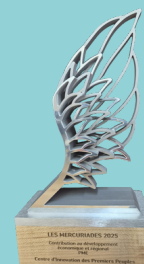
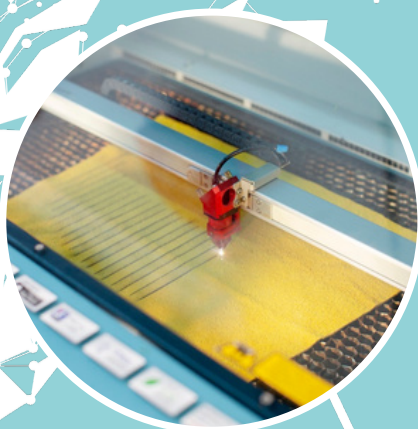




**First Peoples
Innovation Centre**

Onaki FabLab

**An innovative path
forward
for Indigenous youth**



Lauréat 45^e édition
Les Mercuriades 2025

★ Contribution au développement économique et régional

FCCQ

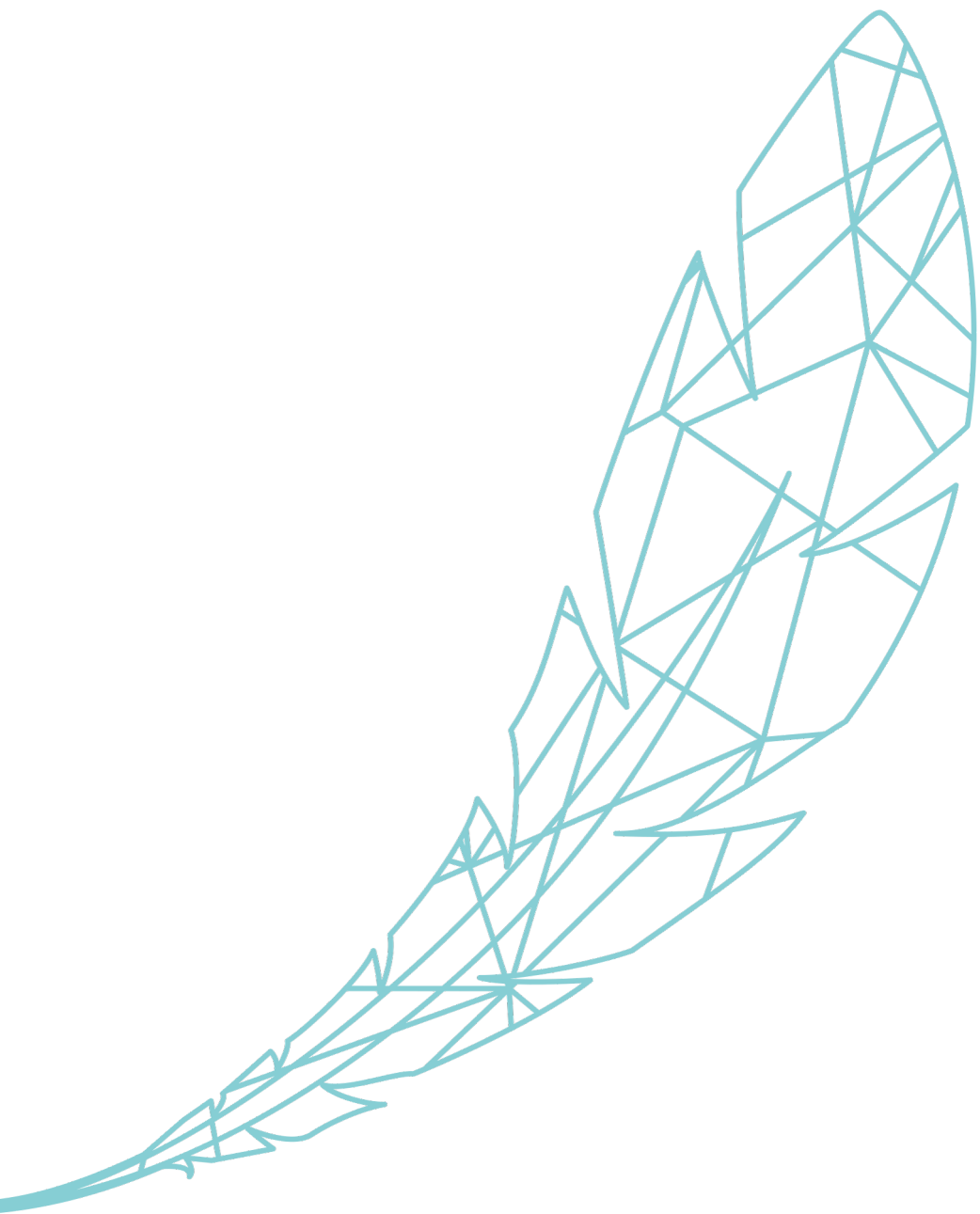
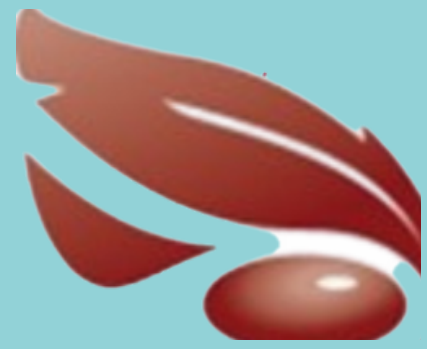


