership as very proactive, as illustrated in these excerpts: "Women working together and getting along well, I find that we are proactive, whether it is here or elsewhere. I myself worked in a place just with girls, it was proactive, the issues were moving forward." (FP14), and: "But when a woman takes the decision or initiative to do something, she's going to see it through" (FP10). Another participant explains:

> In my opinion, [...] this leads me to say that they [male politicians] think, they say but they do not act. But a woman, she thinks, she says but she acts. That's it. She will carefully analyze, she will look at everything, she will review everything, and in my opinion, she will take action. Even if it fails, she gets back on her feet, she goes for it. (FP17)

A participant adds that women's leadership is more proactive than men's: "For me, a woman's leadership is through her actions, there are many actions among women, on the territory, in the village. And men for me, they talk a lot but no actions, few actions." (FP19). Another participant says:

> In any case, it was striking, when the women leaders arrived they were highly pragmatic. They were not there to impress the audience, nor to make the most brilliant speech. They were there because they wanted action and that rubbed off on those who had been there for a long time and had developed the nasty habit of talking for hours without actually getting anywhere. (FP9)

4.2.4 The future as a guide for political decisions

Some women emphasized that it was essential to think about the future consequences of policy decisions: "We want to make decisions for the future, not just for now, but to

think ahead, about the impact it will have in the future." (FP14). In fact, one participant explained that she always considers the seven future generations in her reflections:

> I always say, "I'm going to look out for future generations" [...] because I will always work in my heart for the children, for my community. I always think about the seven future generations. [...] But all this is part of the thinking process of women, whereas a man is day to day. [...] Because a man, he will go a little bit to the future, but at some point, he will take a turn and you have to steer him back towards the future. (FP10)

Participants highlighted the importance of the seven generation prophecy, which is found in many Indigenous cosmologies. It can be found in the cosmologies of the Ojibway Nation, the Anishnabe Nation, and the Kayanerenkó:wa, the great law of the Iroquois Nation Constitution. It teaches us to be aware that our present decisions and actions will affect seven future generations (Basile, 2017; Bell et al., 2010; Coyle, 2009; Kenny et Ngaroimata Fraser, 2012; The Constitution of the Iroquois Nations, 1996).

4.2.5 A leadership shaped by perseverance and resilience

Women's leadership is characterized by great perseverance and resilience. For example, this participant explained that her fellow councillors created many difficulties during her term but that she never gave up:

> Then I had a four-year term that was extremely difficult because I was elected with only three members of my team who had never been in politics, none of them. On the other side, there were the other nine who had been there forever, they were very strong in politics, so they gave me a hard time. I knew that at one point they had said, "Three months is all she's going to be able to do, she's going to come in after three months" but I' m as stubborn as a mule. (FP12)

Other participants explained that the criticism they received made them stronger and pushed them to surpass themselves. One participant said: "But that's not going to bring me down, you're making me stronger. I'm going to get in front of you and I'm going to tell you who I am and why I'm here." (FP14). Another woman had these words:

> ...when I first started this position, when I used to get insulted, it used to hurt, but now it's just like: OK, if that's the way that person feels at that time, at that moment, get it out and let's get the work done because we have a lot to get done. My skin was getting thicker, that's what the saying is in English, right? Your skin gets thicker, and you become more solid and those little insults and those little sayings some have around this table, they just didn't bother me anymore (FP5)

4.2.6 Community as a central concern of Indigenous women politicians

In defining their approach to leadership, several participants explained that it was important to unite the community and bring members together around common goals, as illustrated by the following statements:

> I can speak to my leadership style which was very much about teamwork and community. I would seek out as many people as possible and try to work together to align, discuss, and find a path that we can all move towards together. (FP15)

In many cases, they defined their leadership as being community-oriented as opposed to being power-oriented. One participant states: "A woman's priority is really her community, it's not power and money." (FP10). Two other participants offer the following:

> I don't think about taking power necessarily, it's not that. It's not about having power, it's about having the power to work with the community, with the governments to change things, to defend our interests and our rights. (FP1)

> Because sometimes, with time, some people forget the basics, they forget that if you're there as an elected official, it's because there are people underneath, I should say above. They are the most important, they are the members of the community. (FP7)

4.2.7 Social issues: a priority for women

During conversations with the participants, they repeatedly mentioned a difference in the perception of priorities between women and men. The latter would tend to prioritize issues related to economic development, territory and agreements with governments, whereas women would prioritize social issues. For example, some participants declared: “So the woman’s role is really geared towards community safety I would say, and they [men] are concerned with territorial security” (FP8) and: “Yes, for sure. I think that men will be more motivated towards economic development: creating employment or generating profits. And I think women are more geared towards community development and enhancing social programs.” (FP11).

In addition, several participants mentioned that a balance in the treatment of issues was necessary. One participant explained that it was essential to give as much importance to social issues as to territorial issues, which are intrinsically linked in her opinion.

> Because the fact remains that band councils always focus their conversations on the notion of territory. The territory is ONE thing, even if you win your whole territory, if your people in your community are not trained to develop it, to occupy it, to organize it and to manage it, it won’t do much good. You’re going to waste your time. So that’s important, education is important, health is important, the social services you can offer them... (FP13)

> Yes, there is economic development, but at the same time, to have a good economy, you have to take care of the population. You have to have people strong enough to be able to go to work, to go to school and all that, to be able to take responsibility. You have to start from the bottom up. (FP4)

4.2.8 Women’s vision of the territory

As explained above, women tend to focus on social issues when they hold political office, but this does not mean that they do not have a role to play in territorial issues. One participant pointed out that women are not consulted as they should be in relation to water or medicinal plants when decisions are made about the territory:

> Unfortunately, we all don’t get consultations that we should be getting in different sections in our territories, but I think this is where we [women] need to stand up for that and we need to address it to our leadership, that we should be consulted because we are the water carriers of our community

> and how important is our medicine is in our bush [...] (FP5)

Women and men do not seem to have the same relationship to the territory, nor the same responsibilities towards it:

> Because a woman, in a territory, she will always look around to see if there are medicinal plants, if the water is good, if it's near a lake, if it's safe for children, if there' s wood to build a fire and if there are small animals. She will always look at all the aspects of the environment. [...] Whereas a man, no, he thinks : "I can hunt here, there are beaver over there", and that's it. For him, it's bringing the food to the table. He won't look at the water. For him, the water is there and it's just water. Whereas the women, they will look to see if the water is good to drink. (FP10)

This is also manifested through different concerns about environmental change:

> For men, it's going to be This is also manifested through different concerns about environmental change: "My hunting activities are impacted in this way; I harvested less; I'm not allowed to fish here; my moose calving grounds were impacted by forestry; I went skidooing, that mountain's not there anymore, it's been clear-cut." When women come, it's going to be "I'm very concerned about the water quality for the future" or "I'm very concerned about the regeneration of forest on my trapline; when my husband kills moose, we're starting to see an increase in sickness in the wildlife." The relationship with land and resources is very different. (FP11)

Considering the knowledge held by women and their special relationship with the land, one participant asserts that women are just as indispensable as men in preserving the territory: "But based on what I lived on the land, what I experienced, we need both, men and women, so that we can keep and preserve our territory." (FP6). In fact, one woman recalls that an Elder had told her that it was time for women to get involved in the territory and that they could play an important role in resolving territorial conflicts:

> In another gathering, when there was [...] the Elder who has just passed away, I always remembered his message, he told me: "It takes women now, women must also be involved in the governance of the territory, the decisions and consultations. I think that their involvement is important".

> decisions and consultations. I think that their involvement is important". I have always remembered this message, because he said that men sometimes have a hard time getting along. There are conflicts on the territory, and they can't find ways to settle how we are going to live in our territories, and I noticed that it' s true. (FP1)

Another participant also indicates that the role of women is not limited to that of guardian of culture and that women must reclaim their place in relation to the territory:

> Beyond being the bearer of life or culture, of transmitting the language, but also of giving back their place [to women] as guardians of the territory, of sacred places, in terms of preparing the territory and so on. (FP16)

Two other women pointed out that regardless of gender or age, everyone has a relationship with the territory. Everyone can contribute to territorial issues to achieve a balance in the conversations about the land:

> Our knowledge keepers need to sit at the table, especially when it comes to the land base, right? Who knows the land more? Of course, it will be the First Nations who live off that land, who hunt or whatever may be to provide for our families. We are the ones who know our land, so to be involved at those tables, I think it's important that our men, our women, our youth and our knowledge keepers need to be part of the conversation. (FP5)

> [...] our link with the territory, whether you are a man, a woman, a child, an elder, a handicapped person, or whatever your being is, the issues of the territory are of concern to everyone. It involves everyone, because everyone is sustained by this territory. Everyone hunts, fishes, dresses, lives, admires this territory; so, women can defend as well, if not more, the territory that is ultimately our soul. (FP20)

4.2.9 Balance and complementarity

The women participants do not share the same vision of priorities and seem to have a distinct leadership from men. While the women distinguish their leadership from that of men, they nonetheless indicate that a balance is necessary, and they recall the

complementary roles of women and men in politics (Basile, 2017). One of them states: "we always say that the two complement each other so if we complement each other, it's because women have a strength that men don't have, and then men have certain strengths that are different from women" (FP3). According to them, it is necessary that there be a balance in the representation of women and men in politics: "I really hope to see more women chiefs, more women councillors. We need that balance at the table, at all levels." (FP5). The respective competencies of women and men are necessary for a holistic vision of governance and to balance power (Boyer, 2009; GTFE de l'APNQL & CSFQ, 2010). From an Indigenous perspective, balance is a principle of respect for the laws and relationships that women have within Indigenous legal frameworks and the ecological order of the universe (Boyer, 2009). One participant used the metaphor of the canoe to explain the complementary roles of women and men, and to illustrate the need for balance between the two. For her, this metaphor also applies to the political world:

> Yes, *wikwas tciman* (bark canoe). The father sits in the back, the mother in the front and the children sit in the middle. The father will always carry his family, but it is the woman who will guide, she is important. In spite of all that is happening politically, you still feel it when you talk to the elders, and to people close to the territory. [...] When I talk about the roles of women and men in politics, for me it's really the complementarity of the roles, the *wikwas tciman*. (FP15)

4.2.10 Indigenous Women: Actors for Political Change

For decades, Indigenous women have been politically active in a variety of ways and have made significant contributions to the advancement of women's rights and community well-being. They have been at the head of notable political breakthroughs. For example, one participant recalled the struggle led by Indigenous women's associations to have the Indian Act amended to put an end to gender discrimination in the transmission of Indian status and to allow Indigenous women who had lost their status to regain it. One participant states: "The primary struggles of the Indigenous women's movements were the amendments to the Indian Act at the time, it came from there." (FP9).

