



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

OUR **DEEP-ROOTED**
CULTURES

2025-2026
ANNUAL REPORT



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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS



The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) and the Native Friendship Centres it supports hold a common belief: Indigenous cultures are vibrant, contemporary and deeply rooted in the cities where the majority of Indigenous people live today.

Throughout Quebec, Native Friendship Centres are spaces to gather, share knowledge, support each other and bring about change. They are places where generations come together, where knowledge is passed down, where languages continue to thrive and where families find culturally relevant services adapted to their specificities. More than just a service network, the Native Friendship Centre Movement is a movement of solidarity, cultural pride and self-determination.

Over the past year, the RCAAQ has continued to strengthen the capacity of the Native Friendship Centre network and foster its development. In addition to supporting members' initiatives, the RCAAQ works directly with urban Indigenous populations through the living environments it oversees, which are developed and managed by the RCAAQ's real estate company. Through transformative projects, support services and collective action, the RCAAQ helps improve the living conditions of students, families and seniors while promoting wellness, cultural empowerment and self-determination in our urban communities.

The year 2025–2026 also gave rise to major collective reflection on the role of Indigenous languages, cultures and knowledge in our work. This process led to a provincial cultural strategy that will guide the Movement through the coming years.

It also shapes how we organize and make decisions. The RCAAQ is firmly rooted in autonomous Indigenous governance, exercised by and for the Friendship Centres with a view to improving collective wellness. Thanks to our board members' dedication, solid governance structures and rigorous management of the resources entrusted to us, we have sustained our growth and safeguarded what makes us strong: values-driven decision-making guided by the needs on the ground.

In addition to supporting its Friendship Centre network, the RCAAQ continued its advocacy, research and outreach, to raise governments' and institutions' awareness of urban Indigenous lived experience. We also continued to develop innovative approaches rooted in communities' realities. Be it the research of the Observatory on Urban Indigenous Realities or initiatives on intergenerational cultural transmission, all our work is guided by Indigenous knowledge and by the needs expressed by the communities we serve.

Over this year, at the dawn of the 50th anniversary of the RCAAQ's founding, we look back on our journey with pride and gratitude. We commend the leadership of our Native Friendship Centres, the dedication of our teams, the generosity of our Elders, the contributions of our youth and the trust our many partners place in us.

Together, we continue to build cities where Indigenous cultures thrive, communities flourish and self-determination is a daily reality.

" Culture is not just another sector of activity: it is the very foundation of our approach, actions, governance and vision for collective development. "




Laurianne Petiquay
Chair




Tanya Sirois
Executive Director

WHAT GUIDES US

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 Peoples in urban areas.

Our values



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.

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.

BRING INNOVATION TO OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR MEMBERS

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

THE RCAAQ AT A GLANCE

A network present in

14 cities across Quebec

- Baie-Comeau
- Chibougamau
- Gatineau
- Joliette
- La Tuque
- Maniwaki
- Montréal
- Québec City
- Saint-Michel-des-Saints
- Shawinigan
- Senneterre
- Sept-Îles
- Trois-Rivières
- Val-d'Or

Action in all the dimensions of life

15 areas of activity

The expertise of a dedicated team under

STRONG INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

that promotes self-determination, wellness and inclusion.

1 research observatory

with unique expertise in documenting the lived experience of urban First Nations and Inuit and in informing decisions, policies and practices.

11

Native Friendship Centres

3

& points of service

46

strategic partnerships

These alliances amplify our collective impact and support lasting change.

2

living environments adapted

delivering culturally safe services that promote the educational success and wellness of Indigenous students and their families.

Investments with

TANGIBLE RESULTS

Thousands of First Nations members and Inuit in urban areas whose living conditions have improved

Taking a holistic approach, the Friendship Centres

deliver integrated frontline services adapted to Indigenous realities, life trajectories and knowledge:

- Health and wellness
- Legal and psychosocial
- Families, youth and older adults
- Individual and collective social inclusion and autonomy
- Indigenous cultures and identity-based pride

OUR GOVERNANCE

The RCAAQ's governance model takes shape in part through its board of directors, which draws on the values of collective decision-making, cultural grounding and local autonomy. Representing the Native Friendship Centres, it embodies the diversity of urban Indigenous realities and ensures that orientations are aligned with communities' needs.

