School retention and Gender Stereotypes
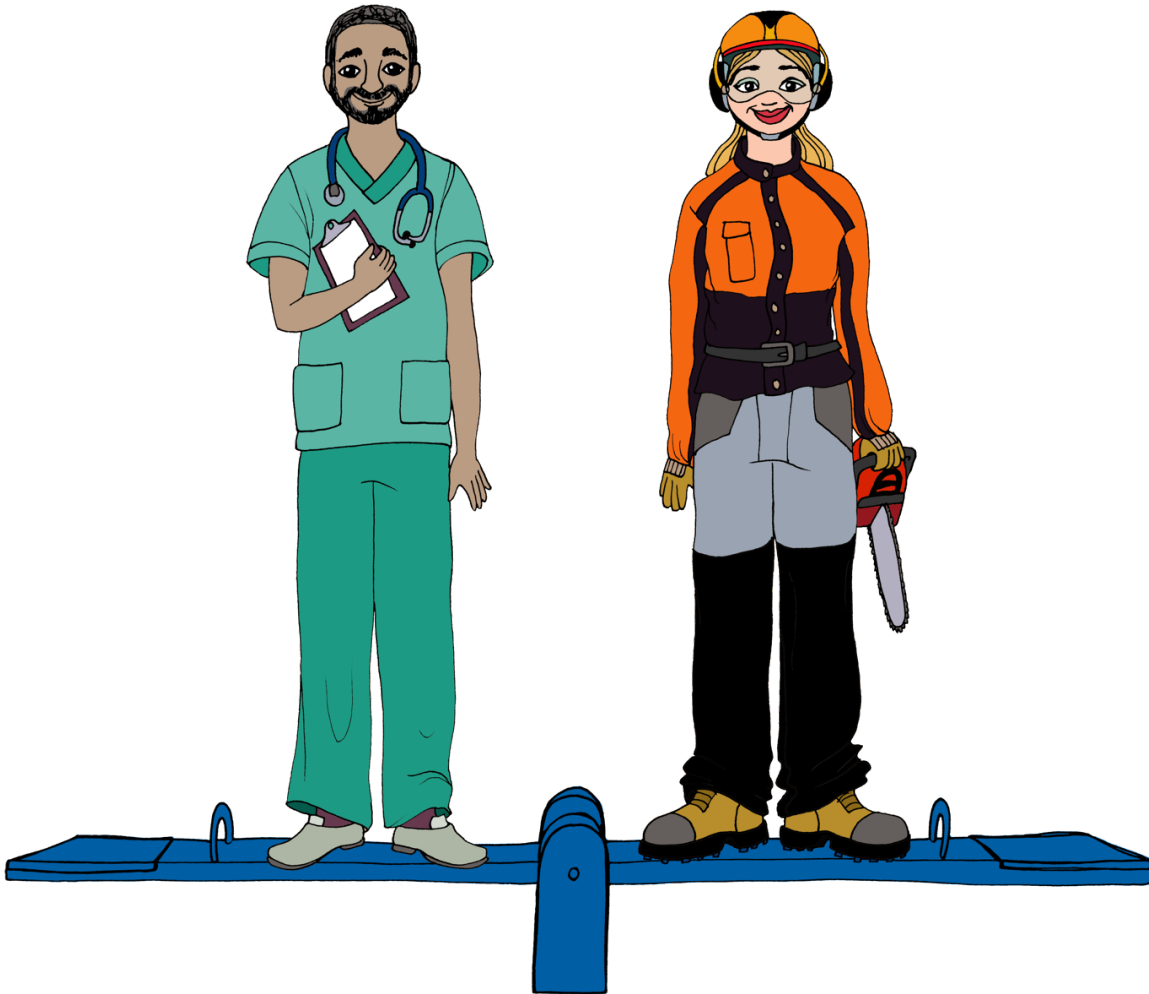
A project led by the Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Intervention Guidelines for young Mi'gmaq College Students

2020

Gender stereotypes amongst Mi'gmaq college students

While it is generally considered that the development of a child's gender identity crystallizes around the age of seven (Boyd and Bee, 2015), studies suggest that the construction of gender identity is dynamic and can be reorganized during the child's further development (Mieeya and Rouyer, 2013). In any case, most college students will already have internalized many of the characteristics, attitudes and behaviours traditionally associated with their gender through gendered socialization (SCF, 2018). Gender stereotypes mark gender differences, and these differences are more apparent amongst students who are considered "at risk" in terms of their schooling (Roy, Bouchard & Turcotte, 2012a, p. 34).

Identity Development

The issue of identity development must be approached from the perspective of school perseverance by sex for two main reasons. First, the development of gender identity continues in college and identity construction in boys and girls is marked by significant differences. Second, the path taken by students as they develop their identity can greatly influence their motivation to study, which is one of the key factors in student retention (Roy, Bouchard & Turcotte, 2012d). Most college students are at an age and in a place—college—where the quest for identity is experienced intensely (Roy, 2011, in Roy, Bouchard & Turcotte, 2012c). Examining the differences specific to each sex and how they construct their identities and make it possible to understand young people better as they make their way through this time of experimentation, and to foster their success at school.

Interplay Between Personal, Professional, and Cultural Identity

According to the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2002), the transition from secondary school to college seems to be a critical step in the academic and personal progress of students in a context of social change that adds to the difficulties they must already deal with as they attempt to define their personal and professional identities. On top of this, indigenous students also have to deal with the necessity of valuing their cultural identity, which is a minority amongst the dominant culture of the student population. Besides, young indigenous college students mentioned having to drop out of school at some points to re-engage with this identity and come back to their academic progress stronger (Gauthier, 2015a). Yet, valuing their cultural identity is a key element of their academic perseverance as studies have shown that indigenous students who succeed best have a strong attachment to their ethnic identity. Therefore, the most persevering students have used their ethnic identity as an emotional anchor point building their confidence and a sense of security while facing adversity and cultural discontinuity (Joncas & Lavoie, 2015, p. 18).