Beyond the political battles waged by Indigenous women within associations defending Indigenous women's rights, the balance between women and men in political circles

can also be a factor for change beneficial to the communities. Indeed, the presence of women in band councils allows for the representation of the needs of women in the community. For example, one participant explained that a female member wanted to set up a sewing association for women and that she endorsed her project in front of the council:

> For example, I was the only woman to present [female name]'s project to the council, but there was some reluctance. They didn't say no outright, but they didn't feel like starting something like that, but I said: "It's necessary". I had to be more assertive to get [the project] moving. (FP14)

Another former councilwoman said that she had suggested to the council that they create a sewing association for women in the community as well as a shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence. Another participant, who had been a chief, supported the project of two of her councilwomen who wanted to set up a place where the women of the community could make their crafts:

> The two ladies that were with me, [...] they were still on the council and then they told me, "We would like to have a building so that the women can have a place to work". So, I asked the person in charge: "Give me a place where we can put this trailer without disturbing anything." (FP12)

Another woman explains that having several women chiefs sitting at the AFNQL table has allowed for a positive influence in the consideration of issues brought by Indigenous women's rights organizations:

> While all this was going on, we still had our famous request (for a seat) at the AFNQL and that year, there were eight women chiefs around the table. We arrived with our request, and I think that it was Chief [female name] who had quite a bit of influence at the AFN, she undertook to have our request placed early on the agenda so that we could present it. I'm not sure it would have passed if there hadn't been women chiefs there. [...] And I think that the fact that there were women chiefs, it helped to defuse fears and to (have) more openness. (FP9)

Similarly, having Indigenous women present at international meetings dealing with Indigenous issues allows for better representation and integration of issues specific to Indigenous women. For example, at a United Nations meeting, one participant testified that she pointed out the gender bias that may exist in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and asked that women also be mentioned in the articles of the Declaration:

> I asked: "Is it possible that in the wording, we use the same wording as the AFNQL's 26 principles and that we add something that will ensure that all these articles apply equally to men and women?". Because we tend to use the masculine in the text and we also tend to give economic and political responsibilities to many men; whereas we [women] will take care of social, health, children, language and cultural matters. (FP16)

Did you know ?

In terms of gender equality, article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples stipulates that:

"Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration." (United Nations, 2007)

The presence of women in politics can also lead to a change in political directions. For example, one participant explained that once she became the leader of the community, she focused on social development rather than economic development:

> Women's priority is really her community, it's not about power and money. It's really to advance, to develop at the individual level. Before I arrived, there were about 20 students who were in post-secondary education. Today, there are 60 students at the post-secondary level. Because we hammered away, we wanted to have development, but not economic development of business to have more money, but to give services to the community, to have more competent people in the community. (FP10)

The arrival of women in key positions can lead to positive changes for other women. For example, a former female community leader explained that when she became chief, she chose to appoint women to issues usually handled by men and conversely, she assigned issues usually handled by women to men:

> So, I was chief, there was [female name] who was an economic development advisor, I gave her the economic development file and I gave [female name] the land claims file, I gave the big files to the women; the two men who were on my band council, I gave them health and education. Those are big files too, but usually it's always the women who deal with those files. (FP3)

Several participants spoke of a change in attitude and/or approach with the arrival of women at the political tables. For example, this former female chief explained that a man had told her that since her presence at political meetings, male politicians were more careful with their language and behaviour:

> And somebody else told me, I think it was a Cree man, he said: "You're a woman and you're in these meetings with all men, there's a difference", a different ambiance I guess, and he said: "When it's all men, sometimes they forget you're there and they say things that are not allowed against a woman". [laughter] But, he said: "It makes a difference, I think it's probably respect". They behave like they do; they watch their language too. [laughter] So I guess that it leads men to behave a bit better, or more well-mannered! (FP18)

Another participant added that bad habits had been established at chiefs' meetings and that the arrival of women had imposed a greater level of organization:

> At the chiefs' table, they had to be more disciplined, because those meetings always started late, went on for a long time and ran in circles. When there were eight women chiefs around the table, [...] they were seated at the table before the meeting started and they were ready. Whereas you would see the men coming in any which way. [...] All these women brought about a change but the moment it subsided; the former routine came back. (FP9)

One female politician also explained that the presence of women led to changes in thinking and discussion: “It’s the first time that we have so many females at Council Board, and you can see that the thought process is different, that the discussion is different, that they’re having an influence.” (FP11).

4.2.11 Leadership of Indigenous women politicians in Quebec and Western Canada

During the interviews, participants were asked if they had noticed any differences between the issues faced by Indigenous women politicians in Quebec and those of Indigenous women politicians in Western Canada (where these issues have been documented). Some participants said that they felt that women politicians in the West were more assertive, more respected and in greater numbers:

> I was also very, very surprised to see how, when a woman (from the West) made a point, the men easily agreed with her point! [...] Women chiefs who have a loud and proud voice and who are highly respected and listened to, I was very surprised. It was like, I would say, a step ahead of us, a big step ahead, I was so impressed. (FP3)

> I feel like they (women in the West) are more grounded. Maybe it’s because there are more elected women. I have definitely been around more female chiefs than female councillors, and that may indeed have an impact. [They exhibit a certain pride, which I also share, but it’s like for them it’ even more so. (FP20)

Other participants nuanced these remarks by reporting that women politicians in the West of the country faced the same difficulties and discrimination in asserting themselves in political circles:

> I think we share the same concerns. The difference is, I think, that there are many more women in politics in the West than in Quebec, I met many young women chiefs [...]. However, I found that they were experiencing the same difficulties at the political level in order to take their place. (FP2)

> It seems like we all have our same, I don’t want to say struggles, but we all have the same problems that we deal with as women leaders. I heard a lot

> of women chiefs from across Canada speaking of all the challenges they have, so it's not any different from Quebec to the west, north, south, east. (FP5)

In conclusion, women's leadership seems to be characterized by an ability to be conciliatory, empathetic, to listen and to collaborate. They also seem to stand out for their perseverance and resilience. They are proactive and tend to prioritize social issues. They put the community and future generations first. Their leadership and their priorities allow them to be a driving force for improving the well-being of communities, for social progress and for political change. They also remind us of the complementarity of women and men in politics and the need for a balance in order to move towards harmonious governance that is representative of all issues and all community members.

4.3 Challenges specific to the political function and/or to the community context

During the interviews, participants were asked questions to identify the challenges they have faced in their political careers. On the one hand, they mentioned challenges that were specific to their respective communities and political office, and on the other hand, they also named challenges that were specific to being a woman.

4.3.1 Working conditions

4.3.1.1 The work of an elected official: a high-pressure job

One participant explained that elected male and female elected officials have a heavy workload: "When you are Chief, 75% of what you used to do, you are no longer able to do. [...] I find it very demanding." (FP10). Other women said that elected officials [male or female] face a lot of criticism from the public. Two of them said: "We've had a lot of people around, [another female elected official] too, in our families who have been in politics and we see how the public treats politicians." (FP14), and: "[...] but people had attacked our politicians and our community leadership can pretty much talk about that, how they are attacked from their own members." (FP5). Another says that some councilwomen have even left political office during their term of office because of the difficulty of taking on political responsibilities: "There were two women (councilwomen) but they didn't finish their term. They found it too hard." (FP2). One participant added that political office had even led to the deterioration of the health of former chiefs:

> I knew how people were with the chiefs. I looked at the former chiefs, how sick they got after that. [...] Yes, they are all people whose lives have been compromised during their leadership mandates. That's it, I was watching, even more so when you're a female leader. I was watching [former Chief] also how she was treated. Anyway, it scared me. (FP10)

For this reason, one of them explains that it is necessary to have a sound mind and to be supported when exercising a political function: "You have to be strong too. I don't want to be compromised." (FP10). She goes on to say: "I want to be supported. It's not true that I'm going to run the ship, because I have a life to live, I have children and grandchildren." (FP10).

Finally, on a more positive note, despite the rigor that political office requires, one participant nonetheless testified to being proud of her accomplishments during her political mandate: "I do believe I accomplished that: our Nation is back at the table, working together as a Nation. I'm leaving very proudly." (FP5).

4.3.1.2 Remuneration of elected officials

Some participants mentioned difficulties related to the remuneration of elected officials. Indeed, in some communities, councillors are not financially compensated and continue to have a job in parallel with their elected function. People in this situation find it difficult to carry out all their duties:

> [...] we are like employees in addition to our title of elected official. I would say it's confusing. We are often absent from our workplace, and I have been criticized for it. [...] We really need to be involved full time if we want to represent our issues well. [...] It's exhausting, it takes a lot. Your office [daytime job] is almost like a government office, you're not even employed anymore. [...] Sometimes, I had my political files there and on the other side were my other [work] files. [...] They say that the subsidy we receive for all the political matters is not enough to pay all the councillors. We had to cut from other places to supplement the salaries. [...] The chief gets a salary, but the councillors just receive allowances. (FP4)

Another participant explained that holding a job as well as a political office can be hazardous to one's health: "That's what I'm complaining about at the council right now,

the way we hold our offices. It eats up your energy. When I look at it today, I think it's not good for your health." (FP1). This same participant also states that for one woman, these duties are in addition to their role as a mother and grandmother, making for a very busy schedule:

> Recently, I presented a resolution, so that we can have a remuneration policy for elected officials and define our duties as elected officials. Because today, I am an employee in the health sector, I have political responsibilities in education and women's issues, I have family obligations as well, as a mother and grandmother, that's too much. It's an extra burden for me. (FP1)

Therefore, in communities where there is no policy on remuneration for elected officials, this can be a barrier for women to enter politics. In many cases, women are the primary breadwinners for their families, so they need to be gainfully employed, which can be difficult to reconcile with being an elected official.

4.3.2 The challenges of unity

4.3.2.1 Problems of unity within the council

Some participants expressed difficulties in reaching agreements with their colleagues on the council. These difficulties could be caused by the fact that several elected officials from different clans/families were elected to the council, leading to political rivalries between councillors:

> Yes, I immediately faced jealousy, since I had a councillor who was the brother of the departing chief, so by removing his brother already, there was a discomfort, there was a difference of allegiance, it was very difficult. (FP3)

For other participants, they also had concerns about getting along with their fellow councillors, but these seemed to be more about interpersonal rivalries than politics. One participant said: "That's when it took a different turn. The elected officials were a little bit younger. The first term was pretty rough... Relationships were unhealthy." (FP15). Other women share:

> We spoke very frankly and very loudly during the meeting, because there

> was also a woman who told me that the current Deputy Chief wanted to isolate me, and there, during that meeting [...], I stated openly that I had heard things like that about me. The Chief also had information about me during the elections, there was someone who said, “Keep an eye on her”. (FP1)

> What I found difficult at the beginning [...] was within the council itself. Sometimes people think that because you’re elected, you want to take their place. [...] So, I had to earn respect from within the council. At first, it seemed like people were suspicious, I don’t know, it seemed like they didn’t trust me. (FP7)

One participant also recalled the anecdote from a chief who had not been supported by her Band Council in her dealings with the government because of a lack of coalition within the Council:

> At some point, I had a chief, she is no longer a chief, but who said to me: “I was lobbying the government to get this or that, but my council did not get on board”. Sometimes, it seems like it’s a battle of egos or rag-picking, which is why the communities don’t move forward. (FP7)

4.3.2.2 Intra/intercommunity conflicts

The numerous intra-community conflicts or between different communities also represent a great challenge for women. According to several participants, these conflicts slow down the development of communities and the progress of many portfolios:

> I think it’s a shame, we always say, “No, no, no”. Sometimes it seems like it’s just a way of getting in the way so that we don’t move forward. I used to say to Chief [first name]: “There are people who are against you, they don’t agree with you, you have to canvass support”. Sometimes it’s partisanship. (FP1)

> I was tired of always arguing and having conflicts. It’s unfortunate, but our communities are sick. There are a lot of missed opportunities because we are fighting instead of joining forces and focusing together. (FP20)

For those who hold or have held the position of [female] Grand Chief of their Nation, they also spoke of the challenge of creating a union between the communities of the same Nation. Other women also spoke of the difficulty of finding common ground in negotiations involving several communities. Indeed, in Quebec today, communities within several Nations are engaged in different types of negotiations with governments or with private companies and it is sometimes very complicated to find a solution that satisfies all the communities. These negotiations can sometimes lead to disagreements or even conflicts between the communities involved:

> Here, politics is a violent business. Yes, it has not been easy in terms of relations with other councils and other elected officials. In addition, there have been issues that have not helped and have divided [...]. There are also always people who gravitate towards their personal interests. They will approach other elected officials and councils to pit elected officials from certain communities against [...] the Grand Chief [...] (FP15)

