



HUMAINE
>>>> CRÉATIVE
AUDACIEUSE



DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO ECORESPONSIBILITY

ECORESPONSABILITY OFFICE

April 22th 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREAMBLE	3
OUR DRIVING FORCES	4
OUR VISION OF AN ECO-RESPONSIBLE UQAT	6
OUR GUIDING VALUES	7
PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS	8
Principles of transversality and interdisciplinarity.....	8
Principles of participatory approach, access to knowledge and leading by example	8
Principle of recognition of Indigenous knowledge and concepts.....	9
Principles of solidarity, equity, social justice and inclusion	11
Principles of agility and continuous improvement	12
Principle of seeking balance	13
FIELDS OF ACTION	14
TRAJECTORY	14
SIGNATURES	16
DEFINITIONS	17
REFERENCES	19

PREAMBLE

Since its creation in 1983, the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (hereinafter referred to as "UQAT" or the "University") has demonstrated a growing concern for eco-responsibility, both in its teaching, research and research-creation activities and in its management, operation and governance practices.

This concern is present in [its mission, its vision, its values and its development plan](#)¹ and is being reaffirmed as part of the University's eco-responsibility initiatives. This declaration's purpose is to formalise UQAT's eco-responsibility commitments and the principles that uphold them, to guide its ongoing efforts in this area, and to mobilize the entire university community in a concerted manner.

Eco-responsibility

A set of behaviours forming an ethical commitment to adopt and implement ecologically sound and fair choices in all activities. For a university institution, eco-responsibility also means being a role model and showing initiative in terms of eco-responsibility, indissociably from inherent social issues².

¹ [UQAT, 2020, p. 12.](#)

² [UQAM, 2023, p. 7.](#)

OUR DRIVING FORCES

- Considering that humans are an integral part of the biosphere³ and that their survival and health depend on the quality of their environment⁴;
 - Faced with the climate emergency⁵, the biodiversity crisis⁶ and threats to the ecosystem;
 - Aware of the behaviours that are bringing us dangerously close to our planetary limits⁷ or which lead us to go beyond them, jeopardising the conditions that support human life on Earth;
 - Wishing to honour its mission through the creation, transmission and practical use of knowledge in support of eco-responsibility and through the training of eco-citizens;
 - Caring not only for the well-being of its university community, but also for all living beings and future generations, in the spirit of the [Seven Generations philosophy](#);
- UQAT recognizes that it bears its share of responsibility and that, to ensure the sustainability of its mission, it has a duty to show courage and apply eco-responsibility principles across the board, in all its activities.

³ "An ecosystem is a dynamic complex of plant, animal, and microorganism communities and the nonliving environment interacting as a functional unit. Humans are an integral part of ecosystems." ([WRI, 2003, p. 3](#)).

⁴ For Indigenous peoples, this is an age-old concept: "Indigenous people have always been intimately aware of their symbiotic relationship with the earth based upon a delicate balance between all living things on Turtle Island." ([IISD, 1992, page 12](#)).

⁵ [GIEC, 2023](#).

⁶ [IPBES, 2019](#).

⁷ [Richardson et al., 2023](#).

Seven generations philosophy

Present in many Indigenous cultures, this concept implies intergenerational equity by reminding us to make our decisions for the well-being of the seven generations that come after us, but also by honouring the teachings of the seven generations that preceded us.

A report by the International Institute for Sustainable Development explains it this way:

There is a teaching passed down from our ancestors that crystallizes our sense of responsibility and our relationship to the earth that arises out of the original law. It is said that we are placed on the earth (our Mother) to be the caretakers of all that is here. We are instructed to deal with the plants, animals, minerals, human beings and all life, as if they were a part of ourselves. Because we are a part of Creation, we cannot differentiate or separate ourselves from the rest of the earth.

The way in which we interact with the earth, how we utilize the plants, animals and the mineral gifts, should be carried out with the seventh generation in mind. We cannot simply think of ourselves and our survival; each generation has a responsibility to "ensure the survival for the seventh generation".

[...]

If at some point we fail to consider these teachings, the balance that was maintained through the teachings will disappear and we will disappear⁸.

⁸ [ISSD, 1992, p.12 and 24.](#)

OUR VISION OF AN ECO-RESPONSIBLE UQAT

Through its education, research, creation and innovation activities, it trains eco-citizens who, in turn, contribute to significant advances in the protection and resiliency of our living environment. Through its example and actions, it inspires and encourages the communities in which it operates to do the same.