Three main dimensions emerge from the literature on the subject: the teacher-student relationship, the students' relationships with their parents, and their involvement in school activities (Roy et al., 2012c). Although gender differences do appear for the first two dimensions, it would seem that involvement in extracurricular activities has a fairly significant influence on identity development in both boys and girls since it allows them to learn more about themselves (strengths, interests) and to assert themselves more clearly as people (Roy et al., 2012c).

Identity Construction in Boys

Some elements more specifically mark identity construction in boys. First, it would seem that boys have more difficulty with the transition from secondary school to college (Roy et al., 2012c, p. 62). This transition can be particularly difficult for young indigenous boys, who then no longer have an environment that is familiar to them and are suddenly part of a cultural minority (Gauthier, 2015, p. 13; Joncas & Lavoie, 2015). Indeed, when they arrive at college, indigenous and non-indigenous

boys are markedly less certain about what they want to do later in life and make their career choices later than girls do (Boutin, 2011). They also arrive at college in search of independence, which they perceive as a condition necessary for their own identity development. In keeping with their desire for emancipation and their affirmation of identity, boys seem more inclined to develop individual learning styles and to circumvent the rules determined by the school world (Roy et al., 2012c, p. 62).

Identity Construction in Girls

There is little documentation dealing with identity construction in college girls, indigenous or not. In contrast to their male classmates, female college students begin their post-secondary studies with a firmer idea of their career choices and become involved in extracurricular activities so as to count on the support of the other members of the group associated with their activity and to forge their identity by building on their membership in this group (Roy et al., 2012c). Many female students are also constructing their mother identity at the same time, alike Innu female students in Baie-Comeau's CEGEP—who are for the most part single mothers (Santerre, 2015), which complexifies their identity construction.

Gender identity development

Ultimately, both boys and girls may continue to build their gender identities into adulthood. According to a conceptualization by John Robert Sylliboy (2019, p. 106), a two-spirited Mi'gmaq, the identity of a human being (L'nu) has four dimensions (emotional, spiritual, physical and mental) and encompasses both historical traditions and contemporary practices. Therefore, Mi'gmaq children develop their gender identity while balancing its spiritual dimension, rooted in cultural traditions, and its mental dimension that reflects contemporary practices. The physical dimension on its part is associated with sexual identity, for example the child's biological sex, while the emotional dimension is associated with gender identity. According to the

Figure 1. L'nu Model (Sylliboy, 2017).

LGBT Family Coalition (2018, p. 2), gender identity is an individual's gender experience which may or may not correspond to their biological sex or the one assigned at birth. Consequently, any individual may identify themselves as a man, a woman or somewhere between these two poles, regardless of their biological sex. All people—regardless of sexual orientation—have a gender identity.
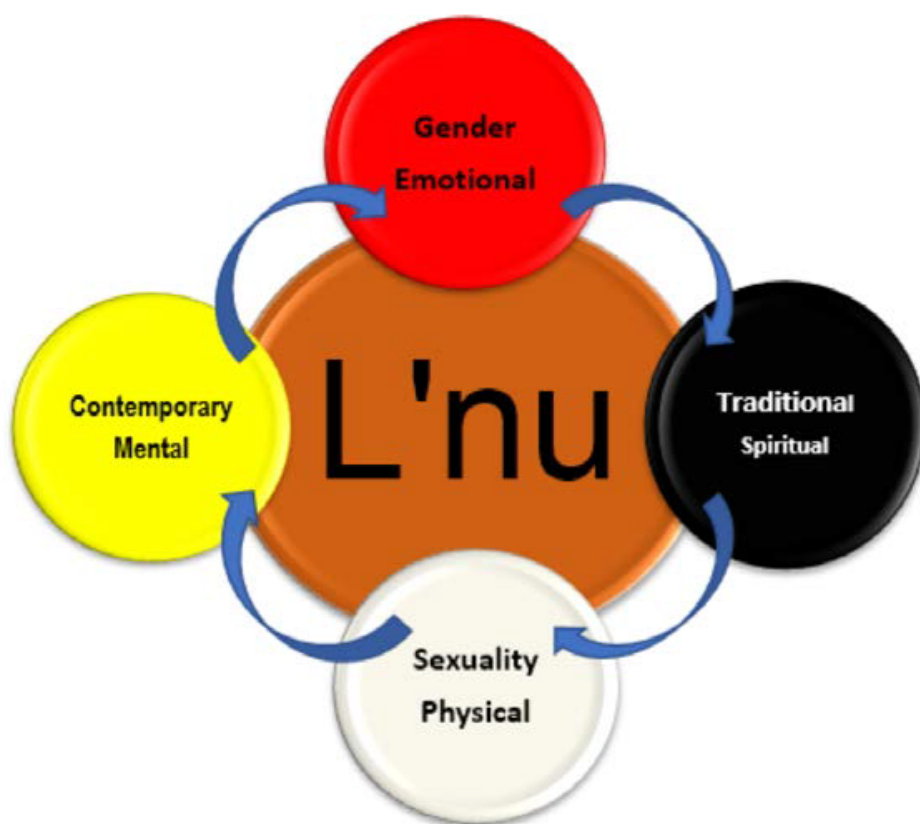
In many First Nations, people with a gender variant identity are called two spirits (Sylliboy, 2017). If the definition of the term "two-spirits" changes from one Nation to another, "Albert McLeod defines it as 'a term used to describe aboriginal people who assume cross- or multiple-gender roles, attributes, dress and attitudes for personal, spiritual, cultural, ceremonial or social reasons.'" (Monkman, 2016). There is no specific word in Mi'gMaq to adequately represent this concept, although undergoing studies might determine which Mi'gmaq expression would represent it best (Sylliboy, 2019).

College students may, therefore, wonder about their gender identity or be trans; in other words, their gender identity might not be the same as their sex at birth whether their transition or coming out has actually occurred or not. Gender identity is not necessarily linked to a young person's interests (activities, clothing, career choices). So it is important to avoid thinking, for instance, that because a boy is interested in a so-called feminine activity, he sees himself as a girl, or vice versa (SCF, 2018).