For many of them, these conflicts were sometimes a reason to leave politics. One participant agrees:

> I didn't say it, I just left and said I was leaving for personal reasons. You get tired, you may be fundamentally strong, but there are other things to do in life than rowing in opposite directions. I'm going to go row in another community that's going to try to row in the same direction. (FP20)

4.3.3 Trappings caused by the *Indian Act*

4.3.3.1 Power struggles and family dynamics

One participant explained that the power struggles that take place in some communities are due to the governance system imposed by the *Indian Act*. For her, these power struggles are not traditional: "It's a power struggle that shouldn't even exist because it's not even traditional. [... This situation was created by the *Indian Act*." (FP20). These power disputes are also closely linked to rivalries between families: "So I ran, but when I ran, there were big conflicts. You know, in an Indigenous village, there's always conflict. There are clans and there are conflicts between families." (FP19). Another participant indicates the same:

> The problem is this war to monopolize power, to get as many of your family members as possible to work within the Nation, because these are paying jobs. [...] there were elected officials with me who wanted to take power for themselves so that their families could be given strategic positions. (FP20)

One participant explained that community members tend to vote for family members rather than for candidates' ideas:

> That's the disadvantage here. It is always by clan, people vote by clan and not based on the strength of the candidate. They will always elect a member of their clan or family, that's the downside of our election political system. (FP2)

These conflicts between families can have an impact when a band council changes following an election. It may happen that the departing elected officials fail to adequately pass on their files to the incoming officials because of the rivalries between their respective families:

> When I ran and won my election, what was not easy for me was the transmission of very important files. There was no collaboration. Because in the communities, there are already big conflicts between families. (FP19)

One participant also explained that due to the low population count in some communities, there is a high probability that several members of the same family will run for office. This situation can lead to intra-family conflicts:

> Furthermore, in a community, it's kind of the same thing in ("non-native") villages, you have the whole issue that it's mainly family, they know you, it's your cousin, your uncle, your brother-in-law etc. I mean, you run against someone in your family, at any rate, it's complicated. (FP13)

Did you know ?

This situation is exacerbated by the system imposed by the Indian Act. Traditionally, chiefs were designated by consensus by all members of the community (Otis, 2004; RCAP, 1996). On the other hand, family circles played

a central role within a community; it was through them that the main socio-economic and political solidarities were played out. This way of functioning has been perpetuated over time and is still present in many communities (Otis, 2004). However, by imposing a plurality-majority voting system, this ensures that the most numerous families or clans obtain seats on the council and retain long term authority, excluding the other families from the decision-making process (Otis, 2004). This system does not take into account the clan and family logic specific to communities, nor the demographic composition of each family. Thus, this system has dismantled the system of inter-clan consensual deliberation that ensured balance in the management of power and has favoured the establishment of nepotism in the communities (Otis, 2004). Nepotism is also favoured by the fact that the band council is the main employer in the community (Morissette, 2007). Indeed, the Band Council not only hires the chief and councillors but also manages other jobs related to teaching, construction or administration, among others (Morissette, 2007). Consequently, elections may result in a change of personnel as newly elected officials may assign these jobs to family members, triggering rivalries between families (Morissette, 2007).

4.3.3.2 An inadequate and imposed political system

One participant explained that the reason she disagreed with the governance system imposed by the *Indian Act* is that it is too restrictive and does not allow to achieve community objectives:

> I have a hard time with the system imposed by Indian Affairs, you always have to stick to rules set by the government, the agreements and the funding. That just allows you to keep your head above water, and then you always have to look for ways to make your societal plans happen. That's also what I don't like about the system. I'm not interested in being a chief in a system like that. (FP2)

Another participant mentioned the problem of the communities' dependence on funding from the federal government. The government has the power to allocate or withdraw funding to communities:

> At some point, a program comes along [...], this was in the 2000s, and at some point, bang! The government pulls the plug. We had a dozen suicides after that [...] They decide, they say: "You're doing too well, you don't need it anymore". They don't ask our opinion, or where we are at. They're just going to pull the plug and that's it. And it's our children who are mortgaged after that and who deal with the fact that there are no more services. (FP10)

The same participant explains that the governance system currently imposed is not culturally relevant. She even adds that despite the calls from several people for her to run for leadership, she has refused because she does not believe in the relevance of being a band chief within this system of governance:

> In fact, the real reason I don't want to be Chief is that I don't believe in the political system we have. I am not interested in the band council system as it is today, and its governance. [...] There should be another governance and political system than the one imposed within the confines of the Indian Act. [...] I would like people to question the current system and to ask themselves what can be developed that is culturally appropriate. When I look at the leaders and elected officials, I feel like they are infantilizing the communities. I don't think they realize the colonizing effects of the political system. (FP2)

Another participant also explains that she resigned because she was no longer in agreement with the imposed workings of the *Indian Act*:

> When I resigned as Grand Chief of my Nation, it was because they were applying the *Indian Act* too much. [...] Who wants to work with the Indian Act? Work for the government! Not for the members, for us, the First Nations. That's what I wanted! So, that's it, that's why I quit. (FP19)

Band councils are accountable to the federal government for their financial management because, as they do not have a property regime, they do not collect property taxes from

their members and are therefore almost entirely dependent on the federal government for funding (Morissette, 2007; Rodon, 2019; Voyageur, 2011). In the event of a deficit, the federal government has the power to place the band council under trusteeship (Rodon, 2019). However, band councils have the authority to develop their own taxation systems. For example, according to Section 83(1)a of the *Indian Act*, Band Councils can impose real estate taxes to their members. In reality, the socio-economic conditions of communities often do not allow them to make this tax transition (Metallic, 2016). On the other hand, the powers of a band council are not limited to those of a municipality; unlike a municipality, the band council also manages education, social services and sometimes even the police in some communities. The voters tend to have high expectations of the Band Council, and the Council, in its eagerness to be re-elected, will aim to meet the demands of the population as much as possible. Therefore, it is very difficult for a band council to find the right balance between satisfying its members by developing local political projects that meet the real needs of the population and meeting the bureaucratic and financial requirements of the CIRNAC (Kuokkanen, 2019; Rodon, 2019; Voyageur, 2008).

4.3.3.3 The election code

Today, communities have the option of appointing their band council according to the election provisions of the *Indian Act* or they can define their own system of governance by adopting a custom code (Otis, 2004). Some participants mentioned that the election code can be a contentious issue within communities. Indeed, one participant reported that there had been disagreements about compliance to the election code between community members, the outgoing Band Council, and the newly elected Band Council of which she was a member:

> The outgoing elected officials who were there said that the election code had not been respected and they filed a complaint with the appeals committee. The appeals committee held a general assembly, asked for the opinion of the population and the population said that they had voted and that the elections were valid. [...] but since [the incumbents argued] that there had been breaches of the election code, they decided to take this to the Federal Court. [...a decision of the Federal Court invalidated the elections. (FP1)

Another participant says that members of the population had challenged the election code because they did not agree with the Band Council's way of governing:

> The problem is that people are challenging the election code. There are flaws in the governance and the way they conduct elections because they rush through consultations. Two months before, people try to change things but they don't provide the impetus for what the community wants to do. They keep applying the same rules. That's why the last election was contested, the oversight committee and the chair didn't follow the rules or change what needed to be changed. (FP2)

Another participant spoke of other kinds of difficulties with the election code arising from the *Indian Act*. She explains that her community had a lot of organizational difficulties with their own election code and was forced to revert to the election code imposed by the *Indian Act*:

> That's the perverse side, we managed to get there because of the Indian Act but we are so sick that we can't organize ourselves. Because we're fighting amongst ourselves [...]. It's weird, because even though [...] we have our own election code, we don't have any help from Indian Affairs, so if there's an internal dispute, it's not provided for in our election code. [That's why I'm talking about a perverse effect. [...] we wanted to be under the Indian Act. We wanted to hold our elections but outside of our election code...the whole governance structure is non-existent, and the structure of the election code is outdated, so we have nothing. (FP20) [...]

4.3.4 The challenge of language and distance

Several participants identified language as a challenge. In Quebec, Indigenous people may have their own language as their primary language and English or French (or both) as their second language. For others, English or French may be their first language. This can sometimes be a barrier to communication:

> Because for most of the Chiefs, in the communities they represent, the second language is either English or French, and that also plays a big role in our communications. Because I speak a language that is very descriptive,

> I don't have to explain myself when I speak [Indigenous language] to someone who speaks [Indigenous language]. [...] But if I speak French, the perception of the words you say changes, and that's why we have difficulty listening to and understanding the other person. That's what happens at the Chiefs' table, it's not just that they don't want to listen, or they don't want to understand, it's that the communication is not so straightforward.

It is also increasingly necessary for elected officials today to speak and understand both French and English and this can be an obstacle for some:

> I am still looking for ways to pass on initiatives to women to go into politics, because when you get to the Chiefs' table, there is already the language barrier, [...] you have to be able to express yourself in French or English. These are some of the areas that need to be improved, and that would help [...] I remember being at the Chiefs' table at one point, and one of the elected female Chiefs was unable to follow when a resolution was passed. [...] There are few resources at the Chiefs' table for these women. (FP3)

> That is something we don't find in Quebec. Here, what is required is that you have to speak English, French and there is little time allocated to helping you acquire that language. Even if it's a job that requires it. I think that's another barrier that we put up between us. I've experienced that. (FP17)

The language challenge poses problems in terms of accessibility. Simultaneous translation is a solution, but it is expensive:

> Also, the problem I would say, the number one obstacle, is language. In many cases, people still speak their own language. They will have a second language which is French or English [...] back then, it was also a challenge to bring all these women together and find a common language. Obviously, we had to use simultaneous translation, which is quite expensive. (FP9)

This is an issue that is also raised in meetings with communities in other Canadian provinces, such as those of the Assembly of First Nations (Findlay et Kohen):

> I've been to the AFN a few times. But you know, there's no simultaneous

> translation. It seems like they are unable to adapt to women in Quebec. Our first language is French. Well, our first language is our language, but the second language is French. [...] We adapt to them; we are able to listen to them when there are meetings of Chiefs at the AFNQL level. But once we get to the AFN, in the case of AFN women, they don't offer simultaneous translation. They don't offer a French translation of documents either. I asked for it, I wrote, but it seems like we don't exist. (FP10)

Finally, two participants noted that the great distances between Indigenous communities in Quebec were not easy to manage. Their remoteness also generates expensive travel costs. The first participant states: "It's certain that you have the geographical distance of the territory that makes things difficult. Every meeting takes up a lot of travel budgets and all that." (FP13). The second corroborates:

> I imagine that others must have told you this, but in Quebec, as elsewhere, we live far from each other. Isolation, remoteness, it is not easy to have discussions and work on issues when we are far away and when we don't have the means to meet often enough. (FP9)

4.3.5 Elected politicians and their families: targets of intimidation

The political environment is a place where violence and intimidation against elected officials can occur. This can even take place at the time of the election. Indeed, some participants mentioned that smear campaigns can be carried out by community members against candidates during election time. Two participants stated: "I would say that bitching is most frequent at election time." (FP7), and: "But, when the elections in our communities, it becomes very hard for some, our elections become so bad; they talk about the individuals, they bring out the worst in a person." (FP5). She goes on to point out that these difficulties in times of elections are experienced by both women and men:

> I imagine that others must have told you this, but in Quebec, as elsewhere, we live far from each other. Isolation, remoteness, it is not easy to have discussions and work on issues when we are far away and when we don't have the means to meet often enough. (FP9)

A participant explains that politicians are also targeted by defamatory accusations during their term of office: “It’s not easy to be in politics because there are things that can easily be made up about your reputation. They’re going to say things, especially when it comes to money matters.” (FP1).

