



SOCIAL ECONOMY INNOVATION

**OPTIMIZED HOME CARE SERVICE OFFER
FOR FIRST NATIONS SENIORS**

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For First Nations, seniors occupy an important place in the social and cultural structures within their communities. They play a determining role in the transmission of knowledge to younger generations. They are also the custodians of traditional values, languages and knowledge. This explains why the First Nations communities have always expressed the desire to help keep seniors in their communities with their families.

It has been found that First Nations seniors are more likely to suffer from degenerative diseases that are normally associated with old age, and to experience social and psychological consequences, such as the loss of a loved one or various traumas experienced over the course of their life (FNQLHSSC, 2017)¹. According to data from the Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey (RHS)², many determinants of health adversely affect the health of First Nations seniors, such as isolation, transportation, inadequate or overcrowded housing, sometimes difficult access to home or community care, poverty, training for informal caregivers that is often non-existent or not accessible, the harmful effects of Indian residential schools and illiteracy, which affect a significant proportion of seniors. These determinants contribute to ensuring that the state of health of First Nations seniors deteriorates significantly after the age of 55. As a result of this state of health, the demand for care and support among First Nations seniors is great and will increase considerably in the decades to come.

It is in this context that this study takes place, the objective of which is to analyze how the social economy model could present itself as an innovative solution in order to optimize services for First Nations seniors. With that in mind, an overview of the situation regarding the services offered, and the needs and issues present in the communities will be provided. The main service offer model will then be analyzed to explore possible solutions to optimize the service offer for seniors.

¹ ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS QUEBEC-LABRADOR AND FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION (2017). *Active Aging in the Quebec First Nations: Everyone's a Winner!* Brief presented to the Secrétariat aux aînés, ministère de la Famille. Wendake.

² FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION (2018). *Quebec First Nations Regional Health Survey – 2015, Health Status and Chronic Health Conditions*. Wendake.

As part of this project, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seniors from different First Nations communities in order to better understand their needs, their knowledge of the home care services offered in their communities and how they use those services.

These interviews indicated that seniors are knowledgeable of the services that are available to them in their communities. It is easy for them to access these services by calling their local health centre directly to make an appointment. Most seniors use them to meet an immediate need, to access a particular service or when their state of health deteriorates. They reported that they are well guided by professional resources and well taken care of. They added that the waiting times are reasonable.

However, the diversity of the care and services offered sometimes remains limited for several reasons: the lack of qualified labour, access to medical transportation services, the lack of time to support beneficiaries, the absence of a place for discussion and gathering, etc. The most used services are housekeeping, accompaniment for appointments by medical transportation and health monitoring with family or nurse assistance. In terms of areas for improvement, some were mentioned multiple times: meals-on-wheels service, access to medical transportation and the possibility of improving their social life.

The meals-on-wheels service often came up as an element that could be optimized or implemented in the communities. Some communities already offer this type of service, but seniors would like to be able to use it more frequently, ideally free of charge, and for it to offer the option of having traditional foods in addition to balanced meals. They are also comfortable paying a certain amount for access to this service as long as the cost is low.

The issue of medical transportation is more complex since hospitals and more specialized services are located outside the communities, sometimes several hours away. The family members of a patient are not always able to visit this person at the desired frequency. Therefore, when they are hospitalized outside the community, they feel isolated and far from their loved ones while often faced with a language barrier as an obstacle. Their greatest wish would be for all medical services to be offered within their community. Their sense of belonging is strong and they feel secure in their community living environment.

First Nations seniors dream of a richer social life. Many of them mentioned that they would like to have access to a community space (such as a seniors' centre) in order to engage in meetings and discussions. They would like to see more cultural activities, recreational activities and outings organized, but with free transportation to get there

since their mobility sometimes becomes a major obstacle to their participation. They want to feel useful and above all do not want to be forgotten. Their sense of belonging, engagement, achievement and cultural transmission in the community is essential. Their economic, social and physical security is also an important issue for their well-being. Access to services offered in their language is also an issue that came up often.