Gender Stereotypes in Young Mi'gmaq College Students

As they build their identities, young people rely on and learn from the various models they have encountered in their lives—within their families, amongst their friends, in the media, their teachers, their communities Elders, etc. Some of these models may reproduce gender stereotypes that today seem natural to us. For instance, we associate cooperation, reading, softness, relationships and calmness with women, whereas competition, sports, strength and independence tend to be associated with men.

In young college students, these stereotypes are expressed in different ways. According to a literature review on the subject, girls appear to be more involved in the relationships they create through their social networks. The spirit of cooperation would more often than not be an important reference value that they have integrated well at college. As for boys, individualism and competition appear to generally have greater value to them. Their social networks generally appear to be less rich than those of girls (Roy et al., 2012d, p. 9). In addition, boys appear to be less likely than girls to use existing resources if they encounter problems. Brooks (1998) schematically illustrated the contradictions between the requirements set for receiving help (i.e.: revealing one's private life, waiving control, being vulnerable, introspection, coping with one's pain and suffering, etc.) and some traits associated with male socialization (i.e.: hiding one's private life, maintaining control, being invincible, acting and doing rather than looking inwards, denying one's pain and suffering, etc.) (Roy, Bouchard & Turcotte, 2012b, p. 9).

Amongst the various behaviours and characteristics marked by gender stereotypes, the most common are the following:

Girls	Boys
Cooperation	Competition
Are more sensitive and emotional	Are more rational and do not show their emotions
Are better at reading, languages and art	Are better at sports, science and mathematics
Take care of others more	Are more independent

TABLE 1. MALE AND FEMALE STEREOTYPES

This being said, these stereotypes are not based on biological characteristics, nor have they been scientifically proven. At birth, the brains of boys and girls differ only in reproductive function. Children aged 0 to 3 years old therefore have the same cognitive (intelligence, reasoning, memory, attention, spatial identification skills) and physical skills (Vidal, cited in Piraud-Rouet, 2017). The differences between boys and girls that develop are attributable to the brain's plasticity, that is to say, its ability to transform according to its learning and its environment (Piraud-Rouet, 2017). As

for the psychological or behavioural differences between the sexes, while they tend to increase from childhood to adulthood, they are nearly absent in infants and young children (Cossette, 2017).

This may explain why there are nevertheless differences between female and male college students: they often have had more than 18 years to learn the social standards expected of girls and boys because they were socialized differently!

Differentiated socialization

Differentiated socialization is the process of inculcating in children the behaviours expected of their sex in keeping with the standards that exist in the society in which they are growing up. Much of this differentiated socialization takes place without our knowledge, totally unconsciously. Foremost, it occurs through family influence and this influence continues to have an impact until children are old enough to attend college. According to a study on identity construction in college boys, some respondents said that their parents appear to have encouraged them to develop their independence more than that of girls by raising them in a manner that is less protective, emphasizing that they need to learn to "figure it out for themselves". Some boys reported learning the "hard way" more than their sisters who were more often protected (Roy et al., 2012a, p. 63). Thus, when asked about this subject, young people perceive these differences in the way their parents behave towards them, since they change their behaviours depending on the child's gender. This differentiated socialization, also transmitted by the media, society, school and by many other agents, also greatly modulates the relationship boys and girls have with school and learning.

Mi'gmaq College Students' Learning Styles and Relationship With School

The experience of Mi'gmaq college students is marked by a variety of gender stereotypes resulting from gender-based differentiated socialization and cultural biases derived from a lack of knowledge between Quebec's indigenous and non-indigenous people (Gauthier, 2015b). In this section, we look at how this socialization influences the students' connection to school and their learning styles as well as how the teaching staff contribute to differentiated socialization without realizing it.

School Leaving at College: A Gendered Situation

College dropout rates are alarming. For technology programs, for instance, the success rate after six years is only 66% (Breton, 2016). There is also still a gender gap in terms of the graduation rate, which reflects a gendered connection to school.

In the Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine administrative region, for the student cohort that entered college in 2009, the graduation rate—students who obtained their DCSs two years after the usual duration of the program—was 61.7% for girls and 50.9% for boys, a difference of 10.8% (Cartojeunes, 2019). In Québec, moreover, this rate has fallen further for girls (from 70.3% to 67.4% over five years) than for boys (57.3% to 56.1%) (Dion-Viens, 2017), all Nations combined. The Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine welcoming very few Mi'gmaq students, we are unable to access data related to their school retention at this level.

The reasons why girls and boys drop out of college are also very different (Roy et al., 2012b):

For boys	For girls
Factors connected to the educational institution;	Personal and family-related reasons and difficulties;
Attraction of the labour market;	Academic difficulties; and
Lack of motivation (or interest) and commitment to their studies;	Too heavy a workload.
Role exerted by their social network (friends who want to drop out of school); and	
Low importance of academic success in terms of values.	

TABLE 2. REASONS WHY BOYS AND GIRLS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL AT COLLEGE LEVEL.

Lack of motivation and commitment to education are two very important factors in determining student retention, which may explain why more boys drop out (Roy et al., 2012d). In addition, employment opportunities for boys without diplomas are much more interesting than those that exist for girls (Chouinard, Bergeron, Vezeau & Janosz, 2010), traditionally male jobs being better paid than those traditionally reserved for women. However, more girls are able to conciliate work and their studies (Duchaine, 2017) as well as family responsibilities and studies (Santerre, 2015), which might explain why, when they do drop out, they say it's because their work load is too heavy or they're having trouble at school.

Finally, it must also be said that sociocultural origin and gender play a role in the number of students enrolled: upon arrival at college, the disparity between young men and young women is even greater for young people from less advantaged sociocultural communities: 30 men for 70 women, when both parents have at best completed their secondary school studies. In contrast, this imbalance is considerably mitigated when the young people come from advantaged communities (53 women for 46 men) (Eckert, 2010, p. 158).