Several participants explain that their children could be bullied at school or in the community because of their parents’ political decisions. Two women state: “if as an elected official you made a decision that other people don’t like, it’s your kids in school that are paying the price or it’s your kids in their community life that are suffering the consequences.” (FP13), and: “Yes. They say things about your child when your child has nothing to do with it. All your kids are getting the finger pointed at them.” (FP10). Another shares:

> I think that my son, my youngest, it had an impact at school. I had heard about things said in his elementary school back in the day. Some teachers had commented about my social position and my son also. He doesn’t deserve that. (FP1)

Women’s political involvement can also have an impact on their families more generally. One participant said: “That’s what you’re going through, you have to be tough. You have to pick up the pieces at home. I have sisters who are crying, because they say to me: ‘You’re getting slashed on Facebook, that’s bullshit.’ ” (FP10). Another adds:

> But that’s something that, as a woman or anyone that’s running for those positions, I think we all know that because we put ourselves out there and you are easier targeted. And it’s not only that, it’s not only you being the target, it’s your whole family they start to talk about. (FP5)

4.3.6 Relations between Indigenous communities and the provincial and federal governments

We asked participants about the state of relations between Indigenous communities and the provincial and federal governments and about their experiences with these governments in their political careers. One participant summed up the views of many on the state of relations between Indigenous communities and the relevant levels of government: “That’s the story of the Indian Act; they divided us. They divided the men and women, they divided the Indigenous people who live in the city, they divided us

into categories and we're still dealing with that today." (FP9). Two other participants noted a lack of consideration and understanding from the Quebec government towards Indigenous communities:

> Whether it's Legault or someone else, they don't understand, they don't want to hear, they don't want to understand, they don't want to share, they don't want to listen, they turn a deaf ear. For having met with premiers for years, I've seen many of them, federal and provincial, they don't listen to anything! (FP3)

> I have the feeling that the Indigenous communities and the government of Quebec, something is preventing us from understanding each other. We don't seem to have found a way to connect with each other. It seems that we move forward like that, in parallel, without ever connecting. [It's not obvious, it's not easy, especially since the Viens Commission since the death of Joyce [Echaquan]. It seems that at times we are still drifting apart, I don't know. (FP7)

Two other participants stated that the Quebec government had little openness towards the First Nations of Quebec: "The province is very closed to the First Nations of Quebec as a whole." (FP20), and: "The Quebec government does not fund the communities. I've come up against a wall many times. I had a lot of pent-up frustration at one point." (FP10). One participant denounced the tendency of the Quebec government not to recognize the distinct identity of Indigenous communities:

> It's as if, from generation to generation, from political party to political party, the ones in power, they try in every way they can to put us into the little "Quebec citizen" box, nice and proper, homogenous, no history, no context, no relationship to the territory, no language, etc. (FP16)

She continues with the concrete example of a Quebec politician trying to make her disavow her Indigenous identity:

> When I came in, a Quebec woman gave me a shove and said: "Ok, that's enough, you don't talk on behalf of Indigenous women anymore; you can't say Indigenous women and Quebec women: you ARE a Quebecer".

> I replied: "Well by the way, go say that to Maryse Alcindor[8], you're not a black women *by the way*, you're a Quebecer because white people are the majority in Quebec". [...] I told her that she couldn't take our identity away from us. (FP16)

One participant broadly denounced a clear lack of will, as well as a very limited knowledge of Indigenous issues on the part of the federal and provincial governments:

> We have a Prime Minister [Justin Trudeau] who spends all his time apologizing and crying, and then someone in the background goes: "There's nothing that's going to change, we're not changing anything!". [...] And of course, you have the provincial government, ignorant and incompetent in Indigenous matters, that' s not interested and will do anything to block us. (FP9)

Two women also defined the relationship between Indigenous communities and the federal and provincial governments as one-way. One woman stated: "The state of affairs is that there is no real communication, it's always one-way and unidirectional." (FP15), and another adds: "Then, with the federal or with Quebec, it's always one-way. That's how they deal with the rest of us, one way" (FP19).

When asked to qualify the relationship between Indigenous communities and the federal and provincial governments, several participants explained that the two levels of government keep shifting responsibilities to one another: "And there is always the game of the provincial-federal not talking to each other and throwing the ball back and forth, so we're not out of the woods yet." (FP9). Another participant adds:

> The Quebec government, the federal government, they play ping-pong, it's a game. When you make a request, they tell you: "It's not up to us, go to the federal government", and then the federal government does the same thing, it tells you: "But you already have grants from Quebec". [...] They play this game, so you don't move too quickly, because then you start to see the big picture. (FP19)

These testimonies on the state of relations between the Indigenous communities and the federal and provincial governments are quite unanimous. The transfer of responsibilities between the two levels of government is detrimental to the advancement of Indigenous

[8] Maryse Alcindor is a public figure in Quebec. She is the first black woman to hold the position of Deputy Minister in Quebec.

community issues. Many decisions continue to be made by governments without consultation with the first people involved and without regard for the consequences. As a result, the colonial relationship is still present, and the true nation-to-nation relationship is still far from being achieved.

4.3.7 Indigenous women politicians more exposed to racism

The interview guide did not include specific questions to racism, but the participants themselves mentioned the racial discrimination they had experienced in the context of their political functions. A participant explained that she was a victim of racism especially when she was Chief: “I didn’t feel sexism from Quebecers but racism, yes. Especially when I was Chief [...] I received threats by phone, from many people and from Quebecers in Montreal” (FP20).

Women politicians also have to deal with racial stigmatization by Quebec newspapers: “My community was smeared, dragged through the mud. At one point, in the newspaper [...], it was written that [community] was a dump” (FP10). Another recounts an event from the 1990’s:

> In the middle of the page, there was a photo of two little girls wearing Innu hats, with big grins on their faces, and in the headline, it said: “Teeth worth gold, your taxes at work”, it was addressed to non-Indigenous, it was an orthodontist who wrote that. He said that (Indigenous) people were sending their children to have braces put in on weekends so that they could spend the whole weekend in Quebec City or Montreal, and in the meantime, Quebecers’ taxes were paying for it all. (FP12)

The political function also leads Indigenous leaders to be present in the media, especially during periods when Indigenous issues are heavily covered in the media, making them public figures. This can accentuate racism against them, especially when this media coverage concerns events where racism is denounced, such as during the Viens Commission or the death of Joyce Echaquan, among others. For example, one participant testified that she had been racially profiled by police officers shortly after being present in the media: “They (the police) would stop me, and they would say: «Your license is not valid». I said: «Of course my license is valid». And then they would tow me away. That’ s profiling» (FP10). In general, Indigenous people are more exposed to racism when Indigenous issues are in the news. Participants also recounted

experiences of racial stigmatization they faced when they were not politicians. These events occurred particularly after Radio-Canada broadcast an investigation in which Indigenous women denounced violence and sexual abuse by Sûreté du Québec officers in Val-d'Or (Radio-Canada, 2015):

> The (Indigenous) woman has been dirtied so much, there are policemen who say: "Why would we sleep with that woman, she is not even good looking!". It was in the newspapers, they dirtied us so much. I didn't even feel comfortable going into town [...] because you know, you're an Indigenous woman, they're not talking about you, but you feel targeted anyway. (FP14)

> I have a hard time with discrimination. You know, at one point, we witnessed it often. We go to the store [...] I went to Walmart, and there was a lady there, she just looked at me. I wait in line and when it's my turn she practically stamps her feet in anger! [...] She looked impatient and that's back in the time when people felt that we were a nuisance. It was after the denunciations. [...] Every time I went somewhere, I experienced that, being looked at, as if I was disturbing everyone. (FP8)

By talking about their experiences of racism in the context of their political functions, the participants were led to talk about racism against indigenous people in a more general way. One woman spoke about the racist comments made by Quebecers on social networks: "when you look at the comments on social media, you say to yourself: «Phew, we still have a long way to go». Because there' s a lot of racism towards Indigenous people by Quebecers." (FP20).

Participants also spoke of the lack of credibility given to the word of Indigenous people within the Quebec justice system: "And my daughter too, she went to court again last year and it didn't work. She experienced violence but her complaint was refused. It was with a white man. They tell you it didn't happen." (FP10). Another participant remembers:

> Listen, when you've lived through sexual assaults and you know that there is brutality and sexual assaults that have been done, and then on top of that they let them go with no (conviction), it stunned me, that time I said: "God damn! When a dog is mistreated, the owner gets a fine, he gets something and us, the Indigenous women, we get raped, we are sexually abused, we are brutalized, we disappear, and nothing happens! What are we worth?

> We are worth nothing?! We are worth less; we worth even less than the dogs!". (FP9)

To summarize, the main challenges cited by the participants in this research are the heavy workload that the political function requires and which can be even heavier in the case of communities where there is no policy for the remuneration of elected officials, the difficulties of consensus between the communities within the framework of negotiations with the provincial and federal governments or with private companies; the overly restrictive and inadequate framework of the political system imposed by the Indian Act, which can lead to conflicts between families; challenges to the election code and a slowing down of the advancement of community projects. They also mentioned the one-sided nature of the relationship between Indigenous communities and the federal and provincial governments, the logistical difficulties caused by the distance between communities, and the many languages spoken. Finally, the women reminded of the discrimination and racial stigmatisation they suffer in the context of their political functions or in general in their daily lives.

4.4 Challenges involving gender dynamics

The analysis of the interviews allowed us to identify several elements related to gender dynamics that can hinder Indigenous women's entry into politics and/or cause them difficulties in exercising their political function.

4.4.1 Family responsibilities

First, for many participants, the weight of family responsibilities still falls mostly on women, which may be difficult to reconcile with a political function. Two participants stated: "There is also the issue of women's availability. We need to provide childcare services. We are still, despite everything, women who largely have this role as well, taking care of children, finding babysitters and all that" (FP7), and: "I look, today, at the women who run for office [...] and there are a few who have expressed difficulties in organizing around their family, work, and elected position." (FP15). One participant explains that she probably would have entered politics sooner if she didn't have children:

These difficulties are even more acute when women have young children. One woman said:

> Yes, and on top of that you have children, most women, young women have young children, so you have to find someone to look after your children when you are away, to cook meals at home and all that, it' s not easy. (FP12)

Several participants explained that they waited until their children were older before considering a political career. For example, two participants said: "I have four kids; I didn't really have the time to do it. And when my kids became older, that's when the people in my community really pushed me out of my comfort zone and asked me to run in local politics." (FP11), and: "When I was elected Chief for example, the kids were already in Cégep, so it was easier." (FP12).

4.4.2 Lack of female representation

The lack of female role models in politics was raised by two participants as a reason why women are still a minority in the political sphere. The first participant said: "In fact, there are no role models, no baseline to motivate women to go into politics." (FP3). The second participant said that it was when she saw a woman in a high political position that she realized that women could also have a political career:

> I think that there's just a lack of role models for women to be like "Oh, you know what? She did it, I can do it too". For me, peculiarly, one of the people that had me [thinking] "Oh, women can be in politics too!" was when Kim Campbell became the Prime Minister for something like three months, and I thought "It's kind of shitty that she's just there temporarily". (FP11)

The lack of female representation also seems to have an impact on the decisions women make. Indeed, one participant explained that the fact that women are still a minority in politics makes it easier to second guess their decisions: "Also, because we [women] are a minority in political circles, I always tell women that they need to be strong because sometimes you make decisions and people try to change your mind." (FP2).

