

THE FACETS OF FATHER ENGAGEMENT

A TOOL ADAPTED TO THE IMMIGRATION CONTEXT

Father engagement is defined as the father's ongoing participation in and concern for his child's physical and psychological development and well-being. (Forget, 2009). As such, it includes all direct and indirect actions taken by the father to meet his child's needs or promote their well-being.

The following table, based on the participant's guide *Pères en mouvement/Pratiques en changement*, presents the various dimensions of paternal engagement. These dimensions represent functions that must be fulfilled to promote a child's development, meet the child's needs, and build a positive parent-child attachment. In some families, depending on their availability and their strengths, the mother or the father may be more involved in these dimensions, or they may be shared between the parents.

A father doesn't have to see every facet as applying to him to be an engaged father. It's not a question of defining what a good or engaged father is, but rather, of highlighting the diversity of functions that he already assumes and of validating his strengths and his importance to his children, while inspiring him to explore new dimensions that will support his cultural adaptation as well as his adaptation as an immigrant father.

PREAMBLE

Contextualizing fatherhood in recent Quebec history

Like other Western societies, Quebec has undergone major social transformations in gender relations as well as the family roles played by men and women. While these upheavals date back to the previous century, recent decades have been particularly marked by an acceleration in the transformation of the father's role. From "moral guide" to "helping father" to "good provider," more traditional fathering models continue to be part of the social heritage of fatherhood, although today's fathers are called upon to reinvent themselves and play a variety of roles.

Anyone working with immigrant fathers needs to know more about the main historical milestones that have marked the evolution of fatherhood in Quebec, so as to be better able to explain the Quebec social context and support the adaptation of immigrant fathers. What is more, the cultural and social changes that have taken place in Quebec are part of a context all its own, and it would be risky to promote a single vision of fatherhood.

One of these milestones was the Quiet Revolution, which challenged not only religious authority, but also that of the father as a symbol of the oppression of the institutions

of the time. Several other subsequent events have had a significant impact on the evolution of the father's role. These include, for example:

- the legalization of divorce;
- the transition from "paternal authority" to "parental authority" in the *Civil Code*;
- the massive entry of women into the labour market;
- the development of a whole field of research on childhood psychology and the importance of parent-child attachment (Bowlby, J., 1988);
- the introduction of exclusive paternity leave;
- legal changes relating to child custody;
- work-life balance measures.

Although father engagement takes many forms today, the fact remains that social expectations of fathers are still blurred and are somewhere in transition between traditional reference points and a multidimensional view of father engagement. The following tool takes the multidimensional approach.

How can the father engagement table and circle support parenting in the context of immigration?

The form and importance of father engagement vary considerably both within and across cultural environments. There are no homogeneous models to describe specific parenting behaviours across cultures.

The new conditions brought about by migration can make it difficult for immigrant fathers to assume their roles in the same way as in their country of origin. The absence of the natural support network and the new economic, social, and cultural contexts often require an internal reorganization of the family system and a redefinition of parental roles. These changes affect father engagement in various ways, and sometimes result in opportunities that are to be seized (e.g., closer ties within the family unit, exposure to a diversity of fathering models, discovery of new aspects of fatherhood). Feelings of loss, deskilling, insecurity, questioning, and even tension within the couple can also mark this transition period. The facets tool is a way of valuing father engagement, helping families adapt to a new balance between continuity and change.

When should the tool be used with immigrant fathers?

The tool can be used at different stages in the adaptation process or in the family's life (e.g., upon arrival in the new country, when starting a new job, welcoming the birth of a child, or when the children are going through adolescence), depending on the support needs expressed by the parents. However, it is strongly recommended to pay attention to the physical and psychological availability of the immigrant father, who may have to deal with major responsibilities while experiencing some kind of distress. The Points of Tension tool can help caregivers to better understand an immigrant father's experience as a whole.

Page 6 presents a number of possible uses for the facets tool of father engagement. These examples equally support individual intervention, coparent meetings, and father support groups.

With the facets tool, it's possible to help a father identify his strengths, find a positive image of fatherhood, and value the importance of being a father in his own way.

A word of caution about using this tool

In Quebec, father engagement in family practice settings has been strongly encouraged for many years. However, care must be taken to not put pressure on immigrant fathers to conform to certain norms and not to create mistrust among those who might feel judged in the way they assume their role of father. Analyzing the different facets of father engagement requires a careful, systemic approach, as the father's role within the family is complex and interdependent with the other members. For example, a father may identify primarily with the role of provider, while his wife may offer more emotional support to the children. It is essential to recognize that parents' contributions to a child's life often complement each other, and that the assessment of father engagement should not be dissociated from the overall family context, where different roles and responsibilities intersect and mutually influence each other.

Please note that this tool will evolve throughout the action-research process of the *Projet d'adaptation des pratiques des organismes communautaires aux réalités des pères immigrants* as a result of the reflections, diverse practices, and contributions of the practitioners and community workers who have received training and support. For this reason, the table below contains blank lines for you to fill in with examples from your own practice or that of your colleagues and partners.