Its spaces are designed to promote a lifestyle that uses resources sparingly and are well suited for experimenting environmentally sound choices and solutions. By adopting concrete eco-responsible practices and considering each of its decisions from a sustainability standpoint, UQAT is continually reducing its environmental footprint.

Knowledge is not confined within four walls; access to nature nurtures a relationship with the land. Whether we call it *Mother Earth*, *Nitakinan*, *Istchee* or *Nunarjuaq*, we learn from the land and benefit from its healing power. Caring for people and ecosystems thus becomes an intrinsic part of UQAT's institutional culture.

OUR GUIDING VALUES

In Anicinape spirituality, various animals known as the Seven Grandfathers are the bearers of sacred teachings that enable us to live in harmony with ourselves, with others and with the land.

Oscar Kistabish, Elder from Pikogan of the Abitibiwinni First Nation community, describes them as follows⁹ :

- Eagle – Love (SAKIITISIA)
- Moose – Respect (MAAATCIITISIA)
- Turtle – Truth (TEPSEIA)
- Wolf – Humility (TAPASEΛIMITISOIA)
- Beaver – Wisdom (PEKATISIA-KAKITA8EΛTAMOIA)
- Bear – Courage (SOKITEEIA)
- The Giant¹⁰ – Honesty (K8AIAK8ATISIA)

Together, these teachings represent a large part of what defines *MIAO PIMATISIA*, "the good life" or "wellness"¹¹. They are values reflected in this declaration and we wish to have them guiding us in our actions, complementarily with UQAT's values of humanity, creativity, and audacity.

⁹ The translation of words into anicinapemo8in (Algonquin language) is based on contributions from Oscar Kistabish, Elder of the Abitibiwinni First Nation, and Frances Mowatt, translator and anicinapemo8in teacher, also from the Abitibiwinni First Nation. The linguistic variety and spelling used are thus those of the Pikogan Anicinape community.

In this declaration, the spelling used follows that preferred by the source of the information and may therefore vary for the same word.

¹⁰ According to Adrienne Jérôme of the Lac Simon Anishnabe Nation, it is called « misabe » in anishnabemowin.

¹¹ [Landry et al, 2019, p. 2.](#)

PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

Principles of transversality and interdisciplinarity

- Considering that eco-responsibility is a transversal commitment to be applied to all of the University's fields of action;
- Considering that eco-responsibility issues concern all fields and all disciplines;
- Considering that awareness of these issues, as well as learning the knowledge and skills to address them, are becoming essential;

WE COMMIT TO:

- make eco-responsibility a priority in our teaching, training, research and creation activities, while respecting academic freedom;
- apply eco-responsibility in all our management practices and internal operations;
- ensure that the University's various internal normative texts and current decisions and orientations are consistent with its eco-responsibility commitments, at all levels of its governance structure.

Principles of participatory approach, access to knowledge and leading by example

- Considering that access to information and evidence-based data, as well as awareness-raising and educational activities, are essential to understanding eco-responsibility issues and are a prerequisite for commitment;
- Considering that a participatory and transparent approach fosters support for the cause and mobilization of the university community;
- Considering that people learn by example and are influenced by the environment in which they are socialised;

WE COMMIT TO:

- conduct the eco-responsibility process in a transparent and open manner that promotes the involvement of all members of our university community;
- ground eco-responsibility content and decisions on proven data, in accordance with the principles of precaution and prevention;
- ensure coherence by assuming leadership on environmental issues and setting an example to influence the environments in which we are active;
- share our experience and expertise, both our successes and our mistakes, as to facilitate and accelerate progress in eco-responsibility for any individual or organisation that wishes to draw inspiration from them.

Principle of recognition of Indigenous knowledge and concepts

- Considering the acknowledgments and commitments set out in the **Territorial Recognition Statement** adopted by the University;
- Considering that, in a context specific to eco-responsibility, UQAT recognizes that ecological practices and knowledge are present in Indigenous cultures and precede the appearance of Western concepts;
- Considering that respect for the land, the reciprocal relationship between Mother Earth and humans, and the **sacred teachings** which guide the interrelationship and balance between the living, the non-living and the spiritual world are central aspects of many Indigenous conceptions of our responsibility towards the ecosystems;
- Considering that Indigenous communities are often the first to witness the environmental impacts of human activities and that they are also particularly vulnerable to the resulting negative effects which threaten their traditional way of life;

WE COMMIT TO:

- Recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge and conceptions in their plurality by applying them in conjunction with scientific perspectives, without any hierarchical relationship, as advocated by the **Etuaptmunk concept**, to support and enrich our eco-responsibility efforts;
- Encourage the participation of Indigenous people and value Indigenous cultures and perspectives in both the content and process of initiatives related to eco-responsibility.