4.4.3 The influence of gender in discussions and decision-making

Two participants brought another aspect of gender into our discussion. They suggested that men may tend to band together in discussions: "When you're facing a bunch of men, where you're in the minority, men will definitely band together." (FP17). Another

participant added that this can be a barrier in Council Board discussions:

> Sometimes too, one of the things that I really noticed at our table is the male versus female gender plate has an impact in the discussion. So, if we're talking about something and it's a good idea and the women support it and the women speak up and the women are kind of bouncing off each other and supporting and talking about something and supplementing the discussion, I find that if it's a somewhat touchy discussion, the men will kind of lock it, they'll just not really say anything or not be a part of that discussion. [...] That's been a barrier, not just for me but I think it's been a barrier in discussions at Council Boards (FP11)

4.4.4 The persistence of sexist stereotypes

We noted the persistence of prejudices that men are more capable in political office than women. Several participants expressed that they had received overtly sexist remarks, telling them that they were not sufficiently qualified for political office:

> Being a woman Chief in [community] was a big challenge, even though people didn't come outright and really confront you, it was very subversive. Especially the elders, it didn't come from the women, they were always happy to see you. But the men, you could see it. Sometimes they'd say, and some were not shy of saying "women are in charge, things don't go right". (FP18)

> I would even say, [...] if you look back, yes, I found myself in a pretty important position, a woman, but throughout my mandate, I was made to feel it, I was made to live it, a lot. No, it hasn't been easy, that's the truth. (FP3)

Others received comments that their place was not in the political sphere but rather in the domestic space. These comments could be made by their fellow councillors within the same band council, as shown in the following excerpt where the participant relates the words of one of her colleagues:

> Once, someone said to me: "The women here, their place is in the kitchen", I said: "Never say something like that to me ever again! You can tell your

> wife if you want, if she accepts it, good for you! But for me, my place is where I feel good." (FP8)

Some participants explained that sometimes people in their community still think that women should not be Chiefs. One participant said: "we do have some men thinking that their women shouldn't be in leadership but that didn't bother me." (FP5). This shows that some men felt that they were more legitimate in politics and did not hesitate to say so. Another said:

> It seems that because the man is the Chief, the man is the boss, in their mind. The man decides and you follow. It seems to be because of that. That's often the attitude floating around, that women shouldn't be the boss. It' s still the same back home. There are women, with the Bible too, there are some who preach on the Bible and that's it, the woman must stay at home and take care of her children. (FP10)

Similarly, one participant relates that some of her male colleagues on the band council expressed reluctance to have female councillors assert themselves and take too much space on the council: "I believe so [that men would feel threatened] because as I was saying earlier, when there were three of us women on the council, they said that we were taking up too much space on the council." (FP1). Another participant makes similar comments and states that men are apprehensive about accepting the presence of women in politics, "The ones who are going to criticize, it affects their pride, because they are not used to seeing a woman in politics." (FP14)

Two other women spoke of comments or attitudes they had encountered, demonstrating that women's authority in politics can sometimes be unwelcome. For example, one participant said: "I may have shaken things up a bit because at one point they said I was the superior mother." (FP15). Another participant said: "I was made to feel envy, a lot of jealousy, you know male-female jealousy. Let's say they weren't ready to have a female leader, they weren't ready at all." (FP3).

Another participant had this anecdote about the creation of the AFNQL Council of Elected Women where she explained that she felt that some of the AFNQL's elected men had reservations, at the time, about having so many elected women and that they were creating this body reserved for elected women:

> I must admit, from my point of view, we had a very strong moment at one

> point, where we felt very much like: “My God, it’s really fun to see that there are so many of them [elected women]”, but we quickly felt that the men didn’t like this gathering very much. They thought it was funny when there were about twenty of them, but for there to be that many, I think they didn’t find it so amusing anymore. (FP13)

Several participants also explained that women in politics receive different treatment from community members because of their gender. For example, some comments show that women still face difficulties in getting elected because they are women. Even though many women run for office, people still tend to elect men more easily: “Maybe it’s still in people’s minds, maybe they vote for men more.” (FP4). Others corroborate:

> It seems that it’ s still men who don’t trust women in politics, even though there are many female and male candidates. In the last elections, there were many women candidates and only two were elected against four male councillors. So that’s what I find, men don’t believe enough in women, they are still the ones who want to take the reins of power. (FP1)

> But me, in the race for the leadership, I am convinced that there are some who did not vote for me because I was a woman. [...] I think that’s what came into play, the fact that it was a man. You will have people who will not vote for a woman. I’m not totally certain, but I’m pretty sure that’s part of it. (FP14)

4.4.5 Women’s unaddressed concerns

Many participants testified that their concerns were dismissed, especially when they related to women or social issues:

> It was a room full of men. They made me wait in the lobby for a good two hours before letting me come in and make my presentation. While I was explaining to them that it was time to talk about family violence in the communities, I could see three [male] Chiefs at the back of the room talking to each other and just laughing. (FP9)

> There was another issue for a women’s group, a shelter that I wanted to set

> up. Each time he would say: “Ah all the time women, all the time women, what about men?”, so I would answer: “Work it out! Do something about it! Do something about that too, for the men!”, so it was blocked. (FP8)

Other participants also reported that when they offered suggestions to promote women’s rights, they were met with disparagement and opposition, as evidenced by this excerpt: “During my mandate there, I was trying very hard to promote women’s rights, but you know, when you only work with guys, there’s a little bit of mockery: ‘Ah [her] and women…’” (FP8). Another participant faced similar issues, but in the context of an international meeting on Indigenous issues:

> In one of the UN meetings, … I asked: “Is it possible that in the wording, … we add something that will ensure that all these articles apply equally to men and women?” […] But the National Chief at the time pulled me out of the meeting. […] I was told that I was diluting the strength of the statement because he said that if you put in the word “woman”then you’re going to have to put in: disabled, homosexual, lesbian, etc. (FP16)

Similarly, band councils do not pay the same attention to issues that specifically affect women as they do to other issues. Many band councils across Quebec have set up a “Status of Women” component so that matters affecting women are given due consideration. However, there are still some obstacles preventing them from being adequately addressed. For example, a participant here explains that when she was a councillor responsible for the status of women, she had difficulty obtaining a budget:

> Family and women’s status. I always said: I’m holding an empty envelope, no subsidies there. Other sectors had something: education, social services, health, community development… and me: ah! family and women’s status. But there’s no funding there. […] Because before I was a councillor, we used to apply for women’s issues, but it was always: “No, we don’t have the budget for that.” (FP4)

4.4.6 The underestimated competencies of women

The interviews also revealed that women politicians are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Women’s political credentials do not seem to be as valued as those

of men. Some women also mentioned that their point of view had less weight and influence than that of men, and that it was even denigrated:

> Sometimes I found that when you say something and decisions are being made, and you say something in one of the discussions, I saw a few times when men in the meetings would say exactly the same thing that you had said or recommended. And then we'd say: "Oh yes, great idea!". (FP18)

> The only time that I could say that I felt really threatened was from a man that I found was super unrealistic with what his expectations are, and he was fighting me on a file, absolutely adamant that he was right and that I was wrong. And I found that he was very improper in the way that he discussed our work publicly, very demeaning, degrading, "she doesn't understand; she never held that kind of job; she's a woman; she's never really worked in forestry." [...] I really also found that in that situation, it was so extreme, it would never be accepted for a man to treat another man like that but because I was a woman, I felt like my Council let it slide a lot. (FP11)

This participant explains that she had to find ways to get her ideas across, including having a male colleague introduce them:

> And one of the strategies that you can use is to have an ally, to go and see somebody who's going to be in the meeting with you, to speak to them about your thoughts, to give them your points. And this person, a man typically, will speak on your behalf. They're saying exactly what you would say but because they're a man, their voice or their message is perceived differently. (FP11)

Another participant also states that women's work is less recognized than that of men:

> I find that women work as hard as men, if not harder, but in the shadows. They are more in the background, that's the thing. They work but they're mostly in second place, even if they work as much, as much as a chief or a councillor, but they're in the background. (FP3)

The devaluation of women's competence also translates into higher demands on

women. Women must prove more that they are legitimate to hold political office. For example, two participants indicated that they felt they were more easily blamed for the decisions they made than men. They felt that they were criticized more harshly and felt that they had no room for error, as evidenced by the following comments:

> When you're a female Chief in particular, it seems like it's harder. It's easier for a man. Things go more smoothly. Also, when you're a crooked Chief and you're a man it's not a big deal. [...] If he does bad things, it's not a big deal, he's the Chief, whereas you always walk on eggshells. [...] That's what happens here, when you are a female Chief, it's very difficult. It's like you're being scrutinized, people are watching you. (FP10)

> Whether it's a man or a woman, they put a certain aura around a man, as if he's going to be easier for him from the get-go! He is more capable! He is stronger, he has the best ideas. [...] However, when women are elected in their communities, they are observed, they are humiliated, they are attacked from all sides, even from other women too, it happens, and from men. (FP3)

4.4.7 Barriers to women taking on territorial affairs

According to the participants, women are still not very active in the area of land issues. To explain this fact, some participants testified to a reluctance on the part of their male colleagues to have them take on territorial issues, which are usually more in the hands of men. One woman said: "At one point, I had asked at the political table [...]: 'I would like to be responsible for, heritage, culture and territory', as a politician. But it didn't pass." (FP17). Another states:

> I have the feeling that the guys don't want to have us there. I tried, I would have liked to go and see, even, I would have liked to go to a negotiation table, I would have liked to go there! [...] I would have liked to but they didn't give me the chance [...] (FP8)

Women explained that men still tend to think that the land is their exclusive responsibility. One woman said: "There are fewer (women), yes. I think men still take ownership of the land more. They think it's up to them to manage it." (FP4)

Participants suggested other reasons for women's lesser participation in territorial issues. Some participants pointed to colonial policies. For example, two participants stated that:

> I'm not going to revisit the events, I think we all know about them, the residential schools and all that, it caused us to lose our place in the territory, so to speak, as well as other responsibilities that we lost along the way. So, the impacts were considerable on women as well. It was largely because of the *Indian Act* [...] It gave more room to men, so we all got lost in it [...] (FP17)

> When we look back at history, we can see that we have been forced out of this decision-making process, out of the relationship that we have, as men and women in a Nation, with and for the territory. Whether it's exploitation, development or with the wildlife, the rivers, we've been pushed aside, and we end up normalizing it or taking it for granted. (FP16)

Participants also indicated that teachings about the role of women in the territory had been erased: "The reason women are not involved in this is that it has never been taught, I think. We haven't had enough teaching about that side of the territory specifically." (FP17). Another participant agrees:

> In my opinion, we [women] have been dispossessed of our knowledge, our relationship, our wisdom, our expertise, and this needs to be re-taught. We have to reappropriate it to say: wait a minute, I'm going to make a decision in these spaces, I have my place too. [...] I didn't know we had so many rights and that was completely taken away from us. (FP16)

The activities practiced by women on the territory have been little documented and this can be explained by the fact that ethnographers, being for the most part men, have essentially focused on the activities practiced by men, notably hunting, and have neglected the other dimensions of community life (Parlee et Wray, 2016). In this regard, ethnographic discourses have largely contributed to the fabrication and perpetuation of the myth of the great hunter, a myth that has served to invisibilize and erase the role of women in the territory (Nadon-Legault, 2020). This image endures within contemporary imaginaries and demonstrates the power relations that play out between community

members (Kermoal et Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016; Nadon-Legault, 2020). One participant testifies: “So I think men have appropriated that role, of taking the territory [...], probably it comes from the myth of the great hunter [...]” (FP8). However, women did have an important role in community organization and in the territory:

> The woman also has an important social role in life, the man and the woman complement each other, but the woman takes care of the camp and the children. She does small hunting around the camp; she takes care of her husband’s hunting goods and feeds her family while the men are away. (FP2)

Some participants recall that if the men left for long periods to hunt big game, the women who stayed at the camp must have had considerable knowledge of the territory to ensure their survival and that of their families:

