

OUR PATH, OUR VOICES :
**AFFIRMING OUR GOVERNANCE
AND EXPERTISE**



2024-2025
Annual Report



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC



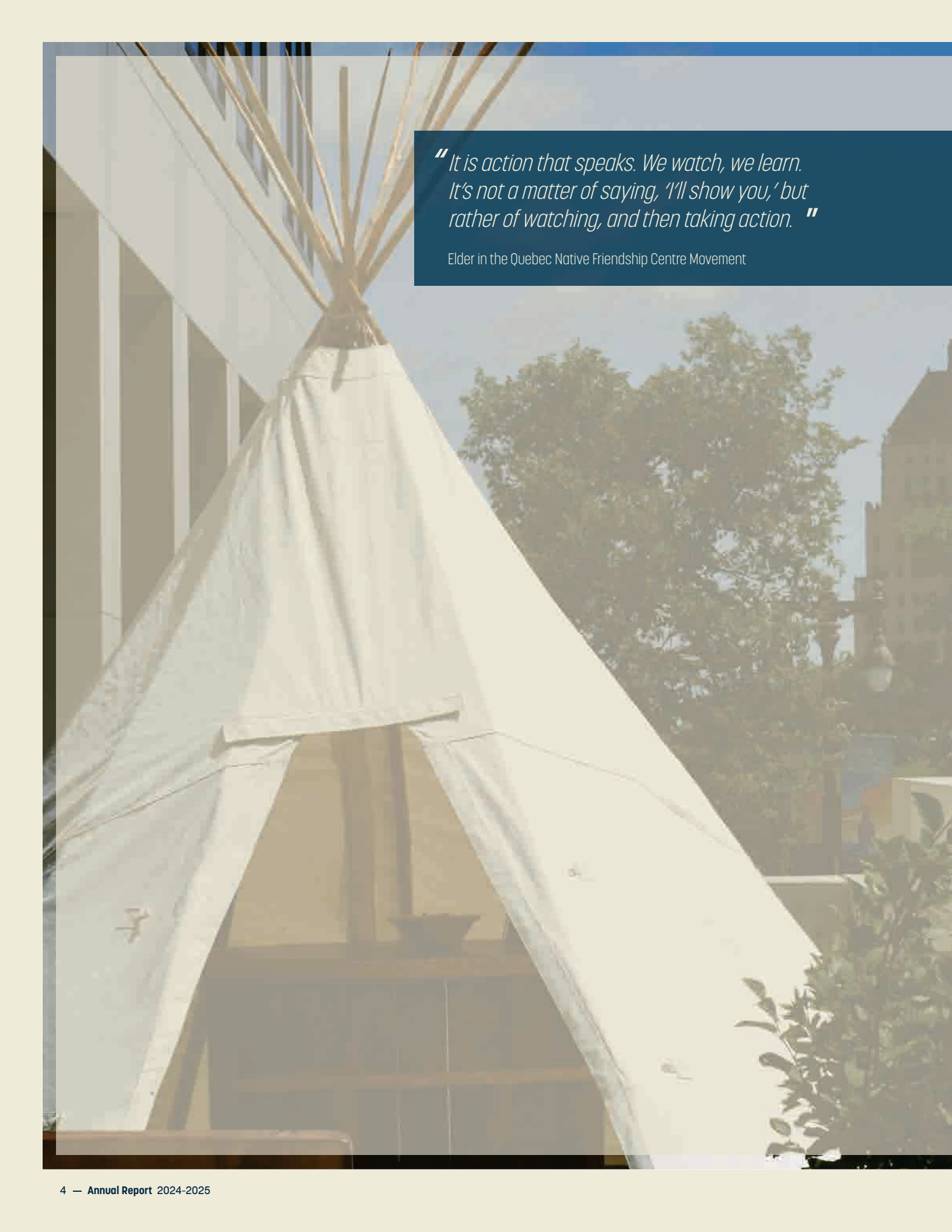
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*"It is action that speaks. We watch, we learn.
It's not a matter of saying, 'I'll show you,' but
rather of watching, and then taking action. "*

Elder in the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement

A WORD FROM THE LEADERSHIP



Through the theme of “Our Path, Our Voices,” the Native Friendship Centre Movement is affirming, now more than ever, the richness, diversity and collective strength that are its driving force. Every Centre, every member, every voice helps chart a course rooted in urban Indigenous realities and supported by autonomous, inclusive and deeply committed governance. Indigenous participation in management and service delivery is known to be an essential lever for reducing inequality, particularly in the area of health and wellness. In this context, the Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) remains a unifying and far-reaching force and, above all, the bearer of a strong vision serving the entire Movement.