UQAT's Territorial Recognition Statement

The Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue recognizes that it is located within Nitakinan, anicinape aki. It recognizes that Nitakinan is the cradle of Indigenous languages, cultures and identities. Moreover, this territory is a prime area for knowledge transmission, exchange and healing.

Today, the territory on which UQAT is located is home to many nations, from both territorial and urban communities. UQAT points out that its institutions and activities are also located in the heart of other First Peoples' territories.

UQAT is aware that it is part of a system stemming from colonisation. The educational institution has long been used for assimilation purposes, notably through the imposition of residential schools. The negative effects continue to be felt to this day.

UQAT is aware that it is part of a system stemming from colonisation. The educational institution has long been used for assimilation purposes, notably through the imposition of residential schools. The negative effects continue to be felt to this day.¹².

¹² [UQAT, 2023](#).

Etuaptmumk

Known in English as "Two-Eyed Seeing", the Mi'kmaw concept *Etuaptmumk* is based on the teachings of the late Charles Labrador, a spiritual leader, healer and chief of the Acadia First Nation, and introduced in 2004 by Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall of the Eskasoni community in Unama'ki.

Its goal is to bring together the teachings of different knowledge systems so that they can be used consciously side by side, for the benefit of everyone.

Without seeking to incorporate one knowledge system within another, *Etuaptmumk* encourages complementarity: no system is judged by the other, and each is evaluated according to its own context¹³.

¹³ [CCUNESCO, 2022](#).

Principles of solidarity, equity, social justice and inclusion

- Considering that we all share the same planet, our only home, and that we are therefore all interconnected within a common ecosystem;
- Considering that the impacts of our actions are relative to our identity factors and our living conditions, and will affect individuals, communities or organisations, here or elsewhere, including people to be born in future generations, in different ways;
- Considering that respecting and protecting the environment is both an individual and a collective responsibility that must be shared in an equitable, fair and impartial manner, taking into account the realities and capacities of each person or community;
- Considering that, whereas we know a high level of biodiversity defines a resilient ecosystem, we believe our university community is stronger when it is inclusive and diverse, and when it values the contribution of each and every one of us, according to each one's own abilities;

WE COMMIT TO:

- Take into account the equity factors and ethical considerations behind our choices, as well as the social repercussions of our decisions on the people affected by them, now and in the future;
- Provide the setting, resources, tools and community spaces that encourage the accessibility and the adoption of sustainable behaviour;
- Adopt a holistic vision and approach to better support individuals and groups within the university community, and work to remove individual or systemic obstacles that limit their ability to commit to eco-responsibility;
- Show benevolence and care and decolonise our ways of doing, thinking and acting by respecting the experience and realities of each individual;
- Consider eco-responsibility as a common challenge for which solidarity, sharing and collaboration are essential, at intra- and inter-university levels, with our partners, with our home territories and internationally.

Principles of agility and continuous improvement

- Considering that environmental issues, their causes and their solutions are rapidly and constantly evolving;
- Considering that we wish to be able to seize unforeseen opportunities to act in favour of ecoresponsibility when they arise or to react in a context of emergency;
- Considering that decisions will sometimes have to be made and priorities set despite the absence of all the data required to make an informed decision;

WE COMMIT TO:

- Adjust our focus, goals and actions as soon as possible in order to better apply our principles and commitments when a changing context or new data make it necessary;
- Carry out unplanned concrete actions when an opportunity arises, if they align with our eco-responsibility principles and commitments, and if the resources are available;
- Avoid dismissing or postponing an action because of missing data or difficulties in measuring its impact if there is general agreement that it complies with our principles and commitments;
- Allow ourselves to make mistakes so that we can learn from them and tackle obstacles in solution mode, as to constantly improve.

Principle of seeking balance

- Considering that taking reasoned action and making informed decisions, in line with the anicinabe **Pekatc** concept and all the above principles, requires time, which is in contradiction with the urgent need to act, faced with the threat of environmental imbalances and the reach of planetary limits;
- Considering that the quantity and scope of eco-responsible actions considered by the University are in opposition to the limited human, financial, material and time resources available;
- Considering that the high-performance culture, which is found at University, contributes to its progress and development, but is at the same time part of a system that contributes to the environmental crisis and the increase in inequalities to which we wish to respond;
- Considering that we wish to show both the courage necessary to affect change and the respect needed to care for the physical and psychological integrity of all people involved, which may suffer from the tension and cognitive dissonance caused by the desire to reconcile these realities;

WE COMMIT TO:

- Acknowledge these contradictory realities by offering support, tools and a caring framework that leaves room for the search for balance in this context;
- Reflect on the influence of existing systems and the dominant lifestyles and paces of our society, which are at the root of environmental imbalances and feed these contrasts;
- Search for alternatives and innovations that promote both a better life balance for the university community and a better overall ecosystemic balance, as well as ways of applying these alternatives in our university context.