A true driving force of development, this governance has more than a purely strategic role: it fosters the self-determination of urban First Nations and Inuit by supporting their leadership, engagement and participation in community life.

The RCAAQ's governance also draws on rigorous mechanisms that support the organization's decision-making, sound management and strategic development. The board of directors and its various committees pursued their work throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year to strengthen governance practices, support the network's growth and advance the implementation of organizational priorities. Through their ongoing commitment, board members help reinforce the Movement's capacity for action and its ability to manifest its vision, to the benefit of urban Indigenous communities.



Laurianne Petiquay

Chair
Centre d'amitié autochtone Capetciwotakanik - La Tuque



Charlotte Comonda

Board member
Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre



Jessica Nanipou

Board member
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Manicouagan



Jennifer Brazeau

Vice-chair
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière



Maud Flamand

Board member
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières



Guylaine Vachon

Board member
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles



Édith Cloutier

Secretary-Treasurer
Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre



Jean Levasseur-Moreau

Board member
Centre MAMUK



Philippe Meilleur

Board member
Native Montréal



Nancy Brunelle

Board member
Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre

*Philippe Meilleur is passing the torch after **eight years** serving as chair of the board.*

We thank him warmly for his leadership, involvement and sustained commitment over the years, which has significantly contributed to our organization's development.

The Board position represented by the Chibougamau Eenu Friendship Centre is currently vacant.

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

GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

This committee keeps governance practices effective, transparent and aligned with best practices. It supports the evolution of policies, regulations and governance mechanisms, while also ensuring that organizational practices and decisions are fully aligned with organizational and traditional values.

AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

This committee enables the board of directors to fulfill its oversight responsibilities relating to the integrity of financial information, internal control mechanisms and rigorous risk management.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

This committee supports the board of directors on organizational development issues, including the adoption and monitoring of policies and regulations pertaining to workforce planning, talent acquisition and retention, and succession planning.

NUMBER OF MEETINGS

5

**Board
of directors**

4

**Human resources
committee**

3

**Audit and finance
committee**

4

**Governance and ethics
committee**

Landmark decisions

Here are some of the board of directors’ many accomplishments over the fiscal year:

- Adopted the mandate and operating procedures of the Observatory on Urban Indigenous Realities’ Knowledge Circle
- Updated the charters of the three executive committees
- Adopted an update to the general bylaws
- Updated the mandate of the Executive Strategy Table
- Began work on updating the organization’s mission and legal compliance
- Adopted the Donation and Sponsorship Acceptance Policy
- Adopted an employee handbook, thereby strengthening the human resources management framework

THE QUEBEC NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE MOVEMENT: AN AGENT OF CHANGE

Today, the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement is the largest service infrastructure for urban Indigenous people. Its guiding principles fit into a holistic vision of social change that is driven by and for Indigenous people to actively contribute to their social, community, economic and cultural development.

Made up of the Native Friendship Centres, the RCAAQ, the real estate company and their early childcare centre (CPE), the Movement draws its strength from one distinctive feature: its deep roots in the community. Both now and in times past, a Friendship Centre is founded out of citizen engagement and it reflects a shared desire to adopt concrete means of improving living conditions and affirming sense of belonging in dynamic and engaged urban communities.

Central to this initiative, the Friendship Centres actively contribute to sustainable social change by promoting environments that foster individual and collective wellness. Drawing on approaches grounded in Indigenous realities and knowledge, the Movement supports life paths focused around empowerment, self-assertion and autonomy. As such, it serves as mainstay for addressing persistent challenges and strengthening sustainable pathways that are grounded in dignity, equity and commitment.

Our Movement | Forest

Our Movement is represented by the forest. It shelters all entities, gives them shared references and ensures a coherent whole.

The RCAAQ | Lake

The RCAAQ is like a lake. A source of support and help, it relies on others' experiences and supports the Centres in their realities and needs.