REVIEW OF THE ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF THE WORKERS AND HUMAN RESOURCES WHO SUPPORT FIRST NATIONS SENIORS

Many workers go to homes to assist people with decreasing independence and informal caregivers. In order to get to know the services offered in the communities, we had them complete a questionnaire that includes eight main categories: home assistance, personal care (physical, mental, emotional), wellness promotion, housing (social assistance), transportation, recreation and culture, informal caregivers and complementary services. In addition, we conducted semi-structured interviews in order to obtain their points of view. The objective of these interviews was to find out what could be improved in terms of services, what is missing and what should be offered within their communities.

Following our interviews with these workers, we can affirm that many health centres offer services that meet basic needs without however meeting all the needs of the aging population. The lack of qualified human resources, as well as their training needs, were often identified as obstacles.

In remote communities, accessing services for medical care is more difficult. It can sometimes take a few hours to drive to the hospital. This means that, very often, patients receive few visits from their families during their hospitalization. Although the medical transportation service is offered in 59% of the communities surveyed, the needs appear to be much greater. It is also important to mention that access to an interpretation service to receive services in one's native language is rarely offered and that this adds to the stress and isolation experienced by the patient.

The workers we met identified various challenges they face in the performance of their duties: ability of seniors to pay, capacity of administrative resources, variable funding in the communities, the difficulty of predicting service needs as well as the lack of time to focus on the holistic health of seniors.

QUEBEC ENVIRONMENT (OFF-RESERVE): THE EÉSAD NETWORK

In Quebec, home care services are offered by social economy enterprises providing home assistance (Entreprise d'économie sociale d'aide à domicile, or EÉSADs). The EÉSADs are made up of home service cooperatives and non-profit organizations. They are social economy enterprises that offer services to clients from all backgrounds, of all ages and with various social conditions. Some use the services to reconcile work and family while others use the services to maintain independence for housework.

Entreprise d'économie sociale d'aide à domicile (EÉSAD) is the term used to designate the cooperatives and NPOs that are recognized by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS) as part of the Financial Assistance Program for Domestic Help Services (Programme d'exonération financière pour les services d'aide-domestique, or PEFSAD).

This program offers a financial exemption for domestic help services³ to people covered by the Quebec health insurance plan. Depending on various criteria, this financial assistance takes the form of a reduction in the hourly rate requested by the EÉSAD to provide its services. The reduction granted can vary between \$4 and \$17.20 per hour, depending on the client's situation.

To benefit from the PEFSAD, an individual must therefore contact the EÉSAD in their region. The price to be paid will be the difference between the price charged by the EÉSAD and the amount of aid granted by the PEFSAD.

³ Home assistance services for which a person receives compensation under a public or private plan are not eligible.

Services offered

The services offered by the EÉSADs fall under four different main categories⁴:

- Domestic help services;
- Personal assistance services;
- Respite-supervision services;
- Seniors' residences.

Domestic help services (DHS) are the services that are targeted by the PEFSAD. These are the type of basic services offered by all EÉSADs. The services are grouped under five (5) main categories:

- Light housekeeping;
- Heavy housekeeping (major cleaning);
- Clothing care;
- Preparation of meals with no diet;
- Procurement and running errands.

Personal assistance services (PAS) are designed to support a person's independence in performing activities or gestures focused on taking care of themselves or participating in social life. These services are not covered by the PEFSAD. However, when users are referred by a Centre intégré (ou un Centre intégré universitaire) de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS / CIUSSS), they do not have to pay for these services. Personal assistance services are generally grouped into four (4) categories:

- Basic care;
- Unregulated care;
- Administration of medication;
- Invasive care.

Basic care constitutes one of the most commonly provided services by the EÉSADs since the attendants who perform the other types of PAS must have more advanced training. The number of PAS offered in each EÉSAD varies as other organizations may already offer these services.

Respite-supervision services are intended for informal caregivers. They are not eligible for the PEFSAD, but may benefit from financial assistance from various organizations, including L'APPUI. The attendants who provide these services can offer monitoring and supervision for the person being cared for, so that the informal caregiver can engage in other activities.

⁴ See section 6.2 of the "[Prefeasibility Study on a Social Economy Enterprise Providing Services to Seniors in a First Nations context](#)" for a detailed list of offered services.

A few EÉSADs offer services in **seniors' residences**, mainly for the preparation of meals. There are even some that own them.