Once again this year, we demonstrated the relevance and solidity of our model of Indigenous self-governance in an urban setting. This is a unique model that, unlike the frameworks imposed by external structures, relies on citizen participation and the expertise of RCAAQ’s members. This collective decision-making process ensures that every voice is heard, reinforcing the relevance of our actions and rooting our vision in the realities experienced by Indigenous people in urban areas. We have also continued to provide strategic support to our member Friendship Centres, helping them to develop their organizations, strengthen their governance and implement culturally safe frontline services.

On the political front, the RCAAQ has continued to act as a preferred intermediary in talks with the different levels of government, maintaining respectful and egalitarian relations that recognize the legitimacy of our Movement. The tangible advances we have made—such as our contribution to Bill 32, *An Act to Establish the Cultural Safety Approach Within the Health and Social Services Network*, which involved concrete proposals—testify to our ability to bring about systemic change by and for Indigenous people. What is more, the coordination of the Local Tables on Service Accessibility for Urban Indigenous People and the resulting National Forum have given rise to a renewed vision of accessibility and rights recognition through rich and engaging cross-sector dialogue.

Our fledgling Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities has also proven to be an important pillar of the Quebec Friendship Centre Movement. Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of First Nations and Inuit, the Observatory has delivered concrete results that have deepened our understanding of the realities experienced by urban Indigenous people. By developing adapted indicators and cultivating community participation, as reflected, notably, in the creation of the Knowledge Circle, we have been able to better align our actions with communities’ needs. This substantive work has improved the reach of our interventions in the field and helped inform the Movement’s strategic decisions.

Finally, we have continued our efforts to champion Indigenous cultures and foster harmony between peoples, through awareness raising, dialogue and mutual recognition initiatives. Large or small, these gestures help build bridges between nations, strengthen local autonomy and spread our vision of a fairer, more inclusive society. They concretely contribute to reducing the persistent disparities between peoples through better mutual understanding and actions that drive change.

Our team is proud to present this 2024–2025 annual report, which reflects a year fuelled by engagement, collective intelligence and self-determination. On behalf of everyone on our team, we hope you enjoy reading it.

In friendship,




Philippe Tsaronséré Meilleur
Chair




Tanya Sirois
Executive Director

VISION, MISSION AND GOVERNANCE

Our mission

To defend the collective rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples in urban areas and to support our members.

Our vision

To expand our role as a driving force for change, leveraging our expertise and innovative approaches to make a powerful impact on the delivery of culturally relevant services and on the self-determination of Indigenous people in urban areas.

Our values

Kindness



Involvement



Integrity



Cooperation



Innovation



Respect



Our strategic directions

Invest in organizational growth

Structure the organization to secure the expertise and resources needed to realize our vision and mission while also boosting the RCAAQ's research capabilities.

Bring innovation to our relationships with our members

Prioritize innovation and foster open, two-way communication with our members and partners while strengthening the Movement's overall capacity.

Strengthen our strategic positioning

Maintain a strong, influential presence by reinforcing the RCAAQ's position with various audiences and across multiple platforms, ensuring it remains a leading force for change.

Our board of directors

The RCAAQ's model of Indigenous self-governance, based on collective decision-making, cultural anchoring and local autonomy, takes shape through its board of directors. Made up of representatives from the Native Friendship Centres, it reflects the diversity of urban Indigenous realities and ensures inclusive governance aligned with the needs of Indigenous populations.

Beyond the strategic role it plays, this approach to governance provides a foundational framework that enables First Nations and Inuit members to assert themselves in an urban environment by fostering their active participation, leadership and civic engagement.

Philippe Meilleur

Chair

Native Montreal

Chair of governance and ethics committee

Maud Flamand

Board member

Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières

Chair of human resources committee

Laurianne Petiquay

Vice-Chair

Centre d'amitié autochtone Capetciwotakanik - La Tuque

Jean Levasseur-Moreau

Board member

Centre multi-services MAMUK

Édith Cloutier

Secretary-Treasurer

Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

Chair of audit and finance committee

Jessica Nanipou

Board member

Centre d'amitié autochtone de Manicouagan

Jennifer Brazeau

Board member

Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière

Guylaine Vachon

Board member

Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles

Nancy Brunelle

Board member

Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre

Jo-Ann Toulouse FOLLOWED BY **Sandy Raphaël**

Board member

Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre

Charlotte Commonda

Board member

Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre

The board of directors draws on the expertise of its committees which, in collaboration with executive management, examine specific issues and propose informed directions and recommendations to support strategic decisions.

- Governance and ethics committee
- Human resources committee
- Audit and finance committee

THE QUEBEC NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE MOVEMENT: A COLLECTIVE FORCE

The Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement is the largest service delivery structure for urban Indigenous people in the province. Its core mission is to drive broad social transformation, led by and for Indigenous communities in urban settings. This effort thereby supports these communities' social, community, economic and cultural development. The Mouvement comprises the Native Friendship Centres, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec and the Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec.