The Friendship Centres | Canoe

The canoe is a symbol for the Friendship Centres. It helps people navigate the realities of urban life, all the while providing a space for governance, solidarity and participation where each person has a role to play in the greater movement.

The real estate company and the community living environments | Tent and campfire

The tent and the fire are safe, welcoming and living spaces where shelter is paired with human-focused presence and support.

The Observatory | Eagle

The Observatory is like an eagle. Its vantage point to watch, analyze and shed light on the realities on the ground.

The CPE | Small animals

Small animals symbolize our children who are growing in a collective ecosystem where each and every one has a unique place, voice and role.



Affiliated Native Friendship Centres

In Quebec, 11 Native Friendship Centres and 3 community service points are brought together under the RCAAQ banner in 14 cities: 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.

Rooted in the communities they serve, these organizations carry out social, community and civic mandates and welcome Indigenous people of all nations, all genders and all ages. By offering a range of integrated and interconnected services, these Centres provide a culturally safe and relevant environment, making them crucial hubs for frontline services. They play a pivotal role in enhancing quality of life for urban Indigenous residents, promoting Indigenous cultures and bridging gaps between different communities.

These Centres embody the founding principles of cultural safety. They constitute Indigenous spaces of cooperation and democratic deliberation; their collegial and participatory organizational culture emphasizes agency and innovation; and all of their actions are guided by a commitment to sharing and a common goal of collective wellness. Their work is grounded not only in a deep understanding of the realities faced by Indigenous Peoples, but also in a holistic approach to appropriate respectful and safe services.

The RCAAQ

Since 1976, the RCAAQ is the provincial association of Native Friendship Centres. It has been advocating for the rights and interests of First Nations and Inuit in Quebec's cities, while actively supporting member Native Friendship Centres. The RCAAQ is a key partner for public authorities on urban Indigenous issues and a central player for ensuring equity in service delivery to Indigenous people in cities. Supporting and contributing to the development of concrete solutions and public policies, the RCAAQ strives to better document the presence, needs and realities of urban Indigenous people through consultations, research and evaluations.

The RCAAQ provides institutional support to each Centre and service point for their daily operations and interactions with their own local partners. Native Friendship Centres nonetheless maintain full autonomy in their actions, in a way that is respectful of their distinct local and regional realities.

The RCAAQ's real estate company and community living environments

By founding its real estate company, the Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec in 2019, the RCAAQ began its project to make housing more accessible to Indigenous people living in cities. The RCAAQ's real estate company is responsible for developing residential living environments specifically designed to support member First Nations and Inuit students living in urban areas. These environments offer far more than housing; they are true community spaces that are safe, culturally relevant and thoughtfully designed to foster school success, family wellness and cultural connection. These living environments also benefit from the RCAAQ's range of local services that address the realities and needs of Indigenous families living in urban areas.



The RCAAQ's Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities

The Observatory of Urban Indigenous Realities broadens knowledge on urban Indigenous realities and makes it accessible. It blends scientific knowledge with Indigenous worldviews to better understand the lived experience of First Nations people and Inuit in urban environments. Through research, storytelling, snapshots and other kinds of testimonials, the Observatory provides greater insight into today's Indigenous realities and the impact of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement's work.



The RCAAQ's early childcare centre

In 2024, the RCAAQ established an early childcare centre (CPE) to support Indigenous families in urban settings. The CPE carries out an educational, social, community and cultural mission that places the child and their family at the heart of a caring environment rooted in Indigenous cultures. This new institution also plays a strategic role in the development of future facilities to sustainably meet the needs of Indigenous families and help them thrive in Quebec cities.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN URBAN AREAS: AN UNDENIABLE REALITY

Urban Indigenous realities are now undeniably part of Quebec's demographic landscape. Nearly two thirds of Indigenous people now live in urban areas, and this population has grown steadily over the past few decades. Indigenous presence in cities is now a lasting and defining reality.

First Nations members and Inuit live in or pass through more than 50 towns and villages in Quebec, not just major urban centres. This presence takes various forms—permanent, temporary, seasonal or intermittent—and reflects many types of connection between the communities, traditional lands and urban areas.

