



Press release



Inauguration of Sept-Îles' First Community Living Environment for Indigenous Students

Sept-Îles, January 29, 2024 – The Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ) is proud to officially launch NUTSHIMIT, the very first community living environment dedicated to Indigenous students. This social housing model offers an adapted and culturally safe community environment that promotes access to education and helps young Indigenous students from communities in Côte-Nord and throughout Quebec stay in school.

More than just student dorms, the 32 housing units offer a range of on-site services, community facilities, collaborative workspaces for students and outdoor amenities that all blend into an architectural concept of a fully integrated cultural space.

The living environment is the result of an inclusive process of collaboration with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, current and potential Indigenous students, the governments of Quebec and Canada, and many regional partners, particularly the Cégep and the Ville de Sept-Îles.

A project designed by and for Indigenous people to meet Indigenous needs

Indigenous people must overcome significant inequalities and challenges every day, particularly in terms of accessing housing and succeeding at school. These obstacles often lead them to temporarily or permanently interrupt their studies before they obtain a diploma. Although First Nations members and Inuit theoretically have access to the same rental units as the non-Indigenous population, their specific needs are not met by most dwellings and they must overcome various additional difficulties stemming from prejudice and discrimination.

The SIRCAAQ's infrastructures establish conditions that are conducive to Indigenous students' academic success. This project has social, cultural and economic benefits. The living environment meets students' needs, values cultures and offers future generations a range of opportunities to help them develop to their full potential and participate in the region's socio-economic development.

Quotes

"We have worked hard for several years to create the first community living environment for Indigenous students in Sept-Îles. This ambitious project—but a very essential one for the community—is the product of a collective effort. NUTSHIMIT is the SIRCAAQ's first major

achievement and will remain a great source of pride and inspiration for other development projects in cities where students also have great needs.”

Laurent Odjick, Director, Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec

“It is a moving moment for all of us today as we officially inaugurate NUTSHIMIT, the very first living environment dedicated to Indigenous students in Sept-Îles. More than just rental housing, this affordable community space will truly transform students’ lives by providing them with a safe, dynamic environment conducive to their personal development and the pursuit of their studies. Many thanks to all those who helped make this project a reality. Every student who comes through NUTSHIMIT thanks you.”

Tanya Sirois, Chair, Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec and Executive Director, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec

About the SIRCAAQ

The Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ) was founded in 2019 to collectively develop and apply innovative and sustainable real estate infrastructure solutions that contribute to the wellness of Indigenous people.

About the RCAAQ

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec (RCAAQ) is a network of Native Friendship Centres in 14 Quebec cities. They offer a range of integrated, culturally relevant and safe services in a variety of sectors: health, social services, social inclusion, education, employability, early childhood, youth and much more. They also contribute to harmony and reconciliation between peoples.

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