The Movement's main strength is in the community roots it sets down. Whether 50 years ago or today, Friendship Centres grow out of a grassroots movement led by individuals working together to give themselves the means, levers and opportunities to improve their living conditions and, in the process, assert their sense of belonging to an active and involved urban Indigenous community. Day after day, Native Friendship Centres forge bonds of equity, respect and solidarity to support members at every stage of their lives.

In response to racism and discrimination, both past and present, the Movement offers constructive solutions and encourages dialogue. In the face of adversity and injustice, the Movement opens up new avenues of hope and wellness for its members and supports them in regaining their footing in their lives.



Affiliated Native Friendship Centres

Eleven Native Friendship Centres and three service points are united under the banner of the RCAAQ. They serve Indigenous people living in or passing through the cities of Baie-Comeau, Chibougamau, Gatineau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Montréal, Québec City, Saint-Michel-des-Saints, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Shawinigan, Trois-Rivières and Val-d'Or. Some Native Friendship Centres, which have been open for several decades, were created around 1970. Since 2000, a second wave of Friendship Centres opened in response to the expanding and diversifying urban Indigenous population and its growing needs.

Native Friendship Centres act as drivers of cultural and social cohesion in their city or municipality and, by extension, in their region, given that their influence extends far beyond the city they are based in. They play a pivotal role in enhancing quality of life for urban Indigenous residents, promoting Indigenous cultures and bridging gaps between different communities. By offering a range of integrated and interconnected services, these Friendship Centres provide a culturally safe and relevant environment, making them crucial hubs for frontline services. Friendship Centres address various needs, including health and social services, individual and community wellness, early childhood development, youth engagement, rights advocacy, social inclusion, community housing and more.



The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec

As the umbrella organization of the affiliated Native Friendship Centres and service points, the RCAAQ works closely with a number of government, Indigenous and university bodies to influence public policy so that the approaches, interests, needs and aspirations of Indigenous people are taken into account and lead to concrete action. The RCAAQ's initiatives are based in particular on research conducted by its Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities, whose approach emphasizes co-production and knowledge mobilization, combining scientific knowledge and Indigenous knowledge.

The RCAAQ provides institutional support to each Friendship Centre and service point in their daily operations and interactions with the partners in their area, while affording them the freedom to operate according to their unique local needs.

Led mainly by women, the RCAAQ and the Native Friendship Centres are Indigenous, autonomous, democratic and non-partisan organizations.



The Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec



Continuing its commitment to ensuring the wellness of urban Indigenous populations, in 2019 the RCAAQ created the Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ). In doing so, it created a distinct nonprofit legal entity dedicated to the design, development and management of Indigenous real estate projects. Its main objective was to ensure that the acquired skills and expertise in urban Indigenous issues were retained and leveraged efficiently to meet the specific needs of urban Indigenous populations and to ensure that housing was not a barrier to them pursuing their life plan.

The SIRCAAQ advocates cooperation with local players with skills and expertise in the field of urban Indigeneity. It puts forth projects that are trailblazing and in harmony with the environment—qualities that are necessary to meet the specific needs of Indigenous populations.

TAKING ACTION FROM THE HEART OF URBAN INDIGENOUS REALITIES

The Native Friendship Centre Movement works in an environment where urban Indigenous realities require adapted and impactful responses, and its action is based on a keen understanding of urban Indigenous issues.



61%

The majority of First Nations and Inuit people live permanently in cities, a proportion that is growing steadily.¹



7.2%

Average annual growth between 2001 and 2021 of the First Nations and Inuit population in cities by Indigenous people.²

Persistent socioeconomic disparities with the non-Indigenous population



Intergenerational impacts:

trauma from residential schools (self-destructive behaviours, such as suicide, addiction, chronic illness, violence, homelessness).



Employment rates:

lower than non-Indigenous people (especially for youth).



Access to housing:

barriers caused by racism, discrimination, language and poverty.



Judicial issues:

multiple challenges, related to poverty, mental health, substance abuse, etc.

¹ Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2021.

² Id.

PAVING THE WAY THROUGH ACTION

Through its strategic role, the RCAAQ is charting a collective course toward the wellness of urban Indigenous populations. Guided by Indigenous values and knowledge, it takes action to strengthen self-determination, support suitable living environments and reduce the persistent disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The achievements of the past year illustrate the concrete scope of this commitment.

Helping to develop tangible solutions and public policies that promote the wellness of urban Indigenous populations



Supporting the development of innovative and proactive strategies and the implementation of frontline programs and services adapted to urban Indigenous populations



Providing the Friendship Centres with institutional and strategic support while respecting their autonomy and specific local context



Fostering harmony between communities by celebrating Indigenous cultures



Leveraging knowledge to make a real impact

The RCAAQ's Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities plays a strategic role in strengthening the Native Friendship Centre Movement by producing and disseminating knowledge rooted in Indigenous know-how. Through research, evaluation and knowledge mobilization, it helps to inform actions and increase impacts in the field.