This demographic shift is leading to growing needs for targeted services, housing, and culturally appropriate support and assistance to promote wellness in individuals, families and urban communities. It is in this context that the Native Friendship Centres and the RCAAQ play a vital role in supporting Indigenous communities living in Quebec's cities.



¹The logos represent the member organizations of the Movement in the primary urban areas in Quebec that Indigenous people live in and pass through.

²Martin Gagnon, Ioana Radu & Carole Lévesque. 2023. *Profil démographique de la population des Premières Nations et du Peuple Inuit dans les villes du Québec 2001 à 2021. Faits saillants*. Alliance de recherche ODENA and Réseau de recherche et de connaissances relatives aux peuples autochtones (DIALOG), Montréal.

50 towns and villages in Quebec are lived in or frequented by Indigenous people.

64 % of Indigenous people live in urban areas²

Between 2001 and 2021, the urban Indigenous population grew at an average rate of

7,2 % per year

This trend redefines service needs, especially in housing and culturally safe supports.

Urban Indigenous life is not marginal; it is both a defining and lasting phenomenon.

OUR FIVE FOCUS AREAS

Every day, the RCAAQ activates its expertise, leadership and network to improve the living conditions of Indigenous people in urban areas. Guided by the realities urban Indigenous populations face, the RCAAQ acts as a catalyst for change and solutions. Through our initiatives, we contribute to the development of relevant public policies, support the growth and sustainability of the Friendship Centre network, promote innovative service delivery and bring peoples closer together. These five complementary focus areas reflect the breadth of our commitment to Indigenous wellness and reconciliation.



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



Strengthening action through research, evaluation and knowledge



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



Fostering harmony between communities by celebrating Indigenous cultures



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

Influencing the drivers of change in Indigenous urban communities

In its strategic role, the RCAAQ acts as a bridge between urban Indigenous communities and public institutions, drawing on a deep understanding of the realities on the ground. At all levels of government, the RCAAQ leverages its governance structures and sustained presence in consultative forums to advance public policies that are better suited to Indigenous realities.

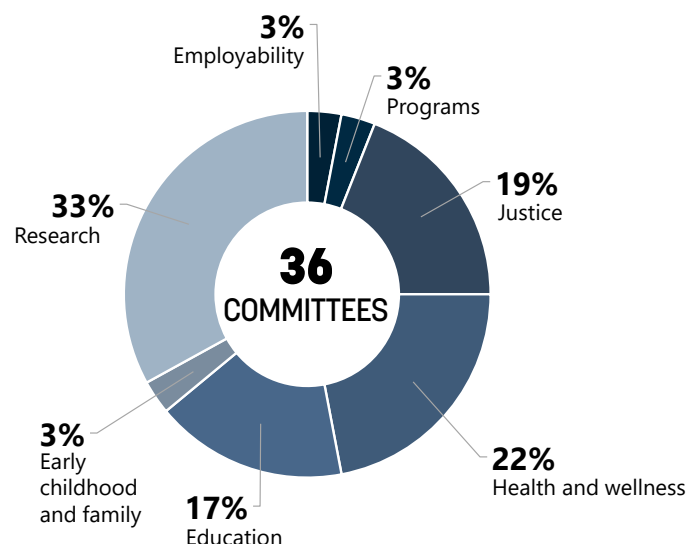
Playing a key role by fostering dialogue, representing interests and shaping policy, the RCAAQ sits on numerous committees, conducts research, produces analyses and supports the development of fundamental solutions to ensure that urban Indigenous realities stay central in long-term public policy decisions.