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The Onaki FabLab



An Indigenous Vision of Innovation

The Onaki FabLab is much more than a digital fabrication workshop: it is a meeting place where traditional knowledge and tomorrow's technologies come together. Developed by the First Peoples Innovation Centre (FPIC), this model is based on an inclusive and culturally rooted approach that values hands-on learning, digital skill development, and pride in identity.

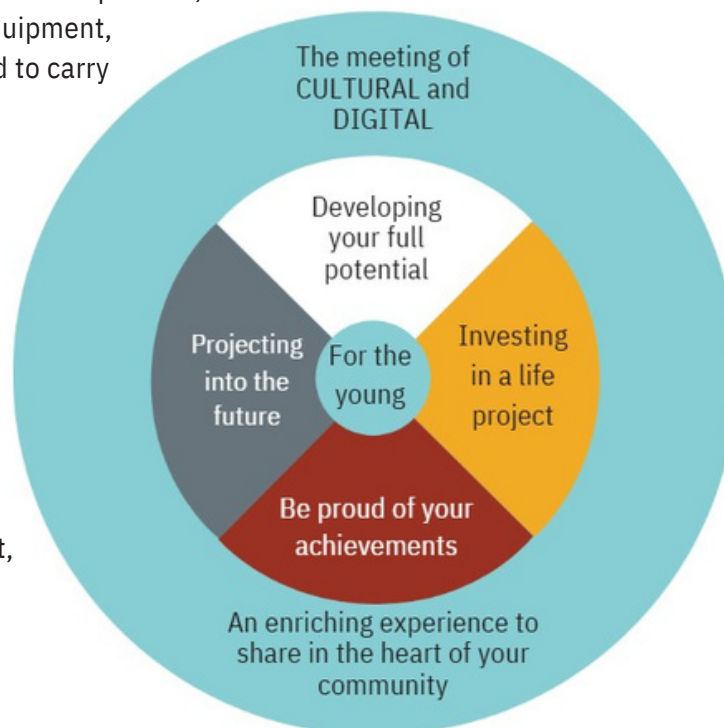
An initiative of the FPIC — a non-profit organization that supports social and technological innovation with and for Indigenous Peoples, both in urban areas and in communities — the Onaki FabLab embodies an innovative form of education grounded in knowledge dissemination and creativity.

A FabLab, or fabrication laboratory, provides users with access to digital tools (such as 3D printers, laser cutters, and more), traditional equipment, and the technical support needed to carry out concrete projects.

By bringing together cultural and technological dimensions, the Onaki FabLab offers indigenous youth the opportunity to build their future while reconnecting with their roots — whether they are Abenaki, Anishinabe, Atikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Innu, Inuit, Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaw, Mohawk, Naskapi.