Learning Styles and Relationship With School

Before looking at the differentiated connection to school and learning of Mi'gmaq boys and girls, let's look at a few context points related to the connection of First Nations to school as an institution. First of all, it is worth repeating that for hundreds of years, amongst Indigenous peoples, teachings have been passed on within the context of the family and the community. School has been implemented just over 50 years ago; First Nations' educational tradition is then quite young and it clashed in many ways with their traditional lifestyle (Commission de l'éducation, 2007, p. 10). The residential schools, implemented in Quebec between 1934 and 1980, as well as all the colonial system, negatively impacted indigenous people's relationship with educational institutions (Gauthier, 2015b; Santerre, 2015). Indigenous youth has consequently developed a critical attitude towards the occidental educational institution, considered as a domination and assimilation ideological apparatus (Gauthier, 2015b, p. 16).

We can then say that for a majority of indigenous students, school clashes with their culture (Brabant et al., 2015) and their connection to it is tainted with mistrust. A study conducted at the Baie-Comeau CEGEP offers a concrete example, as researchers explain that Innu students leaving the community face prejudices coming from their own surroundings, especially when they perform well in school. Respondents agree that indigenous students aren't encouraged to persist in school. Those who do are called "apples", a comparison meaning they have red skin on the outside, but a white heart on the inside (Gauthier, 2015b, p. 84). Fortunately, Audy and Gauthier (2019) highlight that according to many researchers, young First Nations members' connection to school and education is the theatre of a profound change and is becoming a lot more positive, less reactive and resistant.

According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2007), learning from an indigenous perspective is holistic and experiential, it is a lifelong process rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures, it is spiritually oriented, it is a communal activity, involving family, community and Elders and it integrates Aboriginal and Western knowledge.

Perceptions of School Perseverance and Academic Success

It is also important to underline a few elements related to the perceptions of school perseverance and academic success amongst First Nations, even though it can vary from one Nation to another and from one person to another. If, in the European-inspired educational system, academic success is measured with grades, it is often the other way round in indigenous communities, where the survival of the culture and the language is equally important (Commission de l'éducation, 2007), where family is a priority (Gauthier, 2015b) and where succeeding means obtaining a diploma, even if it takes longer than what is initially planned in the regular pathway stated in the program they've engaged in (Santerre, 2015). For the Innu, for example, academic success is defined by parents, students and teachers more in terms of perseverance and of capacity to put in enough efforts to get passing grades. The notion of perseverance then becomes an important dimension of academic success (Commission de l'éducation, 2007, p. 11). For the Inuit, ancient know-how that supports traditional lifestyles, such as knowing how to survive in tundra, is equally important (Commission de l'éducation, 2007). Within the Innu community of Mashteuiash, it is assumed that academic success is a collective responsibility and that it is by taking into account all dimensions of the Human Being that we achieve good health, a pride feeling and academic success. The Pekuakamiulnuatsh have a global and holistic vision of the present time and the future, and they make sure to foster the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical fulfillment of everyone (Girard & Vallet, 2015, p. 27).

During a panel organized in the context of a symposium on the academic perseverance of First Peoples, young indigenous graduated students shared as follows their perception of academic

success and perseverance (Gauthier, 2015a, p. 99): already very proud of being accepted in a graduated program, with all the other steps and efforts that comes with it in their sociocultural context (let's not forget that they come from very remote communities), their first concern is to adapt progressively to their new student reality. They are not very worried about performing in class and they aren't traumatized by an eventual failure. In their mind, it isn't a big deal if it happens, they have the patience to redo the course if necessary.

Therefore, the length of their studies isn't very important to them, even if failures, considered necessary by many Innu students from the Cégep de Baie-Comeau, are difficult to take, because they sometimes have the impression that non-indigenous teachers and students believe they are not able to succeed because of their indigenous roots. This perception brings some indigenous students to drop out courses or even the whole program they are enrolled in (Gauthier, 2015b, p. 88).

Consequently, when looking at the connection to learning of young Mi'gmaq boys and girls, we have to put aside the accounting view of academic success to adopt a holistic approach (St-Amant, 2003). In that sense, the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model of the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) is a good example of how the connection to learning of many First Nations members isn't limited to the educational institution itself, but has to be rooted in the community, to touch on many dimensions of the individual and the society, and has to be formal at certain moments, such as during the post-secondary schooling process, and informal at other times, such as during early childhood.
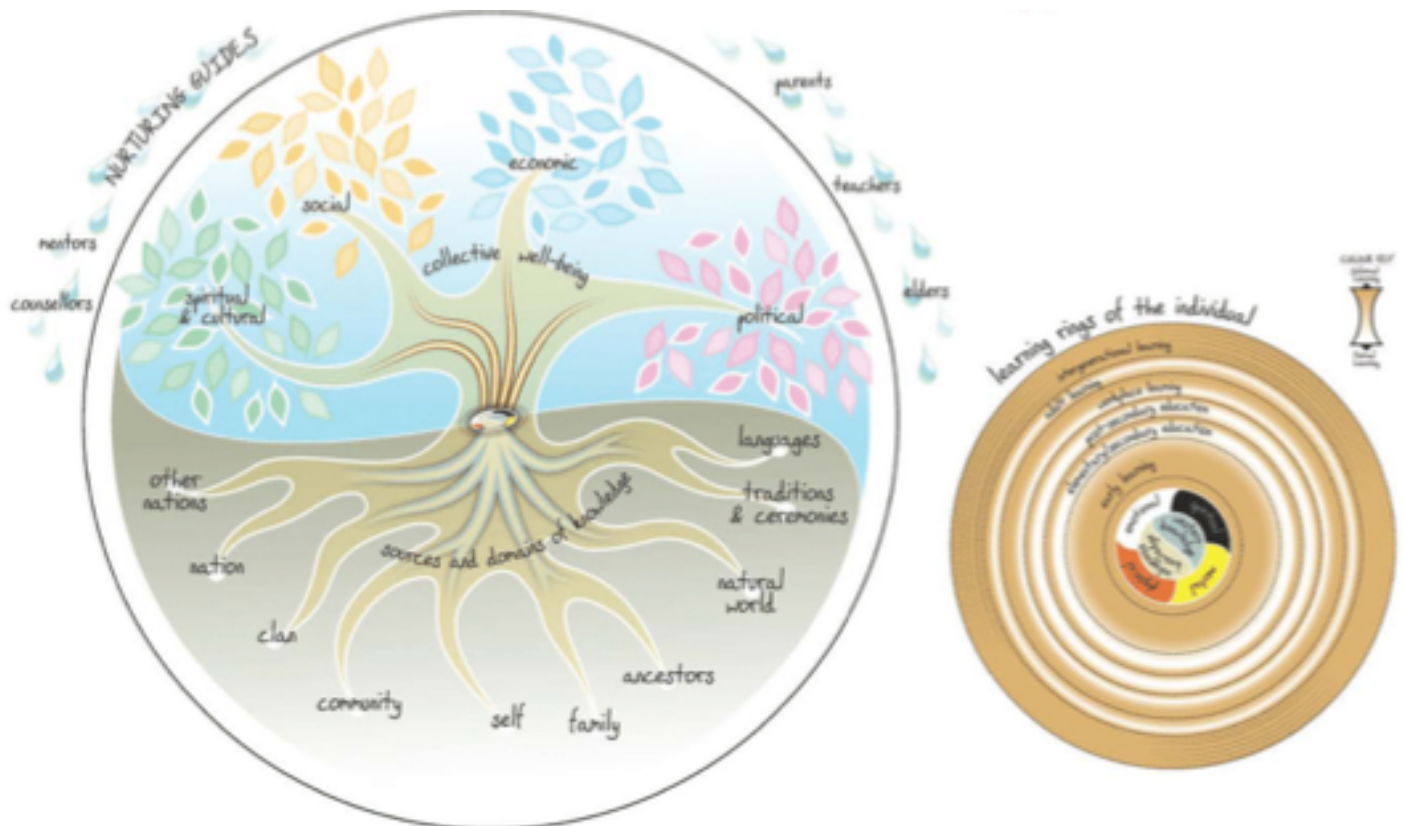