> What we know, globally, is that families existed, that the territories were structured and organized. The women stayed in the camp, took care of the elders and the families, and the men left for six days to hunt. At the end of the day, who made the decisions? It was the women because they were at the site so they had, in my opinion, a share of knowledge about the territory. (FP17)

> Because when a woman was all alone in her camp, when her husband left to go hunting, he didn’t just go next door, he went far away. Sometimes he would come back after a week. As a woman, you had to be able to do everything your husband does. (FP10)

Today, the perpetuation of this image continues to have consequences for the relationship between women and the territory. For example, some participants cited the existence of biases in favor of men regarding the relationship to the territory. The use of the territory would be defined according to men’s activities and women’s activities would be perceived as secondary activities. This participant’s comments provide an explanation:

> There are several reasons why we believe that the analysis of the impacts of different projects often takes into consideration the traditional use and

> occupation of the territory in terms of hunting, fishing and trapping, which are often activities that are less practiced by women. It is important to challenge this bias, to add dimensions that are more relevant to women, in terms of collecting materials or crafts, gathering medicinal plants, knowledge of remedies, travel within the territory, and also in terms of traditional foods. (FP7)

These biases in favor of men's use of the land may even result in a greater financial allocation for men than for women for their territorial practices:

> It was a program to help hunter-trappers or families who still use the territory. The person in charge of these sectors was a man. They brought the file to the table, it was a question of financial assistance for... families, men and women, the couple. But I realized that the man had a little bit more allocations than the woman. [...] Then I realized that they had not evaluated this in terms of criteria. It had been like that for X time. I said that I did not agree with that [...]. If we are going to be in a system where we should be equal between men and women, then it will start there. (FP17)

One of the participants also indicates that women do not necessarily realize that they too have decision-making power regarding the territory: "But I think that women do not understand the role that they can provide on the territory, the decisions, and all the things. They too have the right to decide, they have the right to say their word." (FP14) As a result, colonial politics and ethnographic discourses have contributed to valorizing the role of men in the territory and to erasing that of women, perpetuating the idea that the territory is a political issue that only men can tackle.

4.4.8 Colonization: erasing the place of Indigenous women

To explain the fact that Indigenous women are still a minority in political circles, some participants recalled that this was an impact of colonization. Colonial policies contributed to the erasure of women's role in their communities and their exclusion from political decision-making. The concentration of power in the hands of men for many years under the *Indian Act*, from 1876 to 1951, continues to have an impact. Women state: "It was a lot of the *Indian Act* giving a political structure almost like that of municipalities. It gave more room to men, so we all got lost in that, through those things." (FP17), and: "The

Indian Act also was discrimination against First Nations women" (FP5). Participants explain that the dominance of men in politics has been perpetuated through generations. One woman says: "It's because the dominance continues, it doesn't stop. You know, men are dominant, they are elected and they are dominant. Even today, it's still the case, you can say it, they dominate." (FP3). Another offers this comment:

> [The idea that women shouldn't be involved in politics], well, I guess it dates back to the 1900's, early 1900's, when women couldn't even vote. There were no women in power, there were all the men so I think it comes from generations and generations, how they teach the children, how they teach the men. (FP5)

A participant adds that, in the past, Indigenous women were not allowed to work, except in residential schools:

> Women were not allowed to have a salary, the man had to do everything. It was like that in my mother's time [...] women were not allowed to work before. They stayed in the camps. [...] The only place where we could work was at the residential schools, the women. My mother worked at the residential school, she was a cook. (FP10)

Another says that power was distributed equally between men and women before colonization:

> It comes from colonization, before power was shared, there was the women's assembly and then the men. The women had as much power, but it was the men who were the spokespersons. Women had a lot of power, but when colonization took place, they copied the non-Indigenous way of doing things, it's the men who have to be in front and not the women. Look at the clan mothers among the Mohawks, among the Iroquoians the clan mothers are very important. We didn't have that in our communities, but women were very important. The man would ask the women for their opinion. (FP12)

In fact, one participant recalls that in the past, women had the role of ensuring that chiefs carried out their responsibilities properly: "Women have always closely monitored

who were *okimaw*, and if they failed to fulfill their obligations, women would remind them." (FP15). Another explains that women were involved in politics but were more in the background: "women were not involved in that, they were very much involved in politics but behind the men." (FP12).

4.4.9 Impact of sexism in the relations between Indigenous women politicians and the federal and provincial governments

One participant who was involved in federal politics explained that she had experienced sexism from members of some political parties. For example, she reports the following:

> Sometimes I thought it was stupid, but people told me that the fact that I had a pretty face would help me. Whether it was the Bloc Québécois or the Conservative Party, the political parties told me that the fact that I had a pretty face or I was a good-looking woman would help me. (FP16)

One woman spoke about the impact of gender bias in negotiations between Indigenous communities and the federal and provincial governments. She explained that it can sometimes be difficult for an Indigenous woman to take part in negotiations with the federal and provincial governments because there is a risk that their voice will be less respected than that of their male Indigenous colleagues:

> I don't know, I think maybe because our leaders are men, they are worried about sending somebody who is a female to go negotiate or go have discussions on an international level with their male counterpart. It's still a challenge to perceive women as being trustworthy to go and have those discussions. I don't think it's so much on the part of the woman, I think it's more perceived as : "Is this guy going to be insulted if I send a woman to go and talk to him?". I think the respect for male-to-male discussions is different with having a woman participating in them. That's been a challenge even for us. (FP11)

Another woman decried the fact that discussions between the Quebec government and Indigenous communities are more likely to be held between men, potentially ignoring the concerns of Indigenous women politicians:

> I think it's a shame, if there is indeed an action plan that comes out of the Viens Commission recommendations, that it's the male politicians who choose for us. I wonder why they would choose the second recommendation when I would rather it be the first. [...] And that will be discussed between non-Indigenous elected men in government and elected men at the Indigenous level. And that's also a shame. (FP17)

4.4.10 Gender as aggravating factor of violence and intimidation

4.4.10.1 Violence and intimidation against elected women

As explained earlier in the report, elected officials, both men and women, can be targets of intimidation by community members. This intimidation and violence seem to be more pronounced towards female elected officials and can also come from other elected officials, mainly men. For example, this participant tells us that she was intimidated because she was a woman in politics:

> There are still some of those, mostly men that are like that, and at general meetings they'd sit at the front and you knew they were there. It was unspoken. You could see that they were not happy that you were the boss. They would sit at a table right in front with people when you were running the meeting. For me, it's as if they want to intimidate you, that's what I thought. (FP18)

Another adds:

> The Chief didn't want me to go and meet with the people involved, the territorial Chiefs and the members.... He said that he was the one who was elected, so it was up to him to give the directives. I made the decision to go anyway [...]. By the time I got there...the Chief had already rallyed people against me and a welcoming committee was there to tell me to go home. (FP15)

One participant even called it harassment:

> From [year] on, it became more critical, more difficult, more about intimidation, harassment. [...] Still, at that time, I realized or saw that some

> elected officials were more invested in individual interests than in collective ones. So, there were scores being settled at the table. Relations between men and women were very difficult. (FP17)

Other former elected women testify to having been threatened. One explains: “Me and [another councilwoman] were threatened if we enforced the highway safety regulations or code, but we filed a complaint anyway.” (FP1). Two other participants recount similar events:

> It was a man, a young man, he told me: “It’s not for me that I’m coming to see you, I’ve been sent to give you a message”, [...] he told me: “If you don’t stop fighting against drugs, something will happen to you”. I said: “Okay, go tell the person who sent you that he’s a coward, he could have told me personally and I’m not afraid of that”, but deep down I was scared to death. (FP12)

> Oh yes, of course. When you speak out publicly, I do get messages saying that they will sue me, that they’re going to do this to me. So yes, I received quite a few of them actually, because some don’t agree to what I say in the media or on social media. [...] They would send me bad messages on my Facebook messenger or by email. So yes, I dealt with that. [...] Yes, written messages and I have them all, I printed them. Even sexually, we deal with that. (FP5)

A participant shared an anecdote about events that happened to a former councillor:

> Because sometimes it’s pretty intense, like having all four tires slashed because someone doesn’t agree with your decisions. For example, [former councilwoman] found a threatening letter, a lot of nonsense, on her windshield. (FP14)

Another woman experienced violence at a more advanced stage, as evidenced by the following words: “During my term of office, I received a lot of death threats, a lot of intimidation. [...], my car was vandalized with a crowbar, I was subjected to a lot of violence.” (FP3). This same participant stated that, in general, political environments can be hostile places for women: “These are positions where women will face a lot of

violence, intimidation, jealousy [...]" (FP3). Also, according to her, living in the community while serving in political office would seem to be an aggravating factor of difficulties:

> I heard from women also, it' s extremely difficult for them to be in politics, especially when they live on the reserve. I've been through all that and I'm off the reserve, imagine the women who are on the reserve, right? [...] And when you live on the reserve, I feel like it's a lot harder. I've seen many women come and at the Quebec-Labrador Council, I can't speak for them, but they certainly had good reasons, that's for sure. (FP3)

Finally, two women testified about the unprofessional attitude of some male elected officials towards them. For example, one participant described receiving unsolicited advances or inappropriate comments from male colleagues in the workplace: "I've experienced unwelcomed advances from men sometimes. If we're having a dinner or whatever and sometimes, I've experienced men drinking too much and making unwelcomed advances or acting crazy." (FP11). Another participant corroborates:

> The ones that are, I guess, attracted to you, you know, they make you feel uncomfortable. They say: "Oh you got beautiful eyes", or: "You got a beautiful personality", and that's very uncomfortable. I was very uncomfortable with comments like that [...] (FP5)

Similarly, for women involved politically through associations such as the Native Friendship Centres or Quebec Native Women (QNW), which are and have been mostly led by women, they testify to the difference in treatment that exists between women and men and the lack of respect to which they are sometimes subjected:

> I remember one meeting [...], it was particularly violent, not physically violent but verbally, towards the representatives. There was [...] from the Native Friendship Centres and there was [...] who was the [female] president of QNW at the time. Look, they really got pushed around. [...] But if it had been the guys representing those associations, there would not have been that tone with them. It was a really aggressive tone. (FP9)

These examples show that the political sphere can be a hostile environment for women. The violence to which they are still exposed manifests itself in many ways: from distrust

in their political abilities, to derogatory remarks, and even retaliation against them.

4.4.10.2 A positive evolution in relations between men and women politicians

Despite the many difficulties that elected women still face, many of them have testified to an improvement in relations between men and women politicians. For example, one woman testified that when she was involved in politics, she faced discredit from male leaders for her presentation on violence. She explains that today it is easier to talk about violence and that there has been a noticeable change in the attitude of male leaders towards it: “Nowadays I don’t think there would be a leader who would dare to laugh and giggle while someone is talking about violence. But that’s the way it was back then.” (FP9).