The Onaki FabLab is...

- **A fabrication and creation laboratory** equipped with both traditional and digital tools (3D printer, CNC milling machine, laser cutter, digital embroidery machine, etc.).
- **A safe gathering space** that fosters intergenerational exchange and self-expression, with a strong presence of Elders.
- **A rich and diverse program** focused on learning through observation, hands-on practice, and knowledge sharing.



A Fabrication and Creation Laboratory

The team of instructors and assistant instructors—most of whom are former Indigenous participants—trains youth in the use of both traditional and digital tools.

Young participants design and create various objects and works as part of the FabLab:

- ▶ To express creativity or emotion, or to showcase their potential.
For example, the creation of an artistic objects.
- ▶ To meet a personal or community need.
Here are some examples:
 - *An electronic chessboard capable of connecting to the Internet and playing against a computer*
 - *Printing a missing piece of equipment using a 3D printer;*
 - *Inventing a forest rescue prototype like the “North Star” using electronics and 3D printing.*
- ▶ To produce a digital tool through a prototype.
For example, making a drone.



The FabLab has a meaningful place in the community, as it addresses the needs of its members by allowing young people to repair, create, or invent useful and concrete objects.

Missing a part? A youth at the FabLab can print it.
Don't have the tool to install it? The tool can be printed too!

A Safe Gathering Space

To offer young people a place to feel grounded and inspired, the Onaki FabLab is designed as a welcoming and secure environment.

“What impacted me the most was entering a space that reflected who I am. Sometimes, when I walked into a classroom at school, I felt like I had to suppress my true self in order to succeed. But here, I feel good, relaxed, and like I truly belong.”

Noémie Chilton, 2019 cohort



Cultural pride

The presence of Elders in various workshops is fundamental, as it allows youth to reconnect with their culture.



The walls, witnesses of the journey

Over time, the space is decorated by the participants themselves. Each cohort adds their own touches, leaving a mark of their presence at the FabLab.



A continuous and caring welcome

Creating a warm and respectful welcome at the FabLab is a top priority. The team works to build an atmosphere where trust, attentive listening, and both individual and collective self-expression can flourish in a safe space.

“When young people arrive at the start of a project, they’re often withdrawn—hidden under their hoodies, hands in their pockets. But as the days go by, their faces open up, as does the depth of their personality. These young people are incredible.”