Pekatc

This anicinape word means "be careful", or " take time your time". It evokes a posture of attentive listening and observation.

"*Pekatc* means giving ourselves time to understand together before giving an answer. Concertation models are such that we are sometimes asked to give an answer without having had time to form a mental image of the issues. It's important to take the time to understand what we're getting into."¹⁴ [Translation]

¹⁴ [Minwashin, 2022, p.35.](#)

FIELDS OF ACTION

We believe that ecoresponsibility starts with a personal awareness of our reciprocal relationship with our ecosystem, and with an impulse from the heart. Our power to act and influence lies in each member of our university community, and then in the development of an institutional culture that brings them together.

We want to translate our commitments into concrete actions in all areas of the University's activities. Whether in its teaching, research, research-creation or training activities, in its governance practices or in the management and operations of the living environment it provides, UQAT is committed to acting, in each of its centres and campuses and in any other places where it is located, for the benefit of its home communities and the ecosystems within which it evolves.

TRAJECTORY

Developing an eco-responsibility action plan

Mandated by UQAT's board of directors, the eco-responsibility office coordinates the eco-responsibility process in collaboration with the entire university community. The eco-responsibility steering committee, made up of members from all departments, vice-rectorates, unions, services and the student community, advises and supports the eco-responsibility office in this mandate.

A Circle of Indigenous Perspectives also advises the eco-responsibility Office, to ensure that Indigenous concepts relating to the protection of Mother Earth are properly reflected in the process and content. It holds a seat in the eco-responsibility steering committee.

In addition, seven working groups made up of strategic members and volunteers from our university community review the actions to be taken in the following areas:

- Education and training
- Research and creation-research
- Institutional culture and community
- Responsible procurement
- Infrastructure and buildings
- Sustainable transport
- Green IT

These different groups are provided with presentations and documentation to nourish their discussions and are tasked with recommending actions specific to their field to the eco-responsibility steering committee. The latter prioritises the actions to be retained in order to propose a draft action plan applying to UQAT as a whole. The present declaration guides all stakeholders in this process.

Adoption and implementation of the ecoresponsibility action plan

In an effort to refine and improve the content, the draft action plan will be submitted to both internal and external consultations before being adopted by the Board of Directors. A committee will be set up to monitor the implementation of the action plan, and an eco-responsibility report with indicators will be presented regularly to the Board of Directors and the university community.

As part of the preparation of its annual budget and needs assessment, and subject to the availability of resources, the University will allocate the human, financial and material resources needed to implement the action plan and will adopt the guidelines needed to apply this declaration and the action plan.

The action plan will be revised after a set period of time, but it may be revised sooner than planned, in whole or in part, in accordance with the principles of agility and continuous improvement set out in this declaration, and with the approval of the Board of Directors.

SIGNATURES

By signing this declaration, we commit to show courage, to embody the values, to apply the principles, and to pursue the commitments set out in this declaration, on a daily basis and to the best of our ability,

DEFINITIONS

Communauté universitaire

Any person studying at UQAT, including those living in the residences, and any person working at UQAT, whether as a member of staff, faculty or lecturer; groups within the University, as well as visiting researchers, postdoctoral fellows, associate professors, graduates, members of any statutory or decision-making body, the Academic Committee and the Board of Directors, as well as members from outside the University who sit on any UQAT academic body duly created by a UQAT regulatory text.

Persons from outside the University who collaborate with members of the University Community, for example through a research project or as suppliers of goods and services within the centres and campuses, may also be considered members of the University Community within the meaning of this Declaration.