Another participant states that today, many male AFNQL leaders support female politicians:

> With AFNQL, I’m like a social bunny. [...] I spoke with a lot of Chiefs, made friends. I think they were friends and colleagues as well, because we’d go out for lunch or supper together [...]. At the AFNQL level, I had support there even though I was a woman and the authority at the table was men. But keep in mind that not all men disagree that a woman should be sitting at those tables because, like I just said, AFNQL Chiefs support the women around the table. (FP5)

One elected woman also testified that she felt very respected as a woman on her band council:

> I’m glad, because we’re not a misogynistic board. How could I explain it... My interventions are as important as the guys who are there. I have never felt denigrated. I feel lucky to be on a board like this. (FP7)

Another agrees. She says that she has never been discriminated against as a woman and that there has always been a balance between women and men on her community’s band council:

> I have never felt the difference between women and men in my community and in my Nation. [...] I have never felt the difference between female and

> male power, nor have I ever felt that I had an advantage or disadvantage because I was a woman. [...] We in [community] have always had a balance and often the council was mostly women, even more women around the table than men (FP2)

5. CONCLUSION

Women's leadership differs from men's in that they are empathetic, willing to ask for help, and eager to listen and collaborate. They also stand out for their perseverance and resilience in the face of criticism from members of their community. They are committed to serving their community, making decisions for the well-being of future generations, and making social issues as much a priority as other issues. Indeed, the participants in our research insist that social, territorial and economic issues are interdependent and interrelated. The political vision of elected women can therefore be described as holistic. Their leadership enables them to drive improvements in community well-being and social progress. They also initiate political change by bringing new ways of approaching issues and conducting political discussions. They asserted that the skills of men and women are complementary and therefore stressed the need for balance. Consequently, a balance in the representation of women and men on band councils and in the handling of various issues is necessary. The determining factors that brought them into politics are the appeals from their community members as well as from their family members. In addition, a quarter of the participants indicated that it was women who had approached them. This indicates that even though women are less represented on band councils, they participate politically in their own way by exerting an influence on the candidacies. Also, the fact that the elected women of Quebec have set up a body, the AFNQL Council of Elected Women, allows them to discuss their own issues. This seems to be a factor in consolidating the link and solidarity between elected women, therefore facilitating their political involvement. Women face a number of challenges such as the organizational difficulties of political office, family responsibilities and the linguistic context in which they must work. Participants also reported being a minority in political circles and having difficulty getting elected. They are still confronted with sexist discrimination. They tell us that their skills are more easily questioned than those of men, that less importance is given to their words or their concerns and that some male politicians still seem to think that women are not as legitimate as they are in politics. We can see that the colonial and patriarchal thinking that politics is only a man's job

persists. As well, several explanations emerged during the interviews to explain the lack of female representation in the management of land issues. Some participants stated that it was a consequence of colonial policies that excluded women from these decision-making processes and others also spoke of a certain reluctance on the part of Indigenous men to allow them to take charge of this issue. Participants also testified that they had been intimidated or harassed in their political roles. This could be because they were women or because of political rivalries. They also said that their children and immediate family could be intimidated because of their political office. This research allows for further clarification on topics already discussed in the studies conducted in Western Canada and the difficulties caused by family conflicts. In particular, the participants add that disagreements between communities within the framework of negotiations with private companies or with the provincial and federal governments are also very complex problems to manage. For some, political and family conflicts or interpersonal rivalries with other councillors may have made it difficult to find a place on the council. Some also pointed out the inappropriateness of the governance imposed by the Indian Act and that it would be at the origin of the power struggles that could take place in the communities. They raised other difficulties such as the heavy workload of the function of elected officials and the unpaid status of elected officials in certain communities, which forces them to have a job on the side. Finally, in defining the relationship between the provincial and federal governments and the Indigenous communities, the participants spoke of a lack of understanding and consideration of Indigenous issues, a unidirectional and unilateral way of making decisions, and a lack of willingness to work with Indigenous communities. The women also spoke of their exposure to discrimination and racist stigmatization in the context of their political functions, especially when there is a strong media coverage of issues of racism against Indigenous people. This leads us to believe that these events could be part of a context of systemic racism. Finally, on a more positive note, despite the many challenges that women still face in asserting themselves in political circles, the participants noted that there have been positive developments in the relationship between male and female politicians. We also note that the number of Indigenous women involved in politics continues to increase. Their determination and resilience suggest that this dynamic will continue in the coming years and that we are gradually moving towards balanced governance between women and men.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on what the women suggested during the interviews and following the analysis of their comments, we were able to draw up a non-exhaustive list of recommendations aimed at promoting the involvement of women in politics. Recommendations intended for the AFNQL Council of Elected Women, the AFNQL and all the authorities were formulated.

Recommendations for the AFNQL Council of Elected Women:

1. Create a fund reserved for women's legal and moral support, etc.

At some point, [...] we talked about creating, with the Secrétariat à la condition féminine (government of Quebec), a fund dedicated to providing elected First Nations women with quick access to legal advice [...], psychological services or communication services. (FP13)

2. Organize political training seminars specifically for Indigenous women.

I remember the financial training in global, annual and other budget analysis that we gave. There were also trainings on how to talk to journalists, how to express yourself when you are in a difficult situation and you are approached by a journalist [...] how to debate, to defend your position against opponents [...]. These were all things that women liked, they wanted to have these trainings. (FP13)

That's what I noticed among elected women in Quebec, we need support, administrative or otherwise, to be better accompanied in our files. This is important because we cannot do everything at the same time. (FP17)

And I think that what we also lack is training, young people need to be trained, especially at the provincial and federal government level. We really need our youth to get trained because we often say that if you want to fight properly, if you want to win your fight against someone, you have to fight with their weapons and those weapons are knowledge, training. (FP12)

3. Create mutual assistance and support groups for elected and formerly elected women (discussion forum, coaching group, etc.)

Women should organize together and between Nations to form coaching groups. [...] There could also be a network of former and current elected women to support women who want to run for office [...] as at the non-Indigenous level, there is a network of Indigenous women in business and I think that in the West, there is a network of women in business. [...] We could, perhaps, hold encouragement sessions, even coaching sessions with new women who would like to run for office. (FP20)

There needs to be solidarity, support and mentoring because you can't go into politics alone. You can have the best intentions in the world, but politics is hard and it's also hard in the Indigenous community. It takes support for that. (FP9)

4. Invite a former elected Elder woman to share her experience before each gathering of elected women

At gatherings of elected women, we should invite a woman of experience! [I retired from politics, but I have a lot of experience! [...] I have stories to tell, I have insights to share. So, we could ask for the participation of an Elder or a person who has been in politics [...]. (FP3)

5. Increase the frequency of AFNQL Council of Elected Women meetings

Basically, what I would have liked is to get together more often. Just once a year, I don't think that's a lot. [...] Meetings of elected women, I would have liked to have had them at least twice a year. I would have enjoyed meeting a little more often. (FP7)

6. Improve communication between the AFNQL Council of Elected Women and elected women across Quebec

I know there have been a few meetings like that, but a lot of women tell us the same thing, they either never knew, the news never got to them or it's: no you're not going. (FP4)

7. **Organize meetings between the AFNQL Council of Elected Women and the women parliamentarians in Quebec at least once a year in order to respect the commitment made in the Protocol of solidarity in 2015**

This recommendation was made during one of the results validation meetings.

8. **Promote communication with the Indigenous Women's Circle[9] in order to raise awareness od the issues of elected women in Quebec and that the AFNQL Council of Elected Women can be informed of the actions implemented by this instance.**

This recommendation was made during one of the results validation meetings.

Recommendations for the AFNQL :

9. **Suggest to band councils that they aim for parity to promote better representation of women and of all points of view**

But the first thing I had to do was to change [...] the election code because there was nothing that said we had to have a minimum of one woman, one woman or two on the board. There should always be at least one woman or two [...] that's what we should do here also. (FP8)

10. **Propose to the AFNQL the adoption of stricter codes of ethics in order to promote a climate of listening and benevolence among elected officials (male and female)**

I think that organizations like the AFNQL or the AFN should have stricter or clearer codes of ethics, that there are things that are acceptable and others that are not. That would also change, and it would also have an impact on the presence of women in politics. Because when you're in a room of men and they're only speaking to each other, you don't have much of a voice. (FP9)

11. **Promote and valorize the place of Indigenous women in politics at the AFNQL table**

At some point, when there are women at the Quebec-Labrador Chiefs' table, there should be [...] a recognition of that, not a prize but help [...] so as to promote women. If the men at the Quebec-Labrador Chiefs' table promoted the acceptance or participation of women, there would already be [an improvement]. (FP3)

[9] According to the Government of Canada website: "The Indigenous Women's Circle (the Circle) was established on May 24, 2018, to engage with Indigenous women leaders and experts in the public and private sector on the challenges they face and their priorities for the Government of Canada related to advancing gender equality."(WAGE, 2021).

Recommendations for all authorities :

12. **Educate children on the functioning and responsibilities of Band Councils**

This is one of the points that I bring up and that I find important, in the communities, from childhood, from elementary school, there should be training on what it is to manage a community, on the duties and responsibilities of your band council. People don't know that (FP13)

13. **Promote and valorize the place of Indigenous women in politics**

I also think that emphasizing the importance of women's role in the community, as well as guiding them, helping them and supporting them if they want to be in politics. (FP15)

14. **Keep the register of elected women and men up to date in order to follow the evolution of the place of Indigenous women in politics (AFNQL, AFNQL Council of Elected Women)**

This recommendation was made during one of the results validation meetings.

15. **Create video clips of interviews with Indigenous women politicians to help disseminate female role models in politics to young people (AFNQL, QNW, Mikana, Wapikoni mobile, etc.)**

This recommendation was made during one of the results validation meetings.

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8. APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1 - Letter of support from the AFNQL Council of Elected Women

Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec–Labrador
250, Place Chef Michel Laveau, bureau 201
Wendake (Québec) G0A 4V0
Tél. : 418-842-5020 • Téléc. : 418-842-2660
www.apnql-afnql.com

Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador
250, Place Chef Michel Laveau, Suite 201
Wendake, Quebec G0A 4V0
Tel.: 418-842-5020 • Fax: 418-842-2660
www.apnql-afnql.com

Le 5 juin 2020

Par courriel

Madame Suzy Basile — suzy.basile@uqat.ca
Madame Héloïse Maertens — heloise.maertens@uqat.ca
École d'études autochtones
Pavillon des Premiers-Peuples - UQAT
675, 1re Avenue
Val-d'Or (Québec) J9P 1Y3

Objet : Lettre d'appui pour un projet de recherche sur l'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec

Mesdames,

Nous avons bien reçu votre proposition de projet de recherche portant sur l'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec. Nous sommes d'avis qu'il est important de documenter ces expériences afin de consolider les savoirs relatifs aux femmes pour nos futures générations, et c'est pourquoi nous désirons appuyer votre projet de recherche.

Nous sommes persuadées que vous respecterez les règles éthiques de recherche prescrites dans le *Protocole de recherche de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador* (APNQL, 2014), dans les *Lignes directrices en matière de recherche avec les femmes autochtones* (FAQ, 2012) ainsi que les règles et suggestions que madame Annick Tremblay, agente de liaison politique à l'APNQL, vous indiquera. Nous vous invitons également à valider avec Mme Tremblay l'ensemble de la démarche de la recherche proposée, incluant l'identification des participantes, le lieu et le moment des entrevues ainsi que le processus de traitement des informations et des données (entrevues, enregistrements, photos). Aussi, nous vous demandons de déterminer avec Mme Tremblay la meilleure façon de valider et de partager les résultats de cette recherche avec l'ensemble de notre organisme quand le moment sera venu.

Veuillez accepter, Mesdames, nos salutations les plus distinguées,

Adrienne Jérôme — Verna Polson

Cheffe Adrienne Jérôme — Grande cheffe Verna Polson
Co-porteuses du dossier des Femmes élues de l'APNQL

c. c. M. Ghislain Picard, chef de l'APNQL
Mme Annick Tremblay - APNQL

LE GRAND CERCLE DE NOS PREMIÈRES NATIONS – THE GREAT CIRCLE OF OUR FIRST NATIONS

APPENDIX 2 - Certificate of ethics approval

Référence : 2020-06 – Basile, S. et Maertens, H.