Among the year's highlights, the Nashpitshipanu project, which focuses on health equity and climate justice in urban environments, secured both major funding and recognition from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This is a first in Quebec for an Indigenous collective acting as principal investigator, in a field in which individuals are more likely to be recognized.

The team also acquired a wealth of new expertise, notably by welcoming researchers and a scientist-in-residence in the fields of health, homelessness and identity, and entered into a partnership with the Observatoire québécois des inégalités, as part of the initiative Mawamketuwiyak, Ensemble dans une envolée.

The Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities has published several key deliverables, including an evaluation report and a provincial report card on access to culturally safe frontline services for urban Indigenous people. It also contributed to the publication of a report entitled *Indigenous People Facing Justice and Public Security: Overview of Urban Issues in Quebec*, the fruit of a vast research project carried out in nine Quebec cities from May 2021 to June 2023.

Lastly, the year was marked by a high level of knowledge dissemination activities:

6 agreements signed

5 scientific articles published and contributions made to papers

10 talks given

In addition to producing data, the Observatory paints a living, evolving portrait of urban Indigenous realities. It supports the anchoring of an evaluation culture within the Movement, inspired by Indigenous approaches and knowledge, and focused on concrete, transformative action.





Transforming living environments, strengthening communities

The RCAAQ rolls out proactive and innovative strategies to meet the needs of Indigenous people in cities. It supports the development and implementation of projects and programs across Quebec, while providing the Native Friendship Centres with strategic advice tailored to their realities.

When navigating Quebec's public-service system, which is still largely ill adapted to the cultural realities and experiences of First Peoples, many feel helpless in regards to their rights, obligations and potential recourse. To remedy this, Native Friendship Centres offer a holistic approach that enables Indigenous people to access, under one roof, services that meet all of their needs, despite the complex pathways associated with urban Indigenous life.

By focusing on prevention and intervention consolidation, Native Friendship Centres take action before situations reach a crisis point, and thus they help break vulnerability cycles. They play a decisive role in reducing socioeconomic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, while offering services rooted in cultural safety.

Three major initiatives were taken this year

- **Rallying living environments: Delegation of living environment services from the SIRCAAQ to the RCAAQ**

To maximize the synergy between the living environments developed and managed by the SIRCAAQ and the community services expertise of the Native Friendship Centres, responsibility for resident outreach and support has been entrusted to the RCAAQ and the Native Friendship Centres. This transition is part of a continuation and consolidation of the lessons the SIRCAAQ has learned, while favouring an integrated approach focused on tenants' needs. This strengthens community members' involvement in the development of their living environment and ensures better alignment between the offer and experience of services.

- **Creating a childcare centre rooted in Indigenous cultures**

The RCAAQ's childcare centre will open its first 81-spot facility on the Université Laval campus, primarily for families living in the new Indigenous students' living environment. In conjunction with SIRCAAQ, this service aims to provide a community educational environment rooted in Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge. It will support the children's overall development and help forge an Indigenous identity, while meeting the unique needs of student families who live far from their support system.

- **Renewed strategic support for Native Friendship Centres**

In 2024–2025, the RCAAQ's annual tour of the Native Friendship Centres was completely revisited to be more than a simple rendering of accounts. The aim was to offer strategic support tailored to local realities and take into account the challenges and aspirations unique to each Centre. This approach makes it possible to collect useful data while making space for dialogue and recognition. It strengthened the ties between the RCAAQ and local teams, while providing the Friendship Centres with concrete tools that supported their planning and advocacy efforts.

A critical initiative for the health of First Peoples

Pursuing its mission to transform living environments and strengthen communities, the RCAAQ continued to support Centre-driven development of Indigenous health clinics. These clinics embody a holistic vision of health based on harmony between all aspects of life, and in close connection with community, loved ones and the environment. Rooted in local realities and supported by Indigenous knowledge, this unique model removes access-to-care barriers, builds trust in the services and concretely improves the health and wellness of urban First Peoples.

In 2024, more than 2,500 Indigenous people received care at one of the eight publicly funded Indigenous health clinics in Quebec. This number has more than doubled since the clinics began to receive funding from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux in 2021, supporting the development of services offered in Friendship Centres.