FIGURE 2. FIRST NATIONS HOLISTIC LIFELONG LEARNING MODEL (CANADIAN COUNCIL ON LEARNING, 2009)

Gender stereotypes and learning styles

Some behaviours, values and characteristics that vary significantly by sex have been targeted by teams conducting research in the education field (Eckert, 2010; Baudoux and Noircent, 1993; Roy, Bouchard and Turcotte, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c) since they are connected to school perseverance:

Boys...	Girls...
Attach more importance to competition;	Attach greater importance to the relational sphere (family, loved ones, friends);
Are involved in more physical activities outside college;	Attach more importance to respect;
More often deal with their problems alone;	Attach more importance to the effort needed to succeed;
Drink more alcohol;	Read books more often;
Are involved in more extracurricular activities;	More often feel the workload is too heavy;
Comment spontaneously more often;	Spend more time on their studies;
Are more mobile in class and take over the area around them;	Attach more importance to academic success and obtaining a college diploma;
More often answer questions identified as difficult;	Attach more importance to having a united family;
Speak out more often even if they haven't been asked to do so;	Earn better grades;
More often answer questions that have nothing to do with the subject matter;	Attach more importance to having a successful relationship with their partner;
Are more unruly and argue more against instructions from teachers;	Consider their teachers' levels of knowledge to be higher;
Interrupt speakers more, tease and push others more, particularly girls; and	Help more, congratulate more and disapprove boys less than the opposite;
Consult the teachers at the head of the class more often.	Receive more hostile comments from boys, are criticized more often, are targeted by sexist comments, are assaulted verbally and physically;
	More often answer closed questions put to the group;
	Raise their hand more often without obtaining acknowledgment; and
	Ask for more explanations at the end of the class.

TABLE 3. ACADEMIC BEHAVIOURS, VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS ACCORDING TO GENDER.

Noircent and Baudoux (1993, p. 154) also note that in situations where boys and girls are on the same team, tasks are distributed according to gender stereotypes. In addition, the authors mention that it is in the natural science groups that girls are most invisible when it comes to speaking and where they are most often interrupted; in contrast, in social science groups and in groups where they are a minority, they behave more actively. Finally, girls would seem to be quieter in technology classes and in classes that are mostly female or that have male-female parity. Saint-Amant (2003) notices that amongst First Nations, a gap between boys' and girls' academic perseverance is also noted, at a point where resilience in school seems to be associated with girls.

These characteristics, observed more frequently in boys and girls, are the outcome of gender-based differentiated socialization built on gender stereotypes. For instance, if boys are expected to be competitive, be more mobile, and occupy more physical and sound space, they will develop by trying to meet these implicit expectations. These stereotypes influence the connection to learning and school differently for boys and girls.

As Baudoux and Noircent (1993, p. 150) point out, the teaching staff, who are very sensitive to issues of equity in education, do not suspect they treat students differently. And yet, this is the case:

teachers unconsciously reproduce gender stereotypes through their own interactions with students and because of what they expect of their students. Consequently, not only do they evaluate behaviour differently by gender, they also tend to spot behaviours that are consistent with male or female gender (Baudoux and Noircent, 1993). Here are a few examples.

General observations

1. Teachers often ask boys open questions while girls are asked to answer closed or multiple-choice questions.
2. In cases where boys and girls get the same poor grades, girls are twice less likely than boys to be considered of concern by their teachers.
3. When teachers believe that the assignments they are correcting were submitted by boys, they give higher grades.
4. A very well-presented assignment is devalued if the teacher supposes it was produced by a girl and complimented if the teacher thinks it was done by a boy.
5. Teachers tend to attribute poor results by boys to a lack of effort; in contrast, when girls do poorly they tend to attribute it to a lack of intellectual skills.
6. Boys are more often punished or reprimanded publicly while girls are spoken to briefly, quietly, often unbeknownst to the rest of the class.
7. Interactions between teachers and students are stereotyped; domination and separation are used with boys (teachers use the imperative) while girls are spoken to softly and are encouraged to be complicit with their teachers.
8. The use of the masculine as the generic pronoun not only discriminates against girls but also renders women and their accomplishments invisible, and causes female students to tend to stay on the sidelines.
9. Many stereotypes continue to be depicted in the books and texts used in class; this in itself excludes women from the narrative content.
10. Teachers don't get as close physically to girls as they do to boys when their students ask them questions unless the class is mostly female.

Boys...