Comité d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains

Certificat attestant du respect des normes éthiques

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue certifie avoir examiné le formulaire de demande d'évaluation éthique du projet de recherche et les annexes associées tels que soumis par :

Pre Suzy Basile
Mme Héloïse Maertens

Projet intitulé : *« L'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec »*

Décision :

☒ Accepté	
☐ Refusé :	Suite aux dispositions des articles 5.5.1, 5.5.2 et 5.5.4 de la Politique d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains de l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue
☐ Autre :	

Surveillance éthique continue :

Date de dépôt du rapport annuel :	1er juillet 2021
Date de dépôt rapport final :	À la fin du projet

Les formulaires modèles pour les rapports annuel et final sont disponibles sur le site web du CÉR-UQAT : https://www.uqat.ca/recherche/ethique/etres-humains/

Membres du comité ayant participé à cette évaluation :

Nom	Poste occupé	Département ou discipline
Nancy Crépeau	Membre substitut	Représentante autochtone
Julia Morarin	Membre étudiant	Maîtrise sur mesure en études autochtones
Pascal Grégoire	Président du CÉR	UER en sciences de l'éducation

Date : 1er juillet 2020

Pascal Grégoire, Ph.D., président du CÉR-UQAT

Pour toute question : cer@uqat.ca

APPENDIX 3 - English Interview Guide

Implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec

Guide d'entrevue - préliminaire

Date : _____

Nom : _____

Âge : _____

Communauté/Nation : _____

1) D'où venez-vous ?
2) Quelle est votre occupation aujourd'hui ?
3) Quel était votre parcours avant d'entrer en politique ?
4) Quant êtes-vous entrée en politique ?
5) Qu'est-ce qui vous a poussée à vous impliquer en politique ?
6) Pouvez-vous nous parler de votre parcours politique ?
7) Pensez-vous que le fait d'être une femme a eu une quelconque influence sur votre parcours politique ?
8) Quels sont les principaux défis que vous avez rencontrés ?
9) Comment expliquez-vous qu'il n'y ait pas plus de femmes chefs ?
10) Pensez-vous qu'il y a une différence entre les leaderships féminins et masculins ?
11) Est-ce que les priorités sont différentes entre les chefs femmes et hommes ?
12) On note une faible participation des femmes aux consultations portant sur les enjeux territoriaux entre autres, comment expliquez-vous cette faible participation ?
13) Est-ce que la vision du territoire est différente chez les femmes ? Si oui, en quoi consiste ces différences ?
14) Avez-vous remarqué des similarités/différences entre les parcours politiques des femmes autochtones du Québec et du Canada ? Les enjeux sont-ils les mêmes ?
15) Comment qualifieriez-vous les rapports entre le gouvernement québécois et les communautés autochtones ?
16) Est ce qu'il y une différence entre les rapports entretenus entre les communautés autochtones avec le gouvernement québécois et le gouvernement fédéral ?

APPENDIX 4 - Consent form

UQAT
UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

Laboratoire de recherche
Mikwatisiw

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

TITRE DU PROJET DE RECHERCHE :

L'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec.

NOM DES CHERCHEURS ET LEUR APPARTENANCE :

Suzy Basile – Professeure à l'École d'études autochtones de l'UQAT, directrice du Laboratoire de recherche – *Mikwatisiw* et titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les enjeux relatifs aux femmes autochtones;

Héloïse Maertens – Étudiante à la maîtrise en études autochtones à l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), rattachée au *Laboratoire de recherche sur les enjeux relatifs aux femmes autochtones – Mikwatisiw*.

COMMANDITAIRE OU SOURCE DE FINANCEMENT :

Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et Culture (relève professorale)

CERTIFICAT D'ÉTHIQUE DÉLIVRÉ PAR LE COMITÉ D'ÉTHIQUE DE LA RECHERCHE DE L'UQAT : 1er juillet 2020

PRÉAMBULE

Nous vous invitons à participer à un projet de recherche qui vise à documenter l'implication politique, passée et actuelle, des femmes autochtones au Québec. Il servira également à mettre en lumière les facteurs favorisant ou entravant la participation des femmes aux instances politiques, ainsi qu'au sein des processus de consultation s'adressant aux peuples autochtones à propos la gestion du territoire. Ce projet de recherche est soutenu par une lettre d'appui du Rassemblement des femmes élues de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador (APNQL). Avant d'accepter de participer à ce projet de recherche, veuillez prendre le temps de regarder attentivement les renseignements qui suivent.

Le présent formulaire de consentement peut contenir des mots ou des notions que vous ne comprenez pas. Nous vous invitons à demander des explications ou des renseignements en personne, par courriel ou par téléphone aux membres de l'équipe de recherche : Suzy Basile – directrice et Héloïse Maertens – étudiante.

1

UQAT
UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

BUT DE LA RECHERCHE

Cette recherche découle du constat du peu de littérature disponible au sujet de la place des femmes autochtones dans les structures de gouvernance autochtones passées et actuelles au Québec. Ce projet vise ainsi à combler ce manque de littérature et à rassembler les expériences des femmes autochtones élues ou anciennement élues au Québec. La mise en relation de ces expériences permettra de faire émerger les principales problématiques auxquelles font face les femmes autochtones élues au Québec et d'élaborer des lignes directrices en matière de participation des femmes autochtones à la gouvernance.

DESCRIPTION DE VOTRE PARTICIPATION À LA RECHERCHE

Un minimum de deux rencontres est prévu avec chacune des participantes. La première rencontre se tiendra par Zoom en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19 et permettra l'enregistrement d'une entrevue semi-dirigée d'environ une heure et demie, orientée autour de trois grands thèmes : (1) votre parcours de vie et politique en tant que femme élue ou anciennement élue, (2) votre point de vue sur la gestion du territoire et le manque de présence des femmes dans les processus de consultation portant sur les enjeux territoriaux, et (3) les problématiques rencontrées en contexte québécois.

À la suite de cette première rencontre, le verbatim de l'entrevue sera retranscrit par l'étudiante à partir de l'enregistrement audio/vidéo et codé afin de protéger votre identité (à moins d'avis contraire de votre part). La seconde rencontre, d'une durée d'environ 30 à 60 minutes (qui pourrait se réaliser en personne si les conditions liées à la pandémie de COVID-19 le permettent) permettra à l'étudiante de présenter les retranscriptions des entrevues et les principales conclusions qui en ont été tirées. Cette étape vous permettra de donner votre avis et vos recommandations concernant les données collectées et l'interprétation des résultats.

AVANTAGES POUVANT DÉCOULER DE VOTRE PARTICIPATION

Les résultats de la recherche pourront servir aux femmes élues de l'APNQL afin de parfaire leurs stratégies de soutien aux femmes autochtones, ainsi qu'à évaluer les besoins et les actions à mener en termes de formation, d'appui et d'accompagnement aux revendications des femmes autochtones.

RISQUES ET INCONVÉNIENTS POUVANT DÉCOULER DE VOTRE PARTICIPATION

Les risque et les inconvénients découlant de votre participation à la recherche ne sont pas plus grands que ceux qui sont associés aux aspects de la vie quotidienne. Les inconvénients liés à votre participation sont le temps personnel et l'énergie qui vous sont sollicités pour participer à cette recherche.

ENGAGEMENTS ET MESURES VISANT À ASSURER LA CONFIDENTIALITÉ

Le matériel créé lors des entrevues avec chacune des participantes (enregistrement audio/vidéo et transcription écrite) ne fera pas l'objet d'une diffusion directe auprès du public. Les seules personnes qui auront accès à ces fichiers seront vous, l'étudiante et la direction de la recherche. Ces fichiers codés seront conservés sur l'ordinateur de l'étudiante qui est protégé par un mot de passe jusqu'en septembre 2028. Une version

papier des entrevues et des résultats seront conservés dans un classeur fermé à clé, dans le bureau de la directrice de la recherche (local 4321 du Pavillon des Premiers peuples de l'UQAT à Val-d'Or). À moins que vous en fassiez la demande directe à l'équipe de recherche, les informations permettant de déterminer votre identité demeureront confidentielles et ne seront pas retranscrites ou utilisées pour publication. Toutefois, malgré les précautions que nous prendrons pour assurer votre anonymat, il y a un risque que vous puissiez être identifiée.

INDEMNITÉ COMPENSATOIRE
Une compensation d'un montant de 200$ vous est offerte pour votre participation.

COMMERCIALISATION DES RÉSULTATS ET CONFLITS D'INTÉRÊTS
Les données et les résultats de cette étude n'ont aucune vocation lucrative. Les membres de l'équipe de recherche, Suzy Basile et Héloïse Maertens ne déclarent aucun conflit d'intérêts.

DIFFUSION DES RÉSULTATS
Tous les résultats de la recherche devront être validés auprès des participantes avant d'être présentés à des organismes autochtones (conseils de bande, Rassemblement des femmes élues de l'APNQL, FAQ) ou à la communauté scientifique. Cette recherche permettra à l'étudiante de rédiger un mémoire pour l'obtention d'un diplôme de maîtrise en études autochtones à l'UQAT. Les résultats de cette recherche serviront à l'écriture d'un article à propos du parcours politique des femmes autochtones au Québec qui sera proposé à la revue internationale *AlterNative : An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. Les résultats pourront également présentés lors d'événements scientifiques. Concernant les autres modes de diffusion des résultats de la recherche, ils ne sont pas encore prévus au moment de la signature de ce formulaire, et les participantes en seront informées préalablement. Une copie leur sera fournie sur demande.

CLAUSE DE RESPONSABILITÉ
En acceptant de participer à cette étude, vous ne renoncez à aucun de vos droits ni ne libérez Suzy Basile, Héloïse Maertens et l'UQAT de leurs obligations légales et professionnelles à votre égard.

Votre participation à cette recherche est volontaire. À tout moment, vous pourrez vous retirer sans justification ou conséquence. Si tel était le cas, l'enregistrement audio/vidéo de l'entrevue et la retranscription écrite de vos propos seront détruits dans jamais être pris en compte pour l'analyse, la rédaction ou la diffusion.

Les données collectées dans le cadre de la présente étude ne seront pas partagées avec l'organisme partenaire de cette recherche.

Pour tout renseignement supplémentaire concernant vos droits, vous pouvez vous adresser au :

Comité d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains
Vice-rectorat à l'enseignement, à la recherche et à la création
Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue
445, boulevard de l'Université, bureau B-309
Rouyn-Noranda (Québec) J9X 5E4
Téléphone : 1 877 870-8728 poste 2252
cer@uqat.ca

Si vous avez d'autres questions tout au long de cette étude, vous pouvez joindre :

Les membres de l'équipe de recherche située à l'École d'études autochtones de l'UQAT, Pavillon des Premiers-Peuples, 675, 1re Avenue, Val-d'Or, J9P 1Y3 :

- Suzy Basile, local 4321, Tél : 1 877 870-8728, poste 6336, suzy.basile@uqat.ca

- Héloïse Maertens, Tél : 819-880-0465, heloise.maertens@uqat.ca

CONSENTEMENT

Je, soussignée, accepte volontairement de participer à l'étude : *L'implication politique des femmes autochtones au Québec*. J'accepte et je confirme avoir reçu la compensation de 200$ pour le temps que j'ai accordé à ce projet de recherche.

_____
Nom de la participante (lettres moulées)

_____ _____
Signature de la participante Date

Nous nous s'engageons à respecter la confidentialité des informations collectées au cours des entrevues. Toutefois, nous vous offrons la possibilité que votre nom apparaisse dans les publications de la recherche. Si tel est le cas, s'il vous plait, signer la ligne suivante.

Je veux que mon nom apparaisse dans les publications de la recherche (mémoire, articles, etc.) :

_____ _____
Signature de la participante Date

Ce consentement a été obtenu par :

_____
Nom de la chercheuse (lettres moulées)

_____ _____
Signature de la chercheuse Date

Veuillez conserver un exemplaire de ce formulaire pour vos dossiers.