BETWEEN **10** and **30** medical acts are performed each day in an Indigenous health clinic

12 nurses are employed

16 doctors offer consultation time



Culturally relevant practices are offered

- Access to medicinal plants, traditional care and activities on the land
- Incorporation of Indigenous languages into the services
- Development of mobile clinics, perinatal programs and resources for vulnerable people





Training to improve action

As an extension of the central role it plays with urban Indigenous people, the RCAAQ organizes awareness-raising activities and talks aimed at increasing understanding of the life journeys, issues and aspirations of First Nations members and Inuit. Based on in-depth knowledge of the field, these activities foster inclusive and culturally safe environments while building lasting relationships based on mutual recognition. Drawing on its expertise, the RCAAQ is a trusted partner to a wide range of professional circles working with Indigenous clientele on a daily basis. The activities were carried out with the Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales (DPCP), the Bureau du coroner, the Court of Québec, provincial and federal ministries and the community, among others.

Moreover, the RCAAQ collaborated with several partners, including Alter Justice and the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ), to offer awareness-raising and thought-provoking activities on a variety of topics. Some aimed to provide a better understanding of the dynamics at play in educational contexts, to clarify the rights of Indigenous children in the care of the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) or to provide a space for reflection on healing processes.

22

ACTIVITIES AND TALKS

The number of initiatives undertaken this year to raise awareness of Indigenous realities.

106

MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS

demonstrating the RCAAQ's desire to constantly build lasting bridges, strengthen strategic alliances and advance promising initiatives.



The RCAAQ organizes training activities to support the Native Friendship Centres and to encourage continuous improvement. These provide opportunities for teams to share their experiences, expertise and best practices. They encourage the harmonization of knowledge, recognition of achievements and strengthening of collective capabilities, while fostering a culture of collaboration within the Movement.

Here are a few examples of themes explored in the Learning Circles:

HEALTH CARE

Reconnecting individuals with their culture, territory and overall wellness through traditional activities and healing spaces, which offer an approach rooted in Indigenous cultures. The discussions also highlighted the Native Friendship Centres' health clinics, where interdisciplinary collaboration and personalized support ensure rapid, respectful care. The case studies and best practices that were shared strengthened our collective ability to offer accessible and adapted healthcare services.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

Highlighting engaging approaches that encourage young people to get involved, notably through sports and outdoor activities. These initiatives help young people to reconnect with the land, strengthen their cultural identity and boost their self-esteem, while creating spaces where they can thrive and that value their individual and collective strengths.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening the evaluation culture within the Movement. Meetings held throughout the year helped validate the evaluation frameworks for programs and services, while promoting the development and validation of tools adapted to realities in the field, such as the Sentier de l'évaluation en soins et services en santé et mieux-être (health and wellness care and services evaluation pathway). In addition, hands-on workshops were offered to familiarize participants with specialized tools, helping to build collective capacity for qualitative analysis and continuous evaluation.

JUSTICE

Sharing the expertise and best practices of the legal clinics set up in the Native Friendship Centres, which offer community access to legal information, specialized support and services adapted to Indigenous realities. The discussions also focused on incorporating the cultural aspect into the legal approach, to better meet the needs of Indigenous people and to build trust in the legal system.

PSYCHOSOCIAL FIELD

Actively supporting the creation of a caring safety net for women in situations of violence. The services offered by Native Friendship Centres—clinics, legal assistance, active listening—play a key role in this support. Activities such as craft circles and healing sites help break isolation, strengthen ties and rekindle connection to culture.

26 LEARNING CIRCLES

The number of meetings offered to the Friendship Centres this year, covering a variety of themes related to improving the living conditions of Indigenous populations in cities.

Making our voices heard with government bodies

The RCAAQ plays a central role in representing the interests of urban Indigenous people in talks with the provincial and federal governments. As a privileged intermediary between the Native Friendship Centres and the public authorities, it helps to amplify the voices of urban Indigenous people and influence public policy in a structured, consistent way.

To do so, the RCAAQ uses several levers, such as writing position papers, participating in consultations and being present at discussion forums. These actions shine a light on specific issues, express distinct perspectives and propose concrete solutions, rooted in the realities experienced in the field.



Over the course of the year, the RCAAQ

was active on **82** different committees, confirming its strategic role in consultation, governance and practice transformation spaces.

took part in **20** strategic consultations, seizing the opportunity to make the voice of urban Indigenous communities heard, to contribute to collective reflection and to support initiatives aiming to better meet their needs.