— Céline Auclair, Ph.D., Executive Director and Co-founder of the FPIC



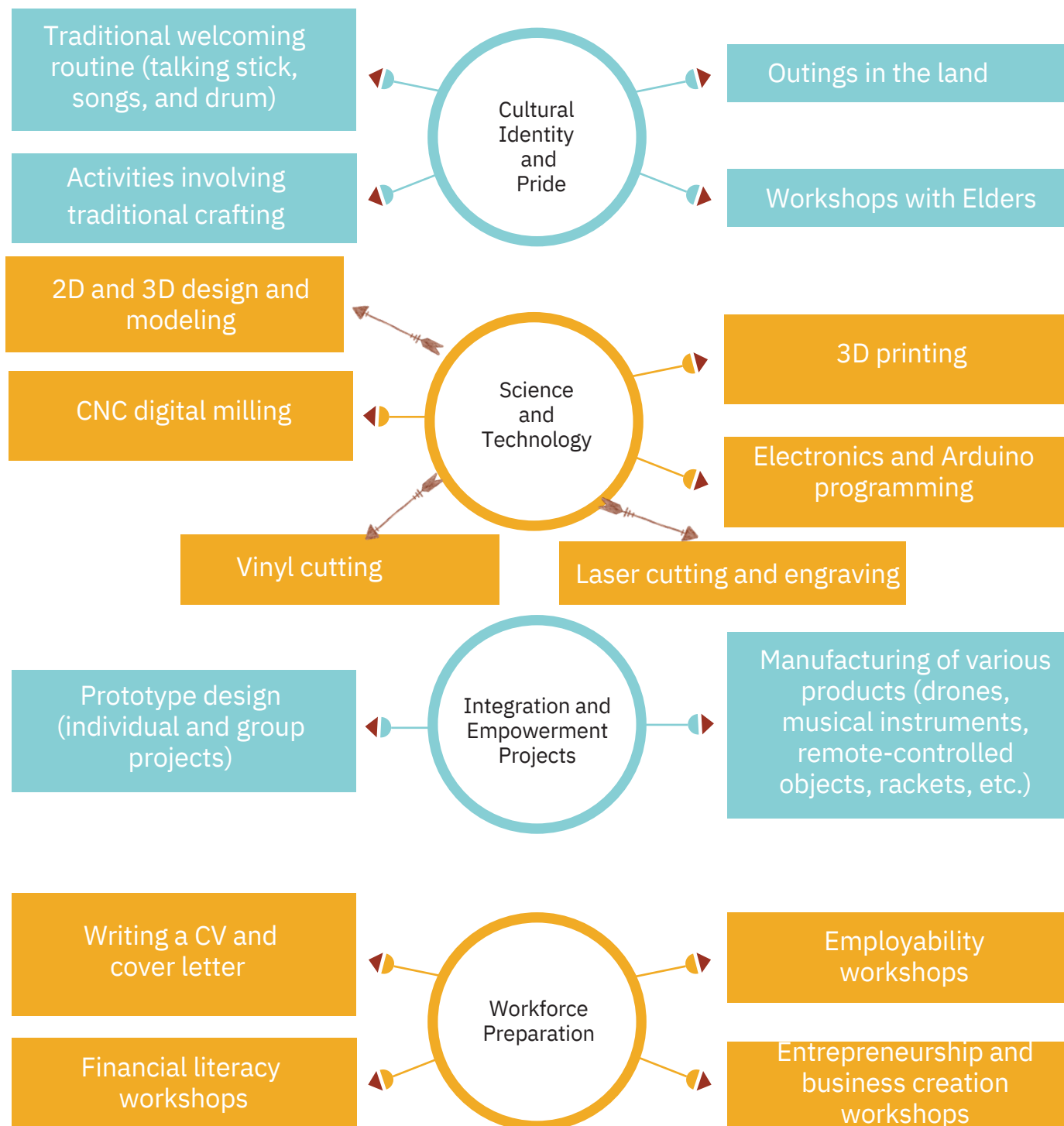
Former participants, now known as “Onaki FabLab Ambassadors,” play a vital role in welcoming new participants and are always invited to return.

A Rich and Diverse Program

The Onaki FabLab offers a six-month program, which includes four months of training followed by a two-month internship in a company or organization. Participants are paid for their involvement.