1. Receive more attention from teachers in terms of approval (congratulations), disapproval, comments or listening than girls;
2. Are asked more direct, semi-open, complex or abstract questions;
3. Receive more instructions from their teacher prior to beginning an assignment and more encouragement later;
4. Are more active and have more educational interactions with their teachers;
5. Occupy a greater space in discussions centred on the topic, initiate such discussions, answer questions, comment spontaneously and direct lesson content;
6. Receive more individual help from teachers, who scrutinize their responses more closely for potential learning difficulties;
7. Are better known to their teachers, who remember their first names more quickly, are more concerned with their success and see them more quickly as individuals;
8. Are criticized more often for incorrect answers or even for not answering; and
9. Even when boys and girls exhibit the same reprehensible behaviours, boys are reprimanded more often.

Girls...

1. Participate less in class discussions and are more likely to be invisible;
2. Not only receive fewer instructions, but teachers take the initiative to complete tasks the girls should have performed; their independence is not encouraged as much;
3. Are part of an undifferentiated group for a long time; questions tend to be put to the group and not to individual girls;

4. Do not object to doing boring jobs; and
5. Fail to obtain answers to their questions more often than boys.

These differentiated attitudes on the part of students and staff towards male and female students are unconscious, but nevertheless very much present. They are shaped by differentiated socialization, anchored in the gender stereotypes experienced by both teachers and students throughout their lives. We must first become aware of these stereotypes and then work to deconstruct them, through self-reflection and by working to this end with students.

Drop out-related factors: Anchored in stereotypes?

While strong adherence to gender stereotypes is associated with higher dropout rates, some other school dropout factors are gender-specific and require appropriate actions.

Transition from secondary school to college: Gendered trajectories

Girls are more sensitive to transitions such as the transition from primary school to secondary school; a difficult transition can lead to academic difficulties, dwindling interest in school and, ultimately, dropping out of school. As for the transition from secondary school to college, studies have shown that the difficulties associated with this transition would seem to be more apparent in boys (Rivière et al., 1997; Tremblay et al., 2006, cited in Roy et al., 2012b). Indeed, their first college term may be a moment of vulnerability for some boys, both academically and personally. The boys most at risk at college apparently feel more out of it and find it more difficult to organize themselves, be independent and manage their schedules. Consequences: it would seem they more easily fall behind and repeatedly fail (Roy et al., 2012d, p. 9).

In addition to having to deal with this transition as well, young indigenous students can also experience a cultural shock when they leave their community for the CEGEP: a transition time is often needed because of the marked differences between these two environments and because of the break marked with their social network. Adelman, Taylor and Nelson (2010, cited in Joncas & Lavoie, 2015, p. 18) highlight the fact that leaving one's indigenous community to pursue post-secondary studies brings a fundamental stress that can lead to dropping out of school. Gauthier (2015b, p. 13) echoes these thoughts, stating that the shock is quite brutal when they get to post-secondary studies because they no longer have a familiar environment and they become suddenly culturally a minority. Dropouts and failures are frequent in this context, but studies have shown that institutions that are sensitive to their reality and that implement welcoming and supporting programs greatly foster post-secondary perseverance of young First Nations students.

Gauthier (2015b, p. 93) also notes that, in the context where students leave a culturally appropriate school environment for one that has a completely different understanding of what education is, the deficient preparation to post-secondary education has a major impact on First Nations students when they reach college. Among other things, they suddenly face an accelerated rate compared to what they've been used to. In addition, they have to adjust their working methods and respect stricter deadlines. They now have to plan their tasks over 15 weeks instead of a full school year staggered over 10 months. They also have difficulty adapting to the requirements of many teachers and to assume their responsibilities in regard to handing in assignments and be present in class.

This being said, since the degree to which students adapt to college life is a key element in the pursuit of their studies, those having more difficulty dealing with the stress of this transition are more likely to drop out later (Meunier-Dubé and Marcotte, 2016). Anxiety and school-related stress are much more prevalent in girls than in boys (Dion-Viens, 2017; Roy et al., 2012a).

A number of mental health-related psychological factors, including depression and anxiety, affect school perseverance in young people differently depending on their gender.

Researchers have observed that young people between the ages of 15 and 18, that is, at ages just before or concordant with entry into college, depression rates increase significantly for both genders and rates of depression amongst girls are up to twice as high as those observed amongst boys (Meunier-Dubé et Marcotte, 2016). In Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine, anxiety and depression are the most common mental health disorders and are more prevalent in women. They are significantly more likely than men (30% versus 19%) to experience a high level of psychological distress. And it is amongst young people between the ages of 15 and 24 that this proportion is highest, at 42% (Direction de santé publique Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine, 2017).

This being said, the presence of depressive symptoms, including psychological distress, would seem to be a major factor for predicting the risk of dropping out, and play a role in the difficulties young people may have in adapting to college. Other symptoms of depression include difficulty concentrating, which could adversely affect to a considerable degree the ability to function of students and their academic performance. For students experiencing depression, it would appear that there is an alteration in some of their cognitive functions, such as those involved in memory and attention. These aspects highlight the difficulties depressed students may encounter when faced with the new academic requirements of the college environment. In addition, many depressed students feel they have a future in which they will not be able to do the job they want. Loss of interest in their usual activities is another sign of depression; a number of depressed students experience a loss of interest for fields of study or for activities they previously enjoyed, which can adversely affect the development of their identity and keep them from choosing a career, with the attendant serious consequences in terms of staying at school (Meunier-Dubé and Marcotte, 2016).

Coupled with the increasing depression rates in young people, more than a third of college students in Québec, particularly girls, must deal with anxiety (Dion-Viens, 2017). This anxiety is not unrelated to the stress resulting from academic pressure, which is two to three times more prevalent in girls (Roy et al., 2012c, p. 151). In Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine, about 11% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 estimates that most of their days are fairly stressful, even extremely stressful, with women tending to be more stressed (Direction de santé publique Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine, 2017).

Thus, to encourage girls to stay at school, it is critical to take into consideration the fact that they face a higher risk in terms of mental health (school-related stress, anxiety and depression), pay particular attention to the related signs in girls and adjust our actions accordingly since they are more likely to experience their connection to school with a degree of stress and anxiety (Doray, Langlois, Robitaille, Chenard & Aboumrad, 2009).

Some college students, whether returning to college or arriving there from secondary school, must conciliate their role as parents with their studies and sometimes even with a job. Since women are still, even today, responsible for most of the work associated with household tasks and child rearing (Couturier and Posca, 2014), this conciliation can be more difficult for female students and can affect their school perseverance, particularly in the case of single-parent families (in GÎM, 74.3% are women (Statistics Canada, 2016)).

At the Cégep de Baie-Comeau, indigenous students are generally adults returning to college and this group is mainly made up of single mothers (Santerre, 2015, p. 22). However, from an indigenous

point of view, Gauthier (2015a, p. 98) notes that if, in first place, this situation obviously doesn't help with staying in school, especially since young indigenous women often have their first child during teenage, it seems that it becomes a powerful motivation generator when they come back to school and a key element of academic perseverance. This brings the author to say that even if it is obviously astutely to make young mothers aware of the risks and consequences of early pregnancy, as much energy should be put in offering them parental support that would allow them to stay in school while being a young mother, one not necessarily going against the other.

Academic and Occupational Guidance

The occupational segregation between men and women observed in Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine is strongly influenced by gender stereotypes. This segregation also exists in the occupational choices made by students in the region, particularly with regard to secondary school vocational programs and college technology programs. Data for technology programs at the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine (CGÎM) shows female enrolment consistent with each sector's traditional nature, either predominantly male or predominantly female (CGÎM, 2018). Gender stereotypes would also seem to influence the students' career choices.

Generally, this situation is also observed in pre-university programs with particular profiles. According to a study conducted at the Cégep de Sainte-Foy, girls are proportionally more numerous in programs such as medical technology and nursing, social science-related technology (social work, special education, early childhood education), the arts and literature program and social science—helping relationships and social action profile. As for boys, they tend to enroll more often, proportionally speaking, in natural science, in computer technology and in social science—organization and management profile (Roy et al., 2012b, p. 41).

Students arriving at college have not necessarily made firm career choices yet and this is more often the case for boys. So it would be appropriate to accompany them from the time they arrive to help them consider all kinds of occupations, regardless of gender stereotypes.

General Recommendations

The differences between boys and girls in terms of dropping out of school are less marked when they reach college, although there too, girls continue to persevere more than boys. Even at college, the evidence shows that the young people most at risk of dropping out are also those for whom the differences between boys and girls are most marked; in other words, the ones who adhere most closely to gender stereotype differences (Roy et al., 2012a).

The reasons why girls and boys drop out of college are also very different (Boisvert and Paradis, 2008; Jorgensen, Ferraro, Fichten and Havel, 2009; MELS, 2004, 2007, cited in Roy et al., 2012d). This explains why it is important to deal with each gender differently when it comes to fostering school perseverance.

This information sheet provides a number of recommendations to integrate into your pedagogical practice so as to deconstruct gender stereotypes in your class. To help you target your actions, the recommendations focus on five areas of intervention:

1. Interactions with students
2. Activities dealing with gender stereotypes
3. Feminist pedagogies
4. Recommendations for team work
5. Self-reflection efforts

For each of these areas, some of the recommendations concern students in general while others are specifically for boys or girls. The goal is not to further differentiate between boys and girls but simply to recognize that at college age, gender-based differentiated socialization has already done its work and some stereotypes acquired by boys and girls need to be approached differently in order to deconstruct them.

Interactions With Students

1. Encourage collaborative activities that bring girls and boys together. In class where students collaborate more, there are fewer stereotypical attitudes.
2. Encourage students equally.
3. Keep in mind that all boys and all girls do not have the same competencies and capacities. Adopting an individual approach will make it easier to take into account separately the realities experienced by the girls and boys in your classes.
4. Survey the parents of your students. Ask them about their realities and their needs, and try to adapt your practices to take these needs into account.
5. Be open-minded regarding diversity. If some young people make discriminatory comments or behave inappropriately towards homosexuals or transgender people (acts of homophobia or transphobia), or towards Mi'gmaq students (racism or colonialism), invite them to think about their conduct.
6. Inform your students of the existence of an institutional policy to counter harassment, and what it involves.
7. Encourage all students to spend a reasonable amount of time on their studies. Encourage boys to spend enough time on their school work and encourage girls to strive for balance between school and social life.
8. Pay particular attention to the vocabulary you use: for instance, avoid saying "men" for workers in the forestry or outdoor activity fields and "girls" for early childhood educators, etc.
9. Make sure the places where boys can get help are more informal: boys respond better to informal professional support places, since they tend to fend for themselves rather than ask for formal help.

10. Provide all boys, including those less academically proficient, with opportunities to be competent at school.
11. Offer walk-in support services, which might make it easier for boys to access these services.
12. Add a competitive element to some activities: this would make them more stimulating for both boys and girls.
13. Value emotions and help boys express them more freely.
14. Encourage artistic talents in boys.
15. Be alert to the invisible needs of girls and pay attention to signs of dropping out in girls, who tend to be labelled as potential dropouts less often and who have a greater tendency to internalize their difficulties.
16. Plan activities for girls to raise their self-confidence.
17. Be alert to psychological distress and the difficulties girls, more sensitive, encounter during the transition from secondary school to college.

Activities dealing with stereotypes

1. Help students think critically about gender stereotypes by:
    o Encouraging reflection and awareness when you see opportunities;
    o Openly criticizing stereotypical images exposed in the public space;
    o Drawing attention to gender stereotypes when students use web applications on their tablets or computers;
    o Questioning the stereotypes and prejudices perpetuated by students or other people; and
    o Correcting the impression that there are specific activities for women and others for men.
2. Because tasks are often divided up between the students in a work group along gender-based lines, invite them to share tasks or try out new ones.
3. React verbally in situations of inequality and discuss them with your students so as to deconstruct stereotypes and encourage them to adopt egalitarian values.
4. In sports, where gender stereotypes are highly present, intervene quickly when you hear discriminatory comments.
5. Feminize your written work and what you say so that everyone feels included.
6. Raise awareness about the aptitudes developed when practising the various activities open to young people and show how they are beneficial to everyone, both girls and boys.
7. Organize activities to raise the awareness of students about the issue of hypersexualization.
8. Organize workshops and games with students to engage in a dialogue dealing with the issue of gender identity and two-spirit folks.
9. Introduce models of men and women who transcend stereotypical roles.
10. Work on gender-based stereotypes with young people, particularly with boys who tend to adhere to them more.
11. Encourage students to choose activities or tasks they tend to ignore or avoid.
12. In situations calling for a cooperative approach or teamwork, encourage participants to use the respective strengths of the girls and boys in the group to give them opportunities to shine. This is particularly important for girls, whose self-confidence is often weaker than that of boys.
13. Encourage young women to explore trades traditionally performed by men and encourage young men who wish to work in areas traditionally dominated by women to choose careers in those fields.
14. Implement promotional campaigns dealing with this. Support and encourage the academic, professional and social aspirations of young people. Help them become convinced that they can do anything and that all career choices are possible.

Feminist Pedagogies

To support school perseverance in all students by deconstructing gender stereotypes, it is important to practise feminist pedagogy; in other words, a pedagogy that ultimately seeks to eliminate inequality between women and men. According to Penny Welch (1994: 156), all feminist pedagogies are founded on three principles that seek to:

- Establish egalitarian relationships in the classroom;
- Ensure that students feel valued as individuals; and
- Use the experience of students as a source or learning.

Burke and Jackson feel that, in addition to these principles, the pedagogical activity should also be transformative (Pagé, Solar and Lampron, 2018, p. 8). Here are a few other general recommendations for how to put into practice feminist pedagogies.

1. To more specifically reach girls and boys as distinct groups, vary your pedagogical approaches. In doing so, you will reach more students giving all the opportunity to learn in the way that suits them best.
2. Be flexible to make it easier for students who are parents to conciliate school, family and work demands.
3. Create a climate conducive to learning and self-expression by:
   o Reacting immediately when you hear sexist, racist, inappropriate or discriminatory comments (zero tolerance);
   o Not casting doubt on students who do not conform to stereotypes and by correcting those who make comments or joke about such behaviours; and
   o Encouraging young people to be open-minded in terms of the choices others make and by demonstrating that a person's gender does not restrict them in their choice of activity or profession.
4. Encourage mixed teams, particularly for sports activities.
5. To put teams together, use a draw instead of letting students choose to foster full reciprocal understanding between students, boys and girls as well as indigenous and non-indigenous.
6. In situations involving school outings and internships, make sure the tasks associated with group life are shared equitably and in a non-stereotyped manner.
7. Make sure you propose a diversity of models for the reading assignments and other tasks you assign (for instance, include female philosophers who deal with topics other than the female condition; female scientists; or women who have left their mark on history for things other than their work as feminists, First Nations men and women that contributed to knowledge development in your disciplinary field, etc.).
8. Check your students' perceptions and feelings regarding their competencies in certain subjects like French and math, and the value they pay to those subjects so you can intervene judiciously:
   o Girls experience more anxiety and often feel less competent than boys in math. They need support and encouragement; and
   o Boys often feel that reading and studying French/English are less important.
9. Provide young people with a variety of occupational role models. Encourage them to see themselves doing a job that reflects their own interests and not one that fits in with gender stereotypes, particularly in the case of students enrolled in programs that are not traditional for their gender.
10. Give priority to reading material and activities that look at original ways of doing things, which present a range of protagonists with qualities and behaviours that break with traditional role models. This is particularly important for reading assignments and guest speakers.

11. Be careful with humour dealing with the skills of men and women. Such jokes, when repeated, can become stifling for a program's minority students (boys enrolled in programs that are traditionally female/girls in traditionally male programs).
12. Allow the program's minority students to express their needs and talk about their difficulties. Don't forget that Mi'gmaq students, boys and girls, are a minority in the college, no matter which program they are in.
13. Put in place mechanisms to encourage boys and girls to speak out in class equitably. For instance, have boys and girls speak in turn.
14. Mitigate stereotype threat[1] by means of a "reaffirming talk" at the beginning of the activity, pointing out that all students have the ability to do the activity successfully.
15. Support the integration of women in predominantly male sectors.
16. Make sure you offer equivalent training to both men and women. Avoid assuming that students already have certain competencies, for instance, that they can drive or use equipment.
17. Support the integration of men in predominantly female sectors.

With the working team

1. Prepare a data-based table showing who participates in which activities so as to determine who is primarily drawn to these activities.
2. Propose activities that combine competencies in the arts and sports to encourage boys to become involved in cultural practices and girls, in physical activity.
3. Plan a policy to regulate romantic and sexual relationships between teachers and students.
4. Have male and female role models in non-traditional activities or on the teaching staff.
5. Hold a group discussion on the issue of gender in the workplace.
6. Plan a policy for dealing with cases of sexual assault, particularly in internship settings.
7. Reflect on an institutional policy for dealing with and integrating two-spirits students as well as students with non-standard gender identities.
8. Foster safe means of transportation, with adequate schedules, to enable students to travel to where their activities take place so as to encourage them to participate.
9. Put a program in place to help students with the transition from high school to CEGEP and pay particular attention to Mi'gmaq students that have to adapt to a new culture and to learning in a second (sometimes third) language, often doing so far from their community.
10. Set specific spaces and programs for young indigenous women, who often consider their educational environment as being hostile, and allow them to be around more indigenous employees (Lavell Harvard, 2011).

Self-reflection efforts

1. Develop practices conducive to self-reflection: be alert and question your own attitudes (very often unconscious) towards young people. For instance, a female teacher filmed her class and realized that she adopted different behaviours towards the girls and boys in her class.
2. Learn more about living conditions in Mi'gmaq communities and their culture to better understand students coming from these communities.

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[1] When working on the same assignment (a geometry exercise), girls do better if they are told it's a drawing exercise that if they are told it's a math exercise. This phenomenon is call *stereotype threat* and can be mitigated by reaffirming the competencies of all pupils at the beginning of the class or assignment.

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