Eco-citizenship

A citizenship aware of how society and nature are linked, a critical, creative, caring and involved citizenship, able and willing to participate in public debates and in the transformation of policies and practices¹⁵. [Translation]

Eco-responsibility

A set of behaviours forming an ethical commitment to adopt and implement ecologically sound and fair choices in all activities. For a university institution, eco-responsibility also means being a role model and showing initiative in terms of eco-responsibility, indissociably from inherent social issues¹⁶. [Translation]

¹⁵ [UQAM, 2023, p. 17.](#)

¹⁶ [UQAM, 2023, p. 17.](#)

Ecosystem

The ecosystem is a dynamic system made up of living organisms and the non-living environment¹⁷ in which they evolve, their interaction constituting the basic functional unit of ecology¹⁸. [Translation]

In this Declaration, the words "Mother Earth", "environment" and "territory" are used as equivalents for everything that makes up the global ecosystem sustaining life on Earth. These terms are used holistically and inclusively, to refer not only to our shared planet, but also to the various territorial concepts that may carry different meanings and be defined in their own way according to the culture from which they originate, such as *Nitakinan*, ᐱᐱᐱ (Istchee) or *Nunarjuaq*.

Precautionary principle

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.¹⁹ [Translation]

Prevention principle

The principle of prevention implies taking the necessary measures to avoid guaranteed damage if no action is taken to avoid that damage. The risk of damage must be foreseeable, certain and based on scientific consensus and clear and convincing evidence. [Translation]

¹⁷ It should be noted that the Western understanding of the living and the non-living may differ from Indigenous conceptions of the latter. In some worldviews, matter, such as the four elements, celestial bodies or inanimate objects, may be considered as living or animate, as explained in this testimonial: "*Our worldview is rooted in the language and it is drastically different from other worldviews. An example is the way we classify things as animate and inanimate. English speaking people consider rocks and trees inanimate and if you want to break it down in a grammatical sense we can talk about those suffixes like mitick (tree) mitickok (trees, an animate suffix). It shows that we see it as being a living thing with spirit.*" (Young, 2003.).

The suggested definition of ecosystem in this Declaration is intended to be inclusive of these visions, so as to respect Mother Earth as a whole.

¹⁸ [OQLF, 2014.](#)

¹⁹ [CNUED, 1992.](#)

REFERENCES

- Centre québécois du droit de l'environnement. (s. d.). *Principe de précaution et principe de prévention: quelle est la différence?* <https://cqde.org/fr/sinformer-nouvelle/les-bases-du-droit-de-lenvironnement/principe-precaution-principe-prevention-difference/>
- Clarkson, L. et al. (1992). *Our Responsibility to The Seventh Generation – Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Development*. International Institute for Sustainable Development. <https://www.iisd.org/publications/our-responsibility-seventh-generation>
- Conférence des Nations Unies sur l'environnement et le développement. (1992). *Déclaration de Rio sur l'environnement et le développement*. <https://www.un.org/french/events/rio92/aconf15126vol1f.htm>
- Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat. (2023). *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. <https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647>
- Landry, V., Asselin, H. et Lévesque, C. (2019). Link to the Land and Mino-Pimatisiwin (Comprehensive Health) of Indigenous People Living in Urban Areas in Eastern Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(23), 4782. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16234782>
- Minwashin. (2022). *Miaja - 8eckatc anicinapek kapi nakatamo8atc nakickotati8in : Rapport sur la 3^e édition – rassemblement sur le patrimoine anicinabe*. <https://minwashin.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Rapport-Patrimoine-Miaja3-WEB.pdf>
- Office québécois de la langue française. (2014). *Écosystème*. Dans Le grand dictionnaire terminologique. <https://vitrinelinguistique.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/fiche-gdt/fiche/8401121/ecosysteme>
- Plateforme intergouvernementale scientifique et politique sur la biodiversité et les services écosystémiques (IPBES). (2019). *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>
- Prosper, L. (2022). *La langue du patrimoine autochtone*. Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO. <https://fr.ccunesco.ca/-/media/Files/Unesco/Resources/2022/12/LaLangueDuPatrimoineAutochtone.pdf>
- Richardson, J. et al. (2023). Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries. *Science Advances*, 9(37), <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adh2458>
- Université du Québec à Montréal. (2023). *Politique en matière d'écoresponsabilité*. https://instances.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2018/05/Politique_no_37.pdf
- Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. (2020). *Plan de développement de l'UQAT 2020-2025*. <https://www.uqat.ca/pdd-2020-2025/docs/UQAT-Plan-de-developpement-2020-2025-complet.pdf>
- Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. (2023). *Reconnaissance territoriale*. <https://www.uqat.ca/reconnaissance-territoriale/>
- World Resources Institute. (2003). *Ecosystem and Human Well-Being - A framework for assessment / Millenium Ecosystem Assessment*. http://pdf.wri.org/ecosystems_human_wellbeing.pdf
- Young, M. (2003). *Pimatisiwin, walking in a good way: a narrative inquiry into language as identity*. [Thèse de doctorat, University of Alberta] Education and Research Archive. <https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/4d627819-6b04-4f3a-942d-e909e1118565>