72 strategic meetings with partners

7 participations in consultations

36 committees and concertation bodies on which the RCAAQ sits

AN INFLUENCE IN SEVERAL KEY SECTORS



5 position papers tabled

Every one of our position papers, every time we took the mic and our every contribution was based on firsthand knowledge of Friendship Centre members' lived experience, making it possible to draw attention to issues that are often overlooked by decision-makers. The RCAAQ's position papers written during the year focused on key priorities:

Improving Indigenous people's living conditions and safety in urban areas

- *Vers une offre de logements inclusive et culturellement pertinente pour les femmes, les personnes bispirituelles et LGBTQIA+ autochtones en milieu urbain* [position paper on inclusive and culturally relevant housing for Indigenous women as well as two-spirit and LGBTQIA+ people in urban areas]
- Repairing Relationships, Securing Life Paths: Building a Community-based Response Adapted to the Sexual Exploitation of Indigenous People in Urban Settings

Ensuring fundamental funding and equity in public investment

- *Investissement social, prospérité économique: le rôle essentiel des Centres d'amitié autochtones* [position paper on social investment, economic prosperity and the essential role of Native Friendship Centres]
- Closing Persistent Gaps: Ensuring Investment in Health, Justice and Education for Indigenous People in Urban Settings

Developing the full potential of First Nations and Inuit

- *L'action des Centres d'amitié autochtones: un levier durable pour le développement du plein potentiel des membres des Premières Nations et Inuit* [position paper on the Native Friendship Centres' action as a sustainable lever for developing the full potential of First Nations and Inuit]

A national campaign for more appropriate policies

The RCAAQ collaborated with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) to gather more than 100 participants from nine provinces and three territories in Montréal on May 28 and 29, 2025, for the National Forum on Urban Indigenous Health Governance in Care, Health Services and Healing. This event highlighted Native Friendship Centres' vital role as the largest service infrastructure for urban Indigenous people in Canada. It was also a strategic opportunity to reiterate the importance of recognizing the distinct needs of Indigenous people living in urban areas, of the Centres' expertise in providing frontline services and of stable, flexible and recurring funding to support their work. By gathering leaders, partners and decision-makers from across the country, the RCAAQ and the NAFC furthered discussion on urban Indigenous health governance and the development of sustainable solutions that promote health, wellness and healing.



Harnessing knowledge to guide actions

The Observatory on Urban Indigenous Realities is a central component of the RCAAQ's work, and it has garnered recognition as a hub of expertise, for the richness of its publications and contributions and for the impact of its work in academic, institutional and community circles. Its distinctive strength lies in Etuaptmumk, or two-eyed seeing, which combines Indigenous and Western viewpoints to produce knowledge that is rigorous, relevant and directly linked to the lived experiences of Indigenous populations.

Beyond results, it is the Observatory's very approach to conducting research that sets it apart. By prioritizing a relationship-based approach, the organization forges trust with local communities, recognizes Indigenous knowledge and practices, and authors analyses that carefully consider cultural and territorial contexts. Over the past year, this approach was reflected in particular through collaboration with three Indigenous students, a lived experience expert and a scientist-in-residence, thereby strengthening the project's grounding in a diverse range of knowledge and experiences. Based

on relationships, active listening and collaborative development, this approach revitalizes the ways we evaluate, understand and take action.

The Observatory has also raised awareness of urban Indigenous issues through contributions to several initiatives focused on knowledge dissemination and transfer, namely through:

- 9 conferences
- 9 scientific articles authored or collaborations in publications
- many public productions, including the *Voi(x)es croisées* podcast and *À la poursuite de la santé*, a documentary film.

The Observatory therefore does more than just document lived experience: it actively contributes to changing research practices by favouring approaches that are more equitable, inclusive and conducive to Indigenous wellness.

The Observatory receives support from the Knowledge Circle, an advisory and collaborative body. Through its experience and deep knowledge of urban Indigenous realities, the Circle guides the Observatory's work, ensures its relevance and strengthens its cultural grounding.