Diversity of EÉSAD models

There are around one hundred EÉSADs in Quebec which are spread over 17 administrative regions⁵. Depending on the region where they are located, their sizes may vary. For comparison purposes, the largest EÉSAD earns about \$8 million in revenue while the smaller ones have revenues of about \$475,000. Although each offers roughly the same basic services, service offers may also vary as the needs vary by region.

Human resources

The majority of EÉSAD employees occupy the position of attendant. There are no specific training requirements for tasks related to domestic help services. However, for tasks related to personal assistance services (PAS), there are generally certain requirements to be met with regard to the training of attendants. It is also interesting to note that 89% of the attendants working in the EÉSADs are women. Most EÉSADs manage their attendants remotely. These attendants go directly to their clients without going to the head office of the enterprise.

Funding of services

As mentioned above, EÉSAD clients can benefit from a reduction in the hourly rate for the services offered according to their family situation and their level of income. In the Quebec model, funding is therefore based on the actual needs of users since they will only receive services if they request them. This model also implies that each user must pay for a part of the services.

⁵ <https://aidechezsoi.com/reseau-des-eesad/#reseau>

FIRST NATIONS ENVIRONMENT (ON-RESERVE)

Funding

In communities, the services offered to seniors can be grouped under the same four main categories⁶: domestic help services, personal assistance services, respite and supervision services and seniors' residences. However, these services are funded by two separate programs: The First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care (FNICCI) program and the Assisted Living Program. Both of these programs are administered by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

The Assisted Living Program⁷ covers non-medical social support services, meaning services related to home support, the placement of adults in foster families and residential care. Home support services include, but are not limited to, meal preparation, laundry, ironing, housekeeping, minor home maintenance tasks, etc. The care covered by the FNICCI program mainly includes nursing care, personal care, needs assessment, case management, home respite, palliative care, nutrition, rehabilitation, respiratory therapy, equipment loans, etc.

This study focuses more on the services covered by the Assisted Living Program, as these generally do not require any specialized training to be offered, which is not the case for most of the care covered by the FNICCI program. Indeed, the provision of these services must be done by employees who meet special requirements since they include, among other things, the physical handling of individuals and the administration of medication. These services are therefore those for which it appears more realistic to be able to innovate in their delivery since they are less critical. In addition, the services covered by the Assisted Living Program are those that most closely correspond to the domestic help services in the Quebec system.

Service delivery

In the majority of communities, it is the band council that is responsible for managing the two programs mentioned above within the limits of the ISC guidelines. More specifically, it is the health and social services sector that will see to the management of requests, the provision of services and the coordination of resources. Seniors should therefore turn to them for services.

⁶ The terms "domestic help services (DHS)" and "personal assistance services (PAS)" are those used in the Quebec network. They do not match the terms used by federal programs, but they are the terms that are used throughout the report to differentiate these two types of services.

⁷ See section 9.11 of the "[Prefeasibility Study on a Social Economy Enterprise Providing Services to Seniors in a First Nations context](#)" for a detailed list of services covered by the program.

As each program offers specific and distinct services, the number of people working at home with people with decreasing independence and their informal caregivers is significant and requires effective coordination. Services offered to First Nations seniors must be provided in accordance with the laws and standards of the province or territory in which they reside, and the mode of delivery must be reasonably comparable to services available to other residents of the province in similar situations. The fact that the responsibility for services rests with the community rather than a provincial body offers better guarantees to beneficiaries with respect to receiving culturally appropriate services.

The survey that was conducted among seniors and workers as part of this study leads to the conclusion that the basic services offered in the communities are very similar to those that are offered in the Quebec environment and that the majority of existing domestic help services are offered in the communities to varying degrees. However, it should also be noted that the list of these may vary from community to community depending on specific needs and that the level of accessibility of these has not been assessed.

Contrarily to the Quebec model, the funding of community services is not necessarily based on the actual needs of individuals. Since it is the Band Council that directly receives the funding, it offers services based on needs and according to its financial capacity (and sometimes exceeding it). As the funder often assesses needs based on data from past years, it becomes difficult to demonstrate an increase in demand if budgets do not allow for offering more.