POSITION PAPERS SUBMITTED BY THE RCAAQ:



Position paper presented to the Committee on Citizen Relations concerning Bill 84, An Act Respecting National Integration: *Un projet de loi à bonifier à la lumière de la contribution des Premières Nations et des Inuit à la société québécoise* (a bill to be improved in light of First Nations and Inuit contributions to Quebec society)



Position paper on the need to integrate a culturally safe approach into the PNSSSD, presented to the Direction générale des aînés et des proches aidants (DGAPA): *Consultation concernant la nouvelle Politique nationale sur les soins et les services de soutien à domicile* (PNSSSD) (consultation on the new Gouvernement de Québec policy on home care and support services)



Position paper filed as part of the 2025–2026 pre-budget consultations: *Des investissements nécessaires afin de mettre en œuvre des solutions innovantes permettant de rattraper le retard en infrastructures communautaires dans le Mouvement des Centres d'amitié autochtones au Québec* (investments needed to implement innovative solutions to close community infrastructure gaps in the Native Friendship Centre Movement in Quebec)



Position paper presented to the Ministère de la Famille: *Sensibiliser, intervenir et soutenir : un cadre d'action nécessaire pour lutter contre l'intimidation et la cyberintimidation des jeunes Autochtones en milieu urbain* (awareness raising, intervention and support: a framework needed to fight bullying and cyberbullying of urban Indigenous youth)



Informing, mobilizing and supporting

The RCAAQ conducts awareness-raising campaigns with urban Indigenous populations, given that it is particularly well placed to reach them in an appropriate and relevant way. As a trusted source, it plays a vital function, given the context of enduring distrust of government institutions. These campaigns go far beyond simple numerical indicators: they reflect the RCAAQ's commitment to fulfilling the core aims of its mission, by promoting access to information adapted to the Indigenous context, community engagement and recognition of urban Indigenous realities.

The RCAAQ also offers training and tools to the Native Friendship Centres and their staff to help them sensitively and effectively support their members.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE E

The RCAAQ launched a campaign to raise Indigenous people's awareness of the different forms of violence, using key messages that instilled hope.

The website received **8,804** sessions on the landing page.

The ads were seen a total of

1,682,930 times

"VACCINATION PROTECTS YOU AND THOSE AROUND YOU"

This campaign raised Indigenous people's awareness of the importance of getting vaccinated.

The content is based on educational videos and takes a constructive, caring approach.

The ads were seen a total of

513,749 times

"DEBUNKING MYTHS AND OPENING CONVERSATIONS: UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE USE WITHOUT JUDGMENT"

This campaign aims to destigmatize psychoactive substance use among Indigenous peoples, targeting both users and their communities.

It seeks to dismantle misconceptions and encourage a respectful and more nuanced understanding of the realities of substance use.

The ads were seen a total of

1 244 399 times

Driving collective action through events

Throughout the year, the RCAAQ organized a series of far-reaching events that enabled it to rally partners, strengthen intervener capacity, promote Indigenous cultures and raise the profile of the Native Friendship Centre Movement. These national forums, thematic meetings, training days and awareness-raising initiatives helped to advance priority issues in urban areas and cement ties between those who work with First Peoples.

A total of **560** people took part in the RCAAQ's flagship events, which helped rally the partners, increase intervener capabilities, showcase Indigenous cultures and raise the Movement's profile.

HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES.

JOURNÉES SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES MÉFAITS (HARM-REDUCTION DAYS)

Bringing together various interveners from the Native Friendship Centres, these two days were an opportunity to enhance knowledge, foster dialogue and co-create solutions adapted to the realities in the field. In addition to giving the participants the tools to better prevent and raise awareness of STIs and injection drug use, the discussions helped lay the groundwork for an awareness campaign. These get-togethers not only enriched the professional practices used but also strengthened the ties between the various sectors.



EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY DAYS

The Early Childhood and Family Days brought together 36 participants, representing 10 Native Friendship Centres. The event aimed to encourage dialogue on early childhood development, enhance interveners' skills, prevent burnout, and celebrate Indigenous knowledge. Activities included workshops, conferences, and testimonials on topics that helped build connections between Centres, such as parental presence, father involvement, elder abuse, and intergenerational bonding.



MAKUSHAM JEUNESSE

Makusham jeunesse brought together 22 young people, 3 Elders and 10 interveners from eight Indigenous nations. The event encouraged discussions on young people's identity affirmation and wellness. Through workshops, cultural activities and training sessions, Makusham helped strengthen interveners' suicide-prevention skills while fostering a holistic approach to mental health rooted in Indigenous realities.

FORUM OF LOCAL TABLES ON SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY FOR URBAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Organized jointly by the RCAAQ and the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit (SRPNI), this major event, held in November 2024, brought together the members of the nine local tables in Quebec as well as those from the central table. It provided an opportunity to collectively reflect on improving access to services for Indigenous people and to experience powerful moments of cultural recognition. Participants notably attended a sunrise ceremony in the Parliament gardens and shared a traditional meal on-site, in a spirit of sharing and respect.



8TH RENCONTRE NATIONALE DE LUTTE AU DÉCROCHAGE (QUEBEC MEETING FOR SCHOOL PERSEVERANCE)

Co-created with community partners, this event highlighted the importance of educational success and of creating conditions conducive to breaking the cycle of vulnerability and to fostering self-determination. Participants were able to share promising practices and strengthen their support capabilities. The discussions shed light on the importance of creating the right conditions that would give young people the means to succeed, while respecting their realities.



SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS MOBILIZATION SPACES

The RCAAQ also acts as a collaborator or strategic supporter in events organized by partners, demonstrating its commitment to promoting spaces for dialogue, consultation, and mobilization that enrich knowledge, strengthen solidarity, and advance Indigenous issues in urban areas.

For example, the RCAAQ hosted the 34th Annual National Youth Forum and the 53rd Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Friendship Centres in Québec City. Engaging discussions and inspiring exchanges provided an opportunity to collectively reflect on ways to mobilize around issues experienced by urban Indigenous people.

To mark the occasion, the RCAAQ designed an immersive exhibition that invited the public to discover the richness and diversity of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement. Presented as an interactive tour, it highlighted the 11 Native Friendship Centres, while giving an overview of the Indigenous nations represented in Quebec. Visitors could hear the 11 Indigenous languages heard in Quebec, explore educational content and immerse themselves in urban Indigenous realities. The exhibition also included a crafting area hosted by Elders, a reading corner dedicated to Indigenous literature and a pop-up shop of handcrafted creations. A cultural evening rounded off the event, combining fine dining, entertainment and immersion in the midst of a forest.



WASKAPIWIN OROCOWEWIN SYMPOSIUM IN PARIS

A delegation from the RCAAQ attended the Waskapiwin Orocowewin symposium in Paris, themed *Croiser nos analyses et nos expériences au regard de la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones* (cross-referencing our analyses and experiences with regard to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP). It presented the various actions taken by the Native Friendship Centre Movement in connection with its implementation of UNDRIP. This participation was part of an initiative to share expertise and promote dialogue internationally.

FRIENDSHIP CENTRES: THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

Each Native Friendship Centre contributes to the wellness of urban communities while respecting the cultures and realities specific to each territory. The highlights presented here illustrate the diversity and richness of the local initiatives: unifying events, innovative projects, memorable inaugurations and major actions. Together, these achievements testify to the Native Friendship Centres' unwavering commitment to meeting First Peoples' needs.



The Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre inaugurated its new point of service in Gatineau in May 2024. It is designed to meet the growing needs of the region's urban Indigenous population. It aims, among other things, to support young people on their life path, break isolation and foster harmonious integration into the urban community.



The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles organized a cultural day with its partners, offering a space to meet and discuss Indigenous knowledge and practices. This initiative strengthened cross-sector ties, raised awareness of Indigenous realities and cemented partnerships in a respectful and sustainable collaboration approach.



The Mikinaw mobile clinic was inaugurated in June 2024, a first in Quebec. This clinic, by and for Indigenous people, offers medical care and psychosocial and educational support directly in the environments frequented by Lanaudière's Indigenous community. Its health professionals, interveners, school staff and traditional healers support Indigenous people of all ages and their families.



On July 19, 2024, the Centre d'amitié autochtone Capetciwotakanik – La Tuque proudly celebrated 50 years in the heart of La Tuque's urban Indigenous community. This memorable event brought together the Friendship Centre's users, partners and the general public in a spirit of celebration and gratitude. This memorable moment provided an opportunity to highlight the Friendship Centre's history, contributions and evolution over the decades while strengthening bonds between the generations and asserting the vital place that Indigenous people have woven for themselves in the local social fabric. To mark the occasion, the Centre unveiled its new visual signature, symbolizing its deep roots, evolution and commitment to the future.



Native Montréal's annual conference on Indigenous languages attracted a large audience around this essential topic. Indigenous languages play a critical role in reasserting the cultural identity of Indigenous Peoples. Languages are much more than just a means of communication; they bolster community pride and cohesion and help pass on cultural heritage to future generations.



September 2024 marked the official opening of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Manicouagan in Baie-Comeau. Since it opened, the Centre has offered a wide range of health, educational, cultural and social services to Indigenous families living in or passing through the Côte-Nord region. This makes it a living environment and a service hub that is focused on listening, providing support and respecting Indigenous values, helping to forge bonds between Indigenous people living in the city and to expand the dialogue with Baie-Comeau's non-Indigenous population.



On September 30, the Centre multi-services MAMUK marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a unifying community dinner, with artistic performances and moving testimonials. This event created a space for memory, dialogue and solidarity, where community members could come together to honour residential school survivors, acknowledge the wounds of the past and assert the resilience and strength of Indigenous Peoples. This moment of sharing strengthened the bonds between the generations and reminded everyone of the importance of continuing to move forward together, in a spirit of respect, openness and gratitude.



The greatest wealth of a Centre lies in the deep human bonds forged each day. It was in this spirit that the Centre organized a recognition activity at Shabogamak, bringing together Elders from Senneterre and Val-d'Or. Keepers of knowledge and wisdom, the Elders generously shared their stories, memories and traditions. At their side, young people will ensure that their knowledge and cultural values live on. This living dialogue is a promise of continuity, respect and hope for the next generations.



In December, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre celebrated its 50th anniversary. Programming enhanced for the occasion showcased Indigenous cultures and celebrated advances in social justice, inclusion and reconciliation. For five decades, the Centre has been actively involved in improving living conditions for Indigenous people in Val-d'Or. Started as a gathering place, it has become a service hub, a lively cultural space and a place for intergenerational knowledge sharing.



The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières held the Forum Kiskinorowewin, whose theme was *Agir maintenant et ensemble pour la réussite éducative des Premiers Peuples* (acting now, together, for the academic success of First Peoples), on February 20 and 21, 2025. At the end of the Forum, the 90-some participants from different backgrounds—decision-makers and education professionals from elementary to post-secondary education, key players from Indigenous communities and the Native Friendship Centre Movement—identified concrete commitments to improve practices within their organizations.



The second floor of the Chibougamau Eenuu Friendship Centre was completely renovated and turned into a welcoming, multipurpose living environment, designed to meet the needs of young people of all ages. The new layout creates a warm, secure environment, conducive to socialization, meaningful bonds and personal growth. By offering a place where young people can meet, learn and express themselves freely, the Centre reinforces its role as a community anchor point.

Applauding voices and actions

Throughout the year, several members of the Native Friendship Centre Movement were honoured for their involvement, leadership and contribution to the wellness of urban Indigenous people. These awards applaud the concrete impact of their work and the growing recognition of the role played by the Native Friendship Centres at the local and national levels.

PRIME MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Sarah Cote, director of Circle of Care at the Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre, won the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. Sarah Cote works at the Migiwewin Head Start Centre, an Indigenous program she helped launch, which focuses on collaboration with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and the community to offer families childhood education rooted in culture.



YOUNG VOLUNTEER AWARD

Aby-Gaëlle Jérôme, president of the youth committee and treasurer of the National Association of Friendship Centres, was the winner of the young volunteer category of the Hommage bénévolat-Québec 2025 awards. She plays a vital role in the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles and her work on community projects is worthy of mention.

KING CHARLES III'S CORONATION MEDAL

The RCAAQ is proud that the contributions made by Tanya Sirois (RCAAQ), Laurianne Petiquay (Centre d'amitié autochtone Capetciwotakanik – La Tuque), Philippe Meilleur (Native Montreal), Charlotte Commonda and David Logue (Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre), Nadine Rousselot and Natacha Rankin (Centre multi-services MAMUK) were recognized in this way. Through their dedication, commitment and inspiring work, these members have made a real, lasting impact on the lives of many people.

PRIX HIPPOCRATE

The Indigenous health clinic at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre was honored at the Prix Hippocrate, receiving the Transformation de prestation de soins et de services sociaux (Transformation of health and social services delivery) award. Thanks to a committed team and care practices rooted in the realities of First Peoples, the clinic is tangibly transforming the health and social services experience for Indigenous peoples, while inspiring the entire network to adopt more inclusive and equitable models.

PRIX DE L'ENTREPRISE INNU DE L'ANNÉE

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Manicouagan received the Prix de l'entreprise innue de l'année (Innu Business of the Year Award) at the Gala des entreprises. This distinction highlights the Centre's ongoing commitment to urban Indigenous populations, as well as its leadership role in promoting and passing on Indigenous cultures.

SHAPING TOMORROW, TOGETHER

As we look to the years ahead, the RCAAQ reaffirms its commitment to playing a central role in improving the living conditions of Indigenous people living in or passing through Quebec's cities. Our path will take shape through our role as a strategic partner, leveraging our unique position to guide the governments toward better aligning public policy with the realities on the ground.

Indigenous health clinics, spearheaded by Friendship Centres, remain essential to reduce the enduring disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities will play a key role in consolidating our collective expertise, by generating conclusive data to inform and support decision-making at all levels. In its work this year, the Observatory consulted more than 2,000 Indigenous people, demonstrating its rigorous, inclusive approach that is deeply connected to the dynamics on the ground. Guided by a desire for social transformation, the Observatory focuses its research on concrete, useful and transformative solutions that empower urban Indigenous communities.

Through the use of these levers, the RCAAQ will continue to act as an interface between needs expressed in the field, Native Friendship Centres, and decision-makers, in order to build more just, inclusive and culturally safe urban environments for First Nations members and Inuit.

Thanks to its expertise, its deep-rooted understanding of the current realities and its ability to rally Native Friendship Centres, the RCAAQ emerges as a leading strategic player in increasing the Movement's influence and empowering urban Indigenous people.