Members of the Circle

- Alice Jérôme
Elder
- Jean Levasseur-Moreau
Centre MAMUK
- Bruno Lemieux
RCAAQ real estate company
- Anne-Marie Leclerc
Researcher at UQTR
- Treena Wasontio Delormier
Researcher at McGill
- Karine Awashish
Researcher and member of the Nitaskinan cooperative
- Leila Qashu
Tahatikohsontontie' ERRSA-Québec
- Nancy Gros-Louis McHugh
First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission



4 Knowledge Circle meetings

4 new research agreements



- » Issues and levers for meaningful Indigenous participation in health and social services governance in Canada and Quebec
- » *Kekocic ka kikehiwemakak*: Pathways of resilience to marital and family violence among Indigenous populations in the Lanaudière region of Quebec
- » Body image and well-being: The experience of Indigenous women in Quebec
- » Documenting the impact of living environments for families and students

Supporting and promoting the Indigenous knowledge by organizing the *Every Child Matters event*, in collaboration with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), to document the intergenerational and territorial transmission of knowledge between Elders and children, with the participation of the Friendship Centres in Chibougamau and Maniwaki (including the Gatineau point of service).



Gaining better understanding of Indigenous trajectories of homelessness to support action

The Observatory continued its work on trajectories of homelessness of Indigenous people in urban settings, focusing in particular on the dilemmas and complex decisions faced by individuals at risk of homelessness and their loved ones. This research sheds light on realities that are often overlooked, such as hidden homelessness, hypermobility, continuity of care failures, the effects of racism and discrimination, and difficulties in accessing affordable and culturally

safe housing. While acknowledging these obstacles, the study also highlights the strength of solidarity networks and the resilience of Indigenous individuals, families and communities. A literature review is currently underway to better document decision-making needs related to homelessness.

Nashpitshipanu: An intergenerational study on climate change

Elders are central to all activities in the Movement. Again this year, they have played a key role in guiding discussions on climate change in cities, working closely with youth from the Movement in an Observatory research project called Nashpitshipanu. Its goal is to initiate an intergenerational dialogue to find innovative solutions to the climate changes Indigenous people observe both in urban areas and on the land.



Approaches that make a difference

To address urgent and very real needs, the RCAAQ prioritizes approaches that emphasize community engagement, trust and cultural safety. It helps Native Friendship Centres implement concrete initiatives

that improve access to adapted services and bring about sustainable changes in practice.

Minukutitau Project

“ Having the clear eye of a healthy person to continue on one’s path. ”

The transformative Minukutitau Project aims to improve access to primary care for First Nations and Inuit living in urban areas. By focusing on the creation of a provincial network of Indigenous clinics and on engaging key partners, the project helps reduce the systemic barriers that limit access to culturally safe and adapted health services. Minukutitau also promotes the formation of strategic coalitions and advocacy that seek to bring about changes in public policy in the areas of prevention and

healthcare financing. This project reinforces the RCAAQ’s role with the Quebec and Canadian governments and its collaboration with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) in promoting a vision of health based on First Nations and Inuit self-determination, equity and wellness.

Partnership with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC)

This year, the RCAAQ welcomed members of the board of directors and the executive leadership of the FNQLHSSC to the Centre d’amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières and the Waska Witcihitowin Indigenous student living environment. This meeting shed light on the work we share, raised awareness of the impact of urban Native Friendship Centres and identified promising avenues for collaboration that would benefit Indigenous populations. The discussions laid the groundwork for a strategic alliance that would strengthen our complementary efforts and promote access to culturally safe health and wellness services for First Nations and Inuit, both in urban areas and the communities.



Restoring culture to its rightful place in the childbirth journey

The Notcin Project highlights an undeniable truth: supporting urban Indigenous families before and after their child is born means recreating spaces where traditions, knowledge and identity can manifest fully.

A province-wide consultation made it abundantly clear that families are concerned about staying connected to culture, tradition and identity in the city, where Indigenous-specific perinatal services are not available.

In light of this, the project worked to build capacity in Friendship Centres, through training and individualized support, to help develop services rooted in Indigenous knowledge, practices and cultural values.

Thanks to the project, local initiatives have emerged, driven by community engagement and local partnerships. In several Friendship Centres, new services related to pregnancy, childbirth and family support have been set up or strengthened, drawing on approaches deeply rooted in tradition, cultural transmission and community ties. These services have now become indispensable in several Centres, demonstrating their relevance and impact.