CASE STUDY: THE COOPÉRATIVE DE SOLIDARITÉ NIMILUPAN NITSHINATSH

The Coopérative de solidarité Nihilupan Nitshinatsh (CSNN), which is located in the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh, is the only First Nation social economy enterprise providing domestic help services in all of Quebec. Its mission is to operate a social economy enterprise in order to provide work to its members as well as goods and services to its user members in the field of home care and other related activities. The cooperative offers several services which include the preparation of meals, regular housekeeping and general cleaning, laundry, accompaniment, procurement and running errands, exterior maintenance (lawn, minor painting work, snow removal from home entrances, etc.) and Lifeline Medical Alert System rentals. Their clientele includes seniors, informal caregivers, active people, people in recovery as well as those in need.

Background

The CSNN was created in 2004 at the initiative of the Band Council with the objective of decentralizing the delivery of certain services to the community. Its basic mission was

therefore to provide domestic help services to the population. At the time, the Band Council directly transferred the budgets it received to provide these services to the cooperative. The provision of personal care continued to be provided directly by the Band Council.

As the budget received did not make it possible to ensure the financial viability of the cooperative, in 2006, it attempted a partnership with an EÉSAD in the region so that clients in the community could benefit from the PEFSAD just like the Quebec clientele. The objective was to be able to cover, thanks to the PEFSAD, the service costs that the sums received from the federal government could not cover. This partnership was necessary because the CSNN is not recognized as an EÉSAD by the MSSS and therefore cannot allow its clients to benefit from the PEFSAD.

In 2009, this partnership came to an end as the provincial government informed the parties that this practice did not comply with program management rules. It also seems that this partnership did not promote the use of community labour, which contravened the principle of a service “by and for the First Nations”.

Subsequently, as the CSNN was regularly in deficit, the Band Council had to, on several occasions, make up for these deficits using its available funds. Meanwhile, many steps were taken with the Government of Quebec to enable the cooperative to have access to the same level of funding as the EÉSADs, but without success. In 2016, a new agreement was reached between the Band Council and the CSNN on funding in order to ensure the sustainability of the services offered to the population. A significant portion of the sums of this new agreement must be taken from other budgetary items in addition to what is received from the federal government to fund domestic help services.

Development of services

The CSNN was initially created to provide domestic help services to the population. While offering these various services, the managers of the cooperative realized that there were needs in the community for related services, which led them to expand the basic service offer. Thus, over the years, the CSNN has developed various services such as a clothing bank, a collective kitchen, a food bank and a respite service. These various initiatives were made possible thanks to various funding agencies, fundraising campaigns, and user contributions. These services are now grouped under a separate NPO (Maison Uashteu), which makes it possible to share certain expenses between the two entities.

Administrative operations

From an administrative point of view, the CSNN operates in a manner comparable to an EÉSAD. For any new client, an assessment of their condition must be done to determine the number of hours of service they require. Each client must provide proof of their income each year to determine the level of financial assistance to which they will be entitled.

To do this, the cooperative operates with the same scales as the PEFSAD. This therefore means that each client pays the same amount as they would have to pay outside the community by doing business with an EÉSAD. Each quarter, the CSNN sends the Band Council the data on all its clients with the number of hours of service. The Band Council then allocates the funding according to the established agreement.

Contrary to what is generally done in communities, this operational approach implies that each client must pay an amount for the services. This would have been difficult to consider if the services had continued to be offered by the Band Council.

EVALUATION OF THE ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF A SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTERPRISE PROVIDING SERVICES TO FIRST NATIONS SENIORS

Since the majority of home care enterprises in Quebec are grouped under the Réseau de coopération des EÉSAD, the analysis in this section is based on data⁸ from enterprises that are members of this network. First, the revenues and expenses of an EÉSAD are analyzed. The factors that may have an impact on the profitability of this type of enterprise in a First Nations context are then addressed.

The objective of this analysis is to assess whether or not it could be financially viable to operate a First Nations home care social economy enterprise (First Nations EÉSAD) according to the parameters of the Quebec system in order to see whether it would be possible to build on it.

From the outset, it should be mentioned that the majority of EÉSADs are profitable.

⁸ See section 8 of the [“Prefeasibility Study on a Social Economy Enterprise Providing Services to Seniors in a First Nations context”](#).

