# Improving skills for success through First Nations traditional knowledge

***Presentation of a project conducted jointly by the First Nations Adult Education School Council (FNAESC), the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA) and the collaboration of the project's host communities.***

## Project objectives

This project has the following three objectives:

1. Design and validate a referential of generic socio-emotional skills for First Nations through an action-research approach.

   *Expected outcome: a new socio-emotional skills repository based on the traditional knowledge of First Nations cultures and aligned with the Competencies for Success Framework.*

2. Adapt a generic skills recognition tool based on the new First Nations-specific reference framework (objective 1), using an action-research approach.

   *Expected outcome: a tool for recognizing socio-emotional skills based on the new repository built around the traditional knowledge of First Nations cultures, and including a validation process adapted to First Nations practices.*

3. To study how this new repository and these new recognition tools can foster the development of skills for success, in order to better support players in the job market and the socio-economic development of First Nations communities.

   *In particular, this project proposes to build on a tried and tested tool for recognizing people's strong skills: Nos compétences fortes (Our strong skills).*

Since 1995, the Nos compétences fortes (Our strong skills) approach has offered adults the opportunity to recognize and develop their strengths (based on a repository of 22 generic competencies) in a group facilitation context (8 to 12 people). The Our Strong Competencies approach is based on seven presential NCF workshops (lasting an average of 2 hours), generating a learning and exploration dynamic comparable to that of talking circles, and putting forward the following principles:

- focus on oral communication and value speaking;
- develop a broad vision of work (not limited to the professional sphere);
- Value recognition, by oneself and by peers;
- recognize the importance of knowing how to recognize and the four actions of recognition: discover, express, value and integrate;
- understand the notion of generic competence;
- encourage reflexivity.

## Process proposed

The project has three main phases:

1. Testing and exploration
Test a recognition tool that works (Our Strong Competencies, ASC), with the aim of defining the foundations of a recognition tool specific to First Nations.

This phase involves the following major operations:

- Identify First Nations communities interested in participating in this new recognition tool project.
- Train people to lead NCF workshops and collect data (these "Field Leaders" would be integrated into the project as co-researchers and paid by the First Nations School Council in adult education).
- Help these people to carry out NCF testing (facilitate workshops) and collect the data needed to create the new tool and choose reference frameworks specific to First Nations.

2. Development and creation of a new tool
Build on the data collected in Phase 1 to create, in cooperation with the First Nations school council in Adult Education,
those involved in testing the NCF tool (phase 1) and the First Nations communities involved in the project a new recognition tool specific to First Nations.

This phase involves the realisation of the following large operations:

- In cooperation with people from participating First Nations communities, develop the knowledge and skills needed to create a new tool and select frames of reference specific to First Nations cultures and customs.
- Still in cooperation with people from participating First Nations communities, create a new recognition tool specific to First Nations and select frames of reference specific to First Nations.

3. Testing and validation of the final tool
Test the new tool created, improve it with the help of participants from First Nations communities involved in the project, and validate the final tool with First Nations.

This phase involves the following major operations:

- Test the new tool in cooperation with Phase 1 participants or new participants.
- Evaluate the new tool and improve it to produce a final tool.
- Validate the final tool in cooperation with new participants

## Relative importance of the tool Our strong skills

The sole purpose of using the Our Strong Competencies tool in this project is to provide a positive framework for reflection that will enable participating First Nations to define the parameters of a new tool whose valuation and recognition functions have yet to be defined.

## The tool to be created

Together with First Nations, we need to develop approaches that promote the inclusion and direct participation of the people concerned in the creation of the new tool. In this context, it is important to rely on "collaborative" and "cooperative" approaches, and to help people from participating First Nations communities to participate actively in the various stages of this project.

Ultimately, all decisions concerning the creation of this new tool, the selection of its components or the identification of the accompanying frame of reference were to be made by the participating First Nations people.

## The knowledge useful for creating this tool

The knowledge useful to the creation of a new tool is mastered by First Nations members. In this context, our role would be to create the conditions conducive to the verbalization of this knowledge, which will be possible with the testing of the Our Strong Competencies tool.

