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Wapikonimobile funding cancelled

<http://www.socialdoc.net/magnus/page/2/>



A Wapikoni mobile production unit. Photo from <http://wapikoni.tv>

For the last eight years, **an exceptional and pioneering media experience has given new means of expression and a sense of hope to aboriginal youth on reserves in Quebec.**

The **Wapikonimobile** is a mobile video production unit – or rather three of them – travelling from community to community, providing video training and supervising the making of short films. **For youngsters confronted with substance abuse, an epidemic of suicides and an almost complete lack of job prospects, this was an extraordinary opportunity, and they took advantage of it.** Some 2000 of them learned production skills, and **made some 450 films** expressing their own realities. Some of those films had real cinematic qualities and were shown in festivals here and abroad.

But now, the federal Department of Human Resources has cancelled its half-million dollar grant, about half of the Wapikonimobile's total budget– at a time when the production units should already have been on the road. Young people in numerous communities who have been looking forward to this experience for a whole year now find themselves without anything to do for the summer and without the means for expressing themselves. For what reason? Because, according to the minister, other projects offer better prospects for creating jobs and teaching skills.

Quebec's excellent daily **Le Devoir**, which broke the Wapikonimobile **story yesterday**, has **another story today (July 19th)** revealing that the arts and the community and aboriginal sectors are hard hit by other little publicized Human Resources cutbacks as well. This is surely a sign of where things are going under the majority conservative government.

Could there be more urgent needs than those of aboriginal youth? Hardly. The founder and director of Wapikonimobile, filmmaker **Manon Barbeau**, is campaigning to have the department change its decision. I wish her the best of luck in this extremely worthwhile endeavour.



Manon Barbeau with well-known Attikamekw rapper Samian, whose career started with a Wapikonimobile training program. Photo: Luc Lavigne, Radio-Canada.ca

*Thanks to **Tobi Elliott** for her help with this blog.*