REVENUES

Domestic help services represent the main source of income for EÉSADs, or around 78% of total revenues. These revenues come from the PEFSAD program and the contributions of users who pay the part not covered by the program. It should be noted that the PEFSAD also includes compensatory aid which is paid to the EÉSADs in order to finance the administrative component (staff other than the attendants).

Although domestic help services represent the largest portion of an EÉSAD's revenue, they are the least profitable services with an estimated surplus per hour of service of \$0.13 per hour. In addition, this calculation includes the compensatory aid received by the EÉSADs. This means that domestic help services are probably in deficit.

The second most significant source of income is the respite-supervision service. This can represent approximately 11% of the total revenue. It is also the most financially beneficial service since it generates surpluses estimated at \$2.02 per hour.

EXPENSES AND PROFITABILITY

The main expenses of the EÉSADs are salaries (about 86% of total expenses). The salaries paid to the attendants represent almost 70% of total expenses. If we remove the salaries from the fixed costs, these represent only about 8% of the expenses of an EÉSAD.

This data allows us to see that operating an EÉSAD does not require a lot of fixed costs apart from salaries. However, since domestic help services are not very profitable, the question arises as to how many clients it takes to be able to operate such a business without running a loss.

Since in the First Nations communities the client base is quite limited, the minimum number of clients necessary to be able to operate an organization that would offer services similar to those provided by the EÉSADs was analyzed. To do so, the profitability of three models of small EÉSADs was examined. The average number of hours of service offered by these three EÉSADs is 21,900 hours, which corresponds to an average of 355 clients. For an enterprise of this size, the average profitability threshold would correspond to 17,565 hours of work, or revenues of \$419,333. This represents approximately 285 clients per year.

However, by analyzing the available data in more depth, it is reasonable to assume that the EÉSAD example that best corresponds to the realities of communities is small EÉSAD 3. Indeed, its fixed costs are relatively low (\$85,359), which is more in line with the client

volume that a community cooperative could serve. Based on this EÉSAD, the profitability threshold would be closer to **\$370,000**.

Using the data provided by the CSNN for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 fiscal years, it was possible to estimate what its revenues would have been under the Quebec model. This exercise makes it possible to compare the profitability of an eventual First Nations EÉSAD with the data available in the prefeasibility study.

Fiscal year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Number of hours	12,610	10,033	11,787
Estimated revenues according to the financing method of the PEFSAD	\$324,613	\$264,593	\$304,582

Based on these figures, the profitability of a First Nations EÉSAD according to the PEFSAD approach to financing does not seem certain. However, this is an analysis that must be done on a case-by-case basis, as several factors must be taken into consideration.

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE PROFITABILITY IN A FIRST NATIONS CONTEXT

Critical mass

The first element that needs to be analyzed to determine whether a home care social economy enterprise could be viable in a First Nations context is to find out if a community or a group of communities could have enough clients to reach the profitability threshold. To conduct an approximate evaluation of the minimum number of residents needed, we referred to the experiences of the Coopérative de solidarité Nimilupan Nitshinatsh, which is located in the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh.

The CSNN has averaged about sixty clients per year for the past three years. This equates to an average of 11,445 hours of services⁹. The community of Mashteuiatsh has approximately 2,000 residents¹⁰, of which approximately 260 are aged 65 and over¹¹.

If we take into consideration that the CSNN could generate average revenues of around \$300,000 under the PEFSAD and that the profitability threshold of a comparable EÉSAD is \$370,000, we could extrapolate that the theoretical number of residents to reach the

⁹ The number of hours is below the calculated profitability threshold, but the cooperative has found other ways to finance its activities. See above.

¹⁰ According to Indian Register data as of December 31, 2017.

¹¹ Based on Statistics Canada 2016 Census data.

profitability threshold would be around 2,500¹². To achieve this critical mass, an enterprise serving a group of communities could be considered since, as mentioned in a previous section, employees rarely go to the head office anyway. Management could therefore easily be done remotely. It is worth pointing out that several communities are already operating as a group to offer health services. This is the case for the Conseil tribal Mamit Innuat (tribal council), which brings together the three Innu communities of the Basse Côte-Nord region.¹³

Access to the PEFSAD or a similar financing system

Currently, although the majority of communities offer domestic help services, these are offered in accordance with the budget available to the Band Council. This means that the services offered, although based on the specific actual needs of each individual, are often limited by the funding obtained from the federal government. Therefore, the frequency and offer of services are not necessarily up to the needs of the population. For example, if the Council only offers one day per week of meal preparation services, a senior who needs this service all week must find another option for the remaining six days.

By offering a service offer based on customer demand, we are entering a model where seniors would have the opportunity to define for themselves the services they want to obtain. However, to achieve this result, it is essential that financial assistance be readily available to them. This is also a key factor in the success of a First Nations EÉSAD. As with the non-Indigenous clientele, it is difficult to think that First Nations members in the community will be able to afford services without financial assistance to reduce costs. It is important to keep in mind that the success of the EÉSAD network greatly depends on the fact that the cost of their services for the client is reduced by financial assistance from the Government of Quebec.

Collaboration with the Band Council

Currently, all the communities offer certain domestic help services to their members. For a First Nations EÉSAD to be viable, alignment with what is already offered by the Band Council is unavoidable. The Band Council could subcontract the services that are already offered to the enterprise based on the funds available. The enterprise could continue to offer these services to the clientele free of charge, in addition to offering a wider range of services by benefiting from other sources of funding such as the PEFSAD. This type of partnership would ensure that the enterprise would receive at least a minimum amount of revenues, while offering the population the possibility of benefiting from financial

¹² $((370,000-300,000)/300,000) \times 2,000$.

¹³ Ekuanitshit, Unamen Shipu and Pakua Shipu.

support to obtain other services that they need that were not being offered before. A “basic service” paid for by the Council would also ensure that there is no overlap in terms of services.

Diversification of the revenue sources

The experience of the Coopérative de solidarité Nimilupan Nitshinatsh shows us that it is difficult to consider being able to make such a business viable only with revenues from domestic help services. As demonstrated above, these services are barely profitable (if not in deficit). It is therefore essential to be able to count on other services in order to obtain additional revenues that will allow for financing the administration of the enterprise.

Adequate financing of the administrative component of the cooperative

One of the issues identified during the analysis of the different funding models for domestic help services is access to core funding for the administrative component of service delivery. Indeed, the federal government seems to fund this component, but based on the number of hours of service rendered. In the Quebec system, the EÉSADs receive basic compensatory assistance to cover these costs. As an example, for the year 2018-2019, this amount was \$29,336.78. This core funding makes a difference for viability purposes since, regardless of the volume of clients, at least one employee is needed to run the enterprise.

Ability to charge an amount to a user

The profitability of an eventual First Nations EÉSAD would also depend on its ability to charge an amount to its clients and be able to collect it. Currently, these services are offered free of charge by the Band Council. Having to pay an amount for these or additional services could be a barrier for many. However, if we take the data from the CSNN as an example, we see that the amount actually requested from the clientele is minimal. Indeed, the majority of clients are able to benefit from the maximum financial assistance according to the PEFSAD, which comes out to \$17.20 per hour. In addition, they can also benefit from a refundable tax credit equivalent to 35% of the fees paid. Ultimately, the client’s net contribution in the majority of cases will equal \$3.12 per hour.

All of the home care services offered to seniors can be grouped into two distinct categories: domestic help services and personal assistance services. Of these two categories of services, the domestic help services are the most suitable to be transferred to a First Nations EÉSAD.

As mentioned, the majority of existing services in Quebec are offered in the communities, to varying degrees. The question therefore arises as to how a community would benefit in opting for a service model inspired by the EÉSAD model. The next section therefore focuses on the impacts that such a model could have, both on the community and on users.

Impacts for the community

Based on the analysis of the CSNN, the primary advantage for a Band Council would be the decentralization of domestic help services towards the community. Currently, in most communities, these services are offered by the health sector. In contrast, since these are not services that require specific skills, it seems that allowing an organization external to the Band Council to take over these services would lighten the workload of a sector with a heavy workload, thus allowing it to focus on services that are deemed to be more critical.

At the same time, based on the mode of operation set up in Mashteuiatsh with the CSNN, it appears that allowing an external organization to take over these services would also make it possible to better document the needs of the clientele. Indeed, since the First Nations EÉSAD would have to keep a register of all the services offered in order to be paid by the Band Council, the latter would therefore have detailed information on the services used by its members. This is an important benefit when it comes to demonstrating the needs of the community to funding agencies.

The social economy model also implies that a portion of the cost of the services be borne by the user, which reduces the financial burden assumed by the Band Council per hour of service provided. The fact that the user has to pay for part of the services also means that they will be able to benefit from the tax credit for home support services for seniors¹⁴ (available for people aged 70 and over), which reimburses 35% of the cost of services assumed by the user. This therefore ensures that responsibility for part of the cost of the services can be transferred to the Government of Quebec.

¹⁴ <https://www.revenuquebec.ca/en/citizens/tax-credits/tax-credit-for-home-support-services-for-seniors/>

Contrarily to the current prevailing model in the communities, a First Nations EÉSAD would allow domestic help services to be offered to all members of the community, and not just those who meet the criteria of the Assisted Living Program. Indeed, federal funding only subsidizes a certain type of clientele, mainly people with decreasing independence. With the First Nations EÉSAD model, services would therefore become accessible to all, because so-called “active” people would be able to afford them and benefit from basic financial assistance from the PEFSAD.

As the pool of users would potentially be larger, a First Nations EÉSAD could also allow for the creation of additional jobs in the community. This is a very accessible type of job since it does not require any special qualifications. The fact that these services are no longer offered directly by the Band Council could also make it possible to offer jobs that are more suited to people with limited capacity for employment. Indeed, since the majority of people in this type of job are women, they often have family obligations that prevent them from holding a full-time job on a typical schedule. An organization such as a Band Council cannot manage multiple part-time employees to deliver services. This would not be the case with a First Nations EÉSAD.

The situation of the CSNN shows us that the First Nations EÉSAD model makes it possible to offer jobs with “tailor-made” schedules. Indeed, the CSNN asks its attendants to provide it with fixed availability. The cooperative then prepares its work schedules based on their availability. This allows the attendants to reconcile this job with their other obligations and the cooperative to have a larger pool of attendants, which makes it easier to adapt if an employee becomes ill, for example.

Impacts on the users

One of the main impacts for users of the First Nations EÉSAD model is that the services offered, unlike what is currently being done, will be based on the genuine needs of users since they will have the possibility of directly asking the First Nations EÉSAD for the services they want to receive. Currently, the services offered in the communities do not encourage the emergence of new demands on the part of users since they are often limited to what can be offered by the Band Council.

Since a First Nations EÉSAD would not be limited in its mission to offering only domestic help services, it could come to identify unmet needs in the community and thus develop new services to offer to the population. This is what happened in Mashteuiatsh where, over the years, the CSNN has come to offer community kitchen and food and clothing bank services. These different services also make it possible to offer various tasks to attendants who can do something besides domestic help. This could also provide the opportunity for seniors to volunteer and thus improve their social lives, an aspect that often emerged in consultations with them. Accordingly, the First Nations EÉSAD would

become more of a living environment for members of the community than a service centre.

Another significant impact for users is that they would have to pay an amount for services that are currently offered to them free of charge. Although the net hourly cost would remain relatively low (around \$3.12¹⁵), this could of course constitute a barrier for many current users since the ability to pay is an issue that often emerged during consultations. It is perhaps in this regard that a First Nations EÉSAD model will have to be innovative in its alignment with the services offered by the Band Council in order to ensure that the most vulnerable clientele are not at a disadvantage.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Following the work and interviews that were carried out as part of this study, it was possible to identify certain elements that could have a significant impact on the success of the First Nations EÉSAD model in communities.

The mobilization of the various First Nations administrative and political stakeholders

The CSNN's situation has demonstrated that the financial viability of a First Nations EÉSAD largely depends on the financial agreement established with the Band Council, since it is the latter that receives funding from the federal government to provide the services. It is therefore essential for the administrative and political stakeholders to be mobilized around the project and have its success at heart. So that a First Nations EÉSAD can last over time, political support is necessary since elected officials are called upon to change. Those working in the health sector must therefore see it as an advantage for the organization of their services and the services received by users. As the services offered by the First Nations EÉSAD will be complementary to those offered by the health sector, it seems important to ensure that they work closely together, during both start-up and operations.

Support and accompaniment of the First Nations socio-economic development ecosystem

The First Nations EÉSAD model involves the creation of a new social economy enterprise. Like any new business, it will need the support of development organizations in the

¹⁵ Assumption of a price of \$22 per hour, i.e. the provincial average for the majority of services offered in EÉSADs in 2018.

evolution of the project, in terms of assessing the feasibility, drafting the business plan and seeking funding as well as during the first years of operation. The “[Prefeasibility Study on a Social Economy Enterprise Providing Services to Seniors in a First Nations Context](#)”, which was produced by the Consortium des ressources et d’expertises coopératives for the FNQLEDC, is intended as a first step in this direction. This study provides potential promoters with a range of relevant information and analyses on the EÉSAD model: services offered, pricing, equipment and material required, human resources, profitability analyses, etc.

Promoting the complementarity of the Assisted Living Program and the PEFSAD

Although the CSNN is proof that it may be possible to operate a First Nations EÉSAD without having access to the PEFSAD, it seems clear that for it to have access to funding that is comparable to what is received in Quebec, it should be able to ensure complementarity between the Assisted Living Program and the PEFSAD.

Indeed, as has been mentioned several times, the funding for assisted living services varies from one community to another. It is therefore difficult, in the context of this study, to accurately compare the funding of provincial and federal programs. That being said, in situations where the funding obtained from the Assisted Living Program would be less than what would be obtained from the PEFSAD, it would be vital to the financial survival of a First Nations EÉSAD that it make up for the difference to ensure that the home care services provided to First Nations people are funded at the same level as services provided to the non-Indigenous population.

Currently, the Government of Quebec’s position seems to be that on-reserve First Nations are not entitled to the PEFSAD since the services offered are funded by the federal government. That being said, no evaluation of the level of care provided and the funding granted appears to have been conducted. Theoretically, even if a First Nations EÉSAD were to receive funding directly from the federal government that is lower than what it could have obtained with the PEFSAD, Quebec’s funding would still not be available to them.

Facilitating accreditation from the Government of Quebec for a First Nations EÉSAD

Even if a member of a First Nation living in a community could benefit from the PEFSAD, a First Nations EÉSAD could only offer services to them on condition of being accredited by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS). Currently, it seems that the MSSS’s position is that there is no room for new enterprises to be accredited since it considers that the needs are being met throughout Quebec’s territory.

This further reinforces the importance of mobilizing the various administrative and political stakeholders of the First Nations, both at the local and regional levels. Indeed, for federal and provincial programs to be complementary, it must be possible for the PEFSAD to be offered by a First Nations enterprise in order to be able to provide a service “by and for the First Nations”. Mobilization will therefore be necessary for a First Nations EÉSAD to be recognized by the MSSS.

Maximization of employability programs and other funding programs

As mentioned in the section on financial viability, this remains difficult to achieve, particularly in communities where the customer base remains quite small. It therefore seems unlikely that a First Nations EÉSAD can be viable if it is only financed by the Assisted Living Program or the PEFSAD program and user contributions. One of the challenges will therefore be to be able to diversify its sources of financing for operations.

As the attendant jobs in the EÉSADs do not require specific training, these are jobs that could be of interest to people entering or re-entering the labour market. The various employability programs that exist in Quebec could therefore be an interesting option in order to reduce the payroll cost of an EÉSAD.

By developing related services such as community kitchens or clothing banks, it will become possible to finance part of the organization's fixed costs with various funding agencies in addition to generating a share of independent revenue.

CONCLUSION

This study made it possible to shed light on the particularities of the organization of senior care services in Quebec and First Nations communities. One of the main objectives was to assess the possibility of building on the social economy model, on which the Quebec model is based, to innovate in the organization of services in First Nations communities. It turns out that, although this model has interesting advantages for a community, its financial viability does not seem certain under the current parameters.

However, it is important to emphasize that the realities of the First Nations communities vary greatly from one community to another: available financial means, geographic location, user needs, organization of services, number of residents in the community, etc. This study, as well as the prefeasibility study that accompanies it, therefore aims to inform communities of the existence of an alternative model for the organization of home care services, to enable them to assess whether it could be interesting for them and to equip any who are interested to build on it.