Among the following examples, several may apply in situations where there is a geographical distance between the father and his child(ren), i.e., when the latter are in the country of origin (or another country) while the father is in the host country, or vice versa. These circumstances usually arise when immigration procedures prevent family reunification, but they can also be the result of a choice made by the family.

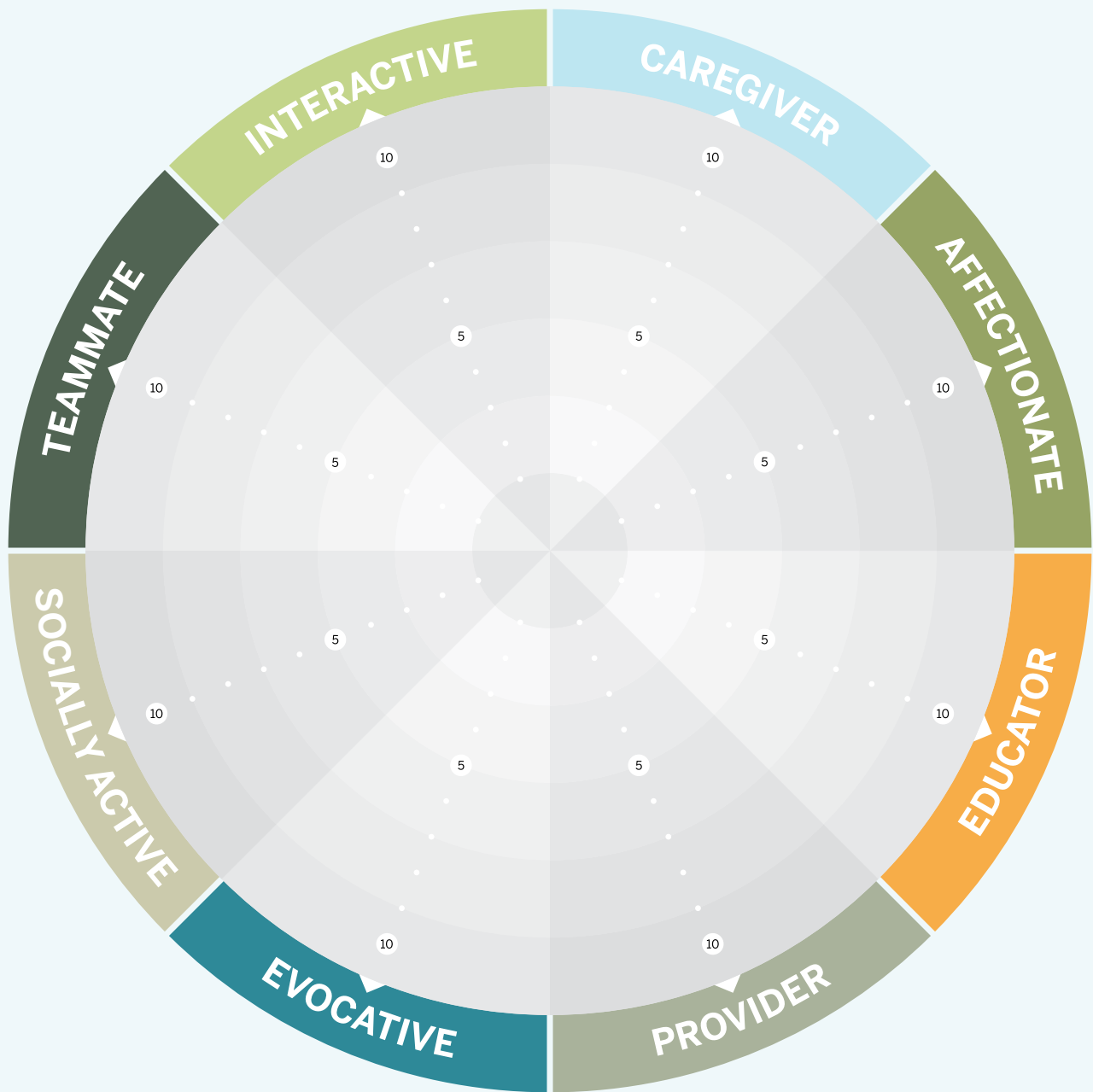
FACETS OF FATHER ENGAGEMENT – TABLE

Here are a few examples to illustrate each facet.

FACET	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
A FATHER WHO IS INTERACTIVE	A presence for their child: due to the quality of the time spent in direct or indirect interaction or simply by being available or accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being fully present for their child without distractions (cell phones, television) Playing sports with their child Exploring the city with their child Learning a new language together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing, texting, or calling each other (e.g., by phone, WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype) _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS A CAREGIVER	Sharing the daily tasks that promote their child's well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking a meal and/or grocery shopping Driving family members to their various activities (school, appointments, social and community activities, etc.) Bathing their child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking members to medical appointments (in person or remotely) Mailing comfort items to family members _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS AFFECTIONATE	Words and actions that reassure and encourage children: offering attention and affection through communication and signs of affection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking tenderly in their mother tongue Giving their child a nickname Holding their hand Encouraging their child's achievements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roughhousing Sending virtual greeting cards _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS AN EDUCATOR	Tasks related to child development and education: authority/discipline, supporting their child's social and moral life, transmitting family history and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting involved in school and leisure choices Helping their child with homework, or simply being by their side (even if the father doesn't speak the language of education) Taking their child to a place of worship Taking an interest in their child's learning and challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching their child their mother tongue and cultural traditions, (or upholding them) _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS A PROVIDER	Supporting their child financially, even after a separation or in the event of geographical distance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to provide for the family Buying books and supplies for school and leisure activities In the event of a separation, paying child support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding out about various financial support programs (family allowances, RESPs, loans and grants, etc.) _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS EVOCATIVE	Thinking about their child, even when they're not there.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at photos of their child Talking about their child's successes with extended family, colleagues, or friends Organizing a celebration for their child's birthday or to mark an important event (in person or remotely) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS SOCIALLY ACTIVE	Social involvement, commitment to society and the community (e.g., school, neighborhood) to make things better for children, parents, and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking part in an organization's outing Volunteering Serving as a member of a school committee or school board Taking part in intercultural twinning Taking a citizenship test Voting (status permitting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking an interest in the politics, history, and geography of the host country Learning the language of the host country Playing a role in his ethnic or religious community _____ _____ _____
A FATHER WHO IS A TEAMMATE	Looking to work as a team with the other parent for their child's well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing daily tasks with the coparent Making important decisions with the coparent Acknowledging the strengths of the coparent with their child (even in the event of a separation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoiding contradicting each other or bickering in front of the children _____ _____ _____

FACETS OF FATHER ENGAGEMENT – CIRCLE

Identify your strengths by ranking yourself from 1 to 10 for each facet.



DESCRIPTION OF THE FACETS

<p>INTERACTIVE</p>	<p>CAREGIVER</p>	<p>AFFECTIONATE</p>
<p>A presence for their child: due to the quality of the time spent in direct or indirect interaction or simply by being available or accessible.</p>	<p>Sharing the daily tasks that promote their child's well-being.</p>	<p>Words and actions that reassure and encourage children: offering attention and affection through communication and signs of affection.</p>
<p>EDUCATOR</p>	<p>PROVIDER</p>	<p>EVOCATIVE</p>
<p>Tasks related to child development and education: authority/discipline, supporting their child's social and moral life, transmitting family history and culture.</p>	<p>Supporting their child financially, even after a separation or in the event of geographical distance.</p>	<p>Thinking about their child, even when they're not there.</p>
<p>SOCIALLY ACTIVE</p>	<p>TEAMMATE</p>	
<p>Social involvement, engagement in society and the community (e.g., school, neighborhood) to make things better for children, parents, and families.</p>	<p>Looking to work as a team with the other parent for their child's well-being.</p>	

GUIDE TO USING THE FACET CHART AND CIRCLE WITH A FATHER, COPARENTING TEAM, OR ORGANIZATION

This tool has been designed to enhance father engagement and to broaden horizons. If a father wants changes, it's important that the choice of targeted facets comes from him and not from the person guiding and supporting him.

Here are a few examples of using this tool in an immigration context:

Provide individual support to a father in the process of adapting, by helping them identify their strengths and the dimensions of fatherhood they want to focus on, targeting opportunities to strengthen the bond with their child, and developing a positive image of fatherhood.

Support the reflections of a father who has lost his bearings by asking him to compare the facets of his role in the country of origin versus the host country, or the fathering model he has known versus the father he wants to be in his new country. Ask the father to determine the actions that will enable him to make the desired changes. It can be surprising how easy it is for people to find their own courses of action.

In the context of a separation, show a father who does not have custody of his child and/or who has to pay child support that his fatherhood is not exclusively the role of provider. Father engagement can be experienced on a daily basis, in the presence of the child, as well as from a distance, for example by using technological means to keep in touch.

Facilitate an integration support group or meetings between fathers to explore each of these facets and the host country's expectations of them.

Solicit other family members to make the father's/partner's engagement and its benefits apparent to them from their perspective.

As part of a coparenting activity, ask each parent to describe themselves and their teammate. Then ask them to discuss their perceptions of the positive points they see and possible avenues for improvement.

Evaluate the scope of your organization's activities with immigrant fathers. Offer a variety of activities that touch on facets of engagement that have not yet been fully explored (e.g., organize a father-child activity showcasing the facet of "affectionate father").

Identify long-term changes with a father who wants to make changes to his parenting/coparenting. Using the annotated wheel, it may be useful to review the action(s) chosen by the father. Did he carry them out? What were the results? It is always possible to repeat the process, aiming for a higher score for the same facet, or choosing a new facet to work on.