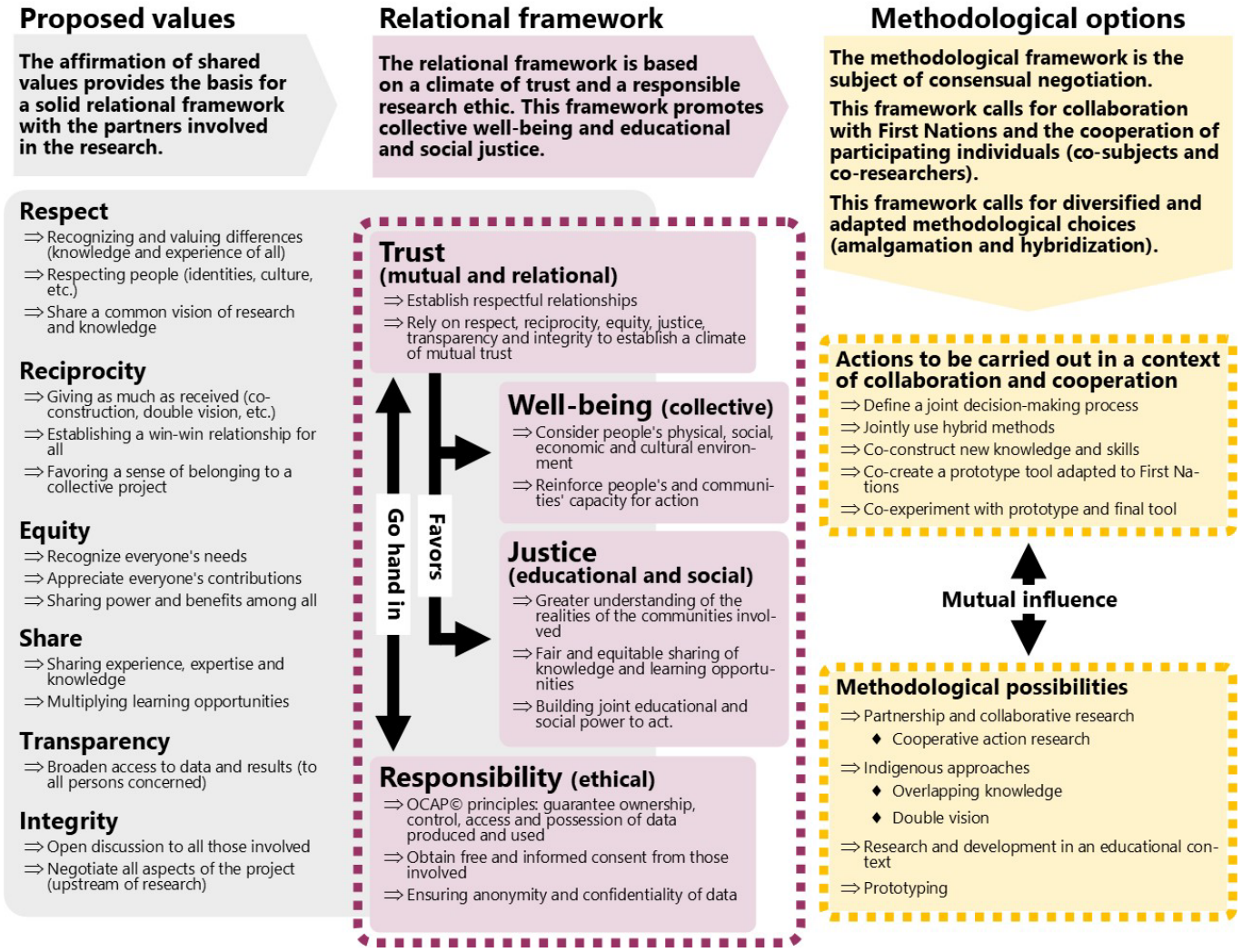
In the context of this project, the Our strong competencies tool acts as a catalyst: it makes it possible to collect data where the analysis of the structuring and fundamental elements of the NCF approach, by the participants, enables these same people to name the elements that should be integrated into a new tool.

## Respect and cooperation

In respect of OCAP principles, this project invites interested First Nations communities to participate in a cooperative exercise aimed at building knowledge on recognition mechanisms specific to First peoples. It will lead to the creation of a prototype recognition tool specific to First Nations cultures and customs. Finally, the prototype and final tool will be tested with First Nations.

The summary figure on the following page presents the values that could be put forward in this project, as well as the relational framework and methodological options that could contribute to its success.

# Values, relational framework and methodological options - summary table




Sources: the elements in this figure are the result of reflections led by the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL, 2014), the First Peoples Working Group (INQ, 2017), the ODENA Research Alliance (Lévesque et al., 2018), RDK Herman, who is senior geographer at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Herman, 2018) and the CCTT Network (CCTT, 2022).