



For immediate release

Press release



Inauguration of Trois-Rivières' Community Living Environment for Indigenous Students

Trois-Rivières, February 5, 2024 – This morning saw the official inauguration of the second community living environment dedicated to Indigenous students, as well as the new premises of the Trois-Rivières Native Friendship Centre, two spaces designed by and for Indigenous people.

Waska Witcihitowin, a unique social housing model developed by the Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ), is located next to the UQTR, in the heart of Trois-Rivières, and offers a safe, adapted community environment that promotes access to education and helps Indigenous people in Quebec to stay in school. Designed by and for Indigenous students, this living environment is more than just housing: it brings together a range of essential services to guarantee students a better chance of academic success. In addition to more than 40 affordable housing units, the living environment includes an early childhood education centre and a kindergarten for four-year-olds. It also has common spaces such as a shared kitchen, a lounge and a work-out room, areas and facilities dedicated to cultural activities, a mutual support network and assistance services.

For its part, the the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières presented its new premises, which are an integral part of the project by being established at the heart of the living environment. The region's urban Indigenous population is growing rapidly, and the Friendship Centre is increasingly in demand as a result. This service point is in addition to its other spaces in downtown Trois-Rivières and Shawinigan. Its location within the Waska Witcihitowin housing project will allow the the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières to increase its work with students, young people and families, as part of a living environment and site better suited to their needs.

This project was made possible thanks to the concertation and support of many partners, notably the governments of Québec and Canada, and the Ville de Trois-Rivières. An implementation committee was also set up locally, and its members contributed to developing the project. These include Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Cégep de Trois-Rivières, Collège Laflèche, Centre de services scolaires du Chemin-du-Roy, Kiuna College, CPE Premiers Pas and the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières.

Quotes:

"Today, the SIRCAAQ is celebrating the official launch of Waska Witcihitowin in Trois-Rivières. It is the second dedicated community living environment for Indigenous students. Working closely with all our partners, the SIRCAAQ has designed and built an infrastructure that echoes Indigenous cultures and blends into the ecosystem of its natural setting. We're convinced that the inauguration of the Sept-Îles and Trois-Rivières student living environments marks the beginning of a series of community projects that will contribute to the success of Indigenous communities in Quebec and Canada."

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

"We are delighted to officially inaugurate the Waska Witcihitowin living environment and the new premises of the Native Friendship Centre in Trois-Rivières. More than just a place to live, this site will provide a wide range of services and facilities designed to create a safe and stimulating environment. It will make a measurable contribution to the academic success of students today and for generations to come."

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

"The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières will take root in a unique space. With new premises and a second outreach clinic, the Centre's range of services will even more effectively meet the needs and reflect the realities of our members. Our proximity to the community living environment will also allow us to play an active role in this project, which we know will make a real difference to the educational careers of Indigenous students and their families.

Maud Flamand, Executive Director, Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières

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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