“ We are all bearers of tradition. We have a responsibility to keep them alive. ”

Mary Coon, Indigenous Elder



Renewal of the agreement for Indigenous health clinics at Friendship Centres



Set to expire in March 2025, the agreement with the Gouvernement de Québec was renewed. It ensures the continuity of basic services that complement the public system and reinforces culturally safe care approaches that draw on trust and Indigenous knowledge. It is also a reminder that stable and sustainable funding is key to consolidating progress and ensuring long-term viability.

Following the commitments made in 2021 in response to the Viens Commission (CERP) recommendations, this RCAAQ-administered agreement supports the vital role Native Friendship Centres play in providing Indigenous people with access to appropriate frontline services.

Concrete and measurable benefits

Data show that the activities held in the Friendship Centres in 2025–2026 had a wide range of impacts:

MORE THAN

7,000

psychosocial
interventions were
performed

MORE THAN

3,000

people received
care in our clinics

MORE THAN

2,000

trips were made to
medical appointments

MORE THAN

800

appointments in the
public network were
accompanied

300

interventions to help people
get a health insurance card
to improve their access to
health care

150

families received
perinatal care

GREATER ACCESS

to Indigenous medicines
or traditional healing

For people

**Better access. Ongoing care.
Strengthened prevention.**

- Easier and faster access to care
- More frequent and better-adapted medical follow-up appointments
- Better integration of prevention into daily life
- Consistent and continuous services

For the healthcare system

**A more effective, better-coordinated
and forward-looking response**

- Optimized use of public services
- Greater synergy among resources
- Smoother and better-coordinated care pathways
- Strategic insights to guide future decisions



Behind every appointment for clinical care service, a series of basic care provisions support access, connection, continuity, support and cultural safety.

Spaces for coming together, learning and sharing

Because lasting change is rooted in collective strength, the RCAAQ and the Native Friendship Centre Movement work to multiply opportunities for dialogue and reciprocal learning. By building lasting partnerships with government, institutions

and community players, we help create spaces for building solutions that are tailored to the realities of urban First Nations members and Inuit, while also bringing people closer together.

Living environments: A community and family ecosystem

The services integral to the RCAAQ's living environments go well beyond simply meeting housing needs. They fit into a holistic approach that transforms these places into true community living environments, where bonds are formed, knowledge is passed on and identities are strengthened.

In addition to providing safe and culturally rooted housing, these living environments give rise to mutual support and guidance at different stages of people's life journeys. Through human and cultural presence in the day-to-day, the RCAAQ's environments foster wellness and the inclusion of families, students and Elders.

6 living environments

2 are up and running, in Sept-Îles and Trois-Rivières, while 4 others are under development in Québec City, Chibougamau and Gatineau

74 housing units

with services support
Indigenous students and
their families

240 units under
development

Residents play a vital role in the living environment ecosystem

In each living environment, a residents' committee is actively involved in planning meaningful activities and projects. These committees play a key role in decision-making and mobilizing the community. Residents play an active role in their community, both individually and collectively.

Committees help strengthen residents'

- empowerment,
- sense of community belonging, and
- knowledge and skills, via meaningful projects.

IN 2025, MORE THAN

350 activities

were carried out to promote family wellness in the Nutshimit (Sept-Îles) and Waska Witcihitowin (Trois-Rivières) living environments

The committees meet needs expressed by the residents themselves, thus bringing participatory governance to life and making Indigenous voices heard in day-to-day organization.

A community-based, compassionate and prevention-focused approach

Our teams work right in the living environment, fostering lasting and trusting relationships with the people they support. This means consistent, reliable daily presence in the living environments.

These actions tangibly reduce the risks of school dropout, social isolation and housing instability.

This close presence leads to

- meaningful relationships with children, parents, students and Elders
- early identification of emerging needs, and
- early support to foster school retention.

Preventing, not fixing,
by taking action directly
where daily life takes place

MORE THAN
320 interventions
in 2025

Building the future with young people

Today's Indigenous youth are the leaders of tomorrow. By providing opportunities for young people to reconnect with their culture, engage with Elders and learn Indigenous knowledge and governance practices, the RCAAQ is preparing the next generation and supporting the emergence of leaders who are strong, