

A successful collaboration: Centre d'initiation à la recherche et d'aide au développement durable (CIRADD) and the Inter-Community Harmony Project



CIRADD
Centre d'initiation à la recherche et
d'aide au développement durable



➤ A Big First Step in Accepting Differences: Building Awareness Among Youth

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Overcoming racial prejudices between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals can be done. And the Centre d'initiation à la recherche et d'aide au développement durable (CIRADD), affiliated with the Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles, and the Inter-Community Harmony Project proved it during their collaboration in the neighbouring communities of Listuguj (Restigouche) and Pointe-à-la-Croix, located in the Gaspésie region.



➤ Building awareness about differences

Since 2002, the Inter-Community Harmony project has strived to build openness among students in grades 1 to 7 to others and their differences. According to Mr. Pierre Vicaire, project co-ordinator, it is vital to eradicate the prejudices of young people in both communities. Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals harbour many preconceived ideas that must be shattered starting in childhood in order to achieve better coexistence.

From this perspective, the project organizes many activities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youths each year. There is no lack of opportunities for enabling these students to get to know each other and accept each other – be it in the form of sending greeting cards at different holidays during the school year or a group outing to the movies.



➤ Sharing expertise so as to better educate young people

In 2006, **CIRADD** came on board the project with a view to supporting its activities and documenting this innovative approach. The Centre's action was two-fold. To begin with, it assessed the situation in the communities of Listuguj and Pointe-à-la-Croix through an analysis of intercultural perceptions. Then, it quantified the impact of the project's action in terms of reducing racism between both communities.

According to Mr. David Bourdages, CIRADD's director general, it is important to support communities – in particular, not-for-profit organizations such as the Inter-Community Harmony project – which are drivers of social innovation. The Centre contributed not only its expertise to the project but also integrated an anthropologist and cégep students into the research work.

For both leaders, the project proved beyond all doubt that it is possible to eradicate prejudices between the two communities. "The important thing is to tackle the problem when they are still children. With adults, there is nothing more that can be done – the perceptions have become too engrained," observes Mr. Vicaire.

Following interviews with participants, it appears that the project has genuinely helped reduce and indeed eradicate prejudices between both communities. The Inter-Community Harmony project has thus become a way of getting to know others better and creating a healthy atmosphere between the two communities. □