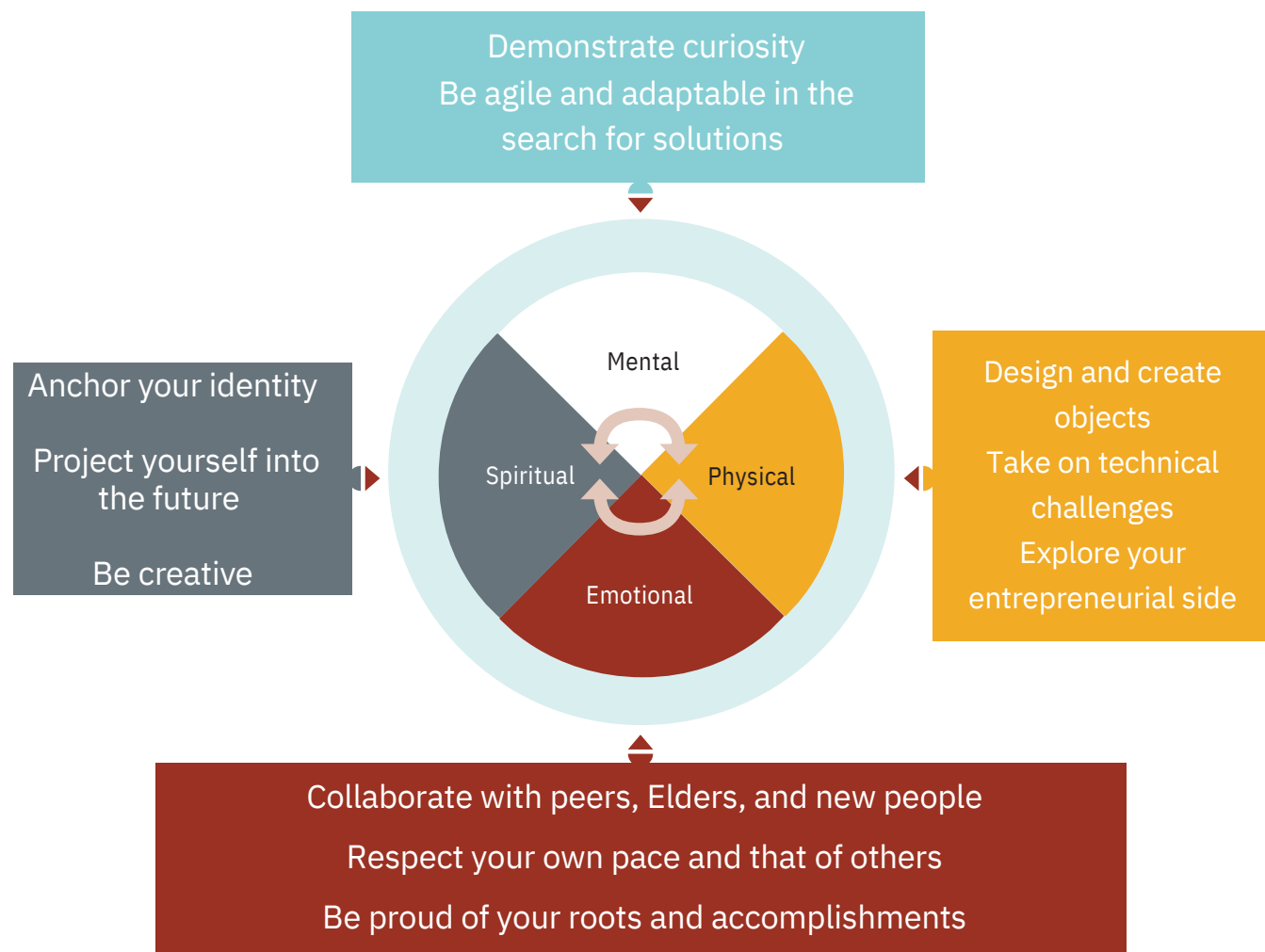
Four Learning Pillars

During the first four months, youth take part in a wide range of activities that combine cultural and digital components, structured around four main learning areas:



A Holistic Vision of Learning

- ▶ To develop skills suited to the complex challenges of the 21st century.
- ▶ The FPIC supports indigenous youth and women through a journey that integrates traditional knowledge, digital skills, and personal development — all to help them thrive in today’s world.



“FabLabs promote openness across cultures, ages, and social status. What surprises us the most is that for our participants, the Onaki FabLab opens a door to themselves — to their own identity as Indigenous youth in the 21st century.”

**Marco Bacon, Chair of the Board of Directors
and co-founder of the FPIC**



A Tailored Educational Approach

Participants learn by observing, experimenting, and sharing with others. Each workshop at the FabLab follows a structure that promotes active, collaborative learning.

This is how a typical workshop at the FabLab takes place.



Visual explanation
by the instructor

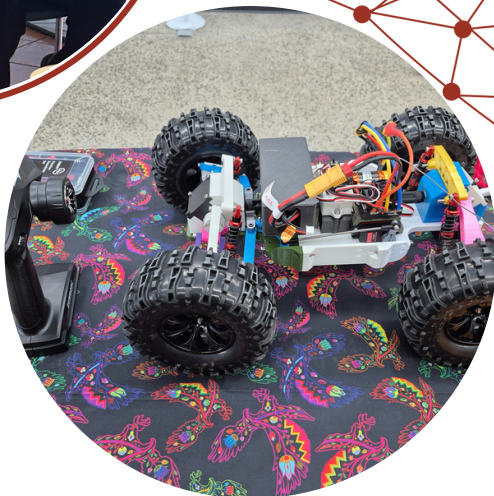


Technical
application of
new skills to
individual
projects



Explanation of the
process between
students

Adjustments
and model
creation



Presentation of
prototypes and
feedback
sessions

Transferable Skills

After four months of intensive training, participants have the opportunity to apply what they've learned in a real-world setting through a two-month internship in a company or organization. This immersion allows them to: strengthen both technical and interpersonal skills; gain a clearer understanding of workplace expectations; build self-confidence. For many, this internship is their first hands-on professional experience and serves as a springboard toward employment, further education, or entrepreneurship.

Recognized Learning

The knowledge and skills acquired at the Onaki FabLab—both during workshops and the internship—are recognized with an official certificate issued by the FPIC, digital badges developed by the Centre, and recognition from the Cégep de l'Outaouais, enhancing participants' résumés and validating their educational journey



The recognition from Cégep de l'Outaouais is a key milestone for the FPIC. It confirms the educational value of the Onaki FabLab and the credibility of the skills gained by youth. This connection strengthens bridges between Indigenous knowledge, technology, and education.

— Alexandre Bacon, Secretary of the Board and Co-founder of the FPIC

Looking Further, Aiming Higher

At the end of the six-month Cycle 1, participants who wish to deepen their skills and become more involved in the Onaki FabLab can continue their journey through two additional options:

- **Cycle 2 – Advanced Program**
This path allows participants to further develop technical and creative skills through concrete projects. Participants delve deeper into creative design, 2D/3D modeling, smart technologies, and web management, while being supported by mentors. It also provides an opportunity to become more involved in the FabLab as an assistant or ambassador.
- **FabLab Manager Training**
Intended for those who wish to manage and lead a FabLab, this training develops skills in project management, workshop facilitation, knowledge transfer, and community leadership, while respecting indigenous values.



Encouraging Results



Most of the young people who begin training at Onaki FabLab are neither employed nor enrolled in school

Over the course of the training, they develop technical skills and gain confidence, opening up new opportunities.

Among participants from the past few years...

For these graduates, in the months after completing their program at the FabLab...

76 %
completed
their program

68 %
found a job

30 %
re-entered
education

These programs give youth the chance to access employment either within the FabLab itself or in external companies. Moreover, if a participant wishes to turn an idea into a meaningful project, the FPIC supports business creation. This is exemplified by the inspiring story of one participant who, thanks to the knowledge acquired at the FabLab, launched her own business

Meet Alexandre Daigle-Paquette!

After his experience at FabLab Onaki, Alexandre created a business specializing in custom-made objects. His creations range from decorative items and skateboard accessories to mask straps.

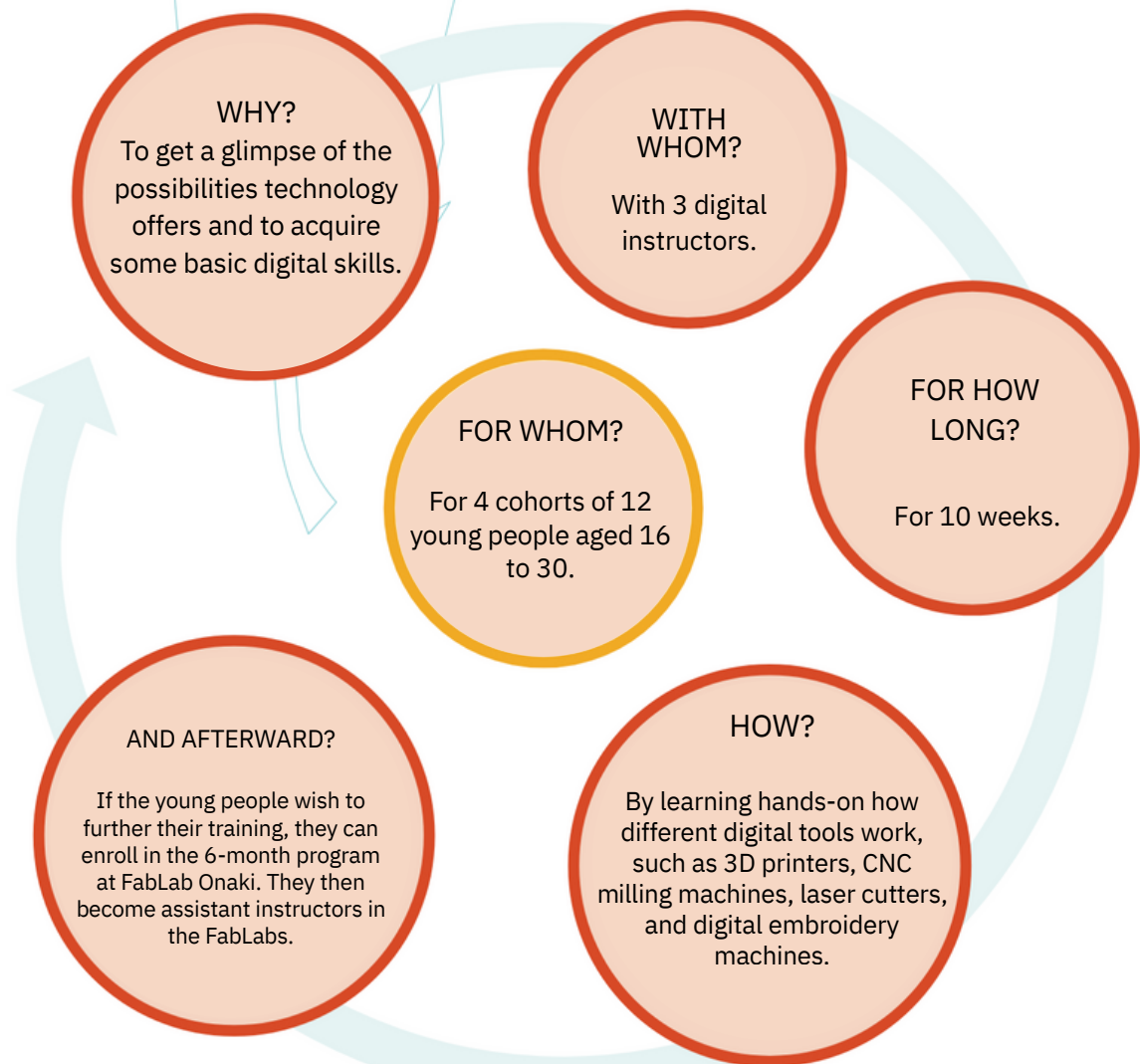
For more details, visit his company's website:
www.geekyourselfout.ca



Nomad FabLab comes to you



To reach as many indigenous youth as possible, the FPIC travels to communities with its Nomad FabLab, offering a short training program.



For more details

The FPIC offers support to communities interested in hosting the mobile FabLab, as well as to young people who wish to participate in the six-month program in Gatineau.

Contact the FPIC to learn more about the resources available to you.



First Peoples
Innovation Centre

WHERE FIRST PEOPLE
CREATE PROGRESS

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Located on the unceded territory of the
Algonquin Anishinaabeg

See Our Inspiring Paths



Onaki FabLab Cycle 1

Indigenous Training and Innovation in Gatineau, Quebec

Nomad FabLab

A Technology Caravan to Connect Indigenous Youth Across All Regions



Feminine FabLab

A Space for Empowering Indigenous Women

Fixed FabLab : Exports

Four permanent FabLabs are currently in operation: in Gatineau and La Tuque (Quebec), in the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne (Ontario), and in Fredericton (New Brunswick).



Onaki FabLab Cycle 2

This advanced program delves into specialized areas like construction, project management, and the mining sector.





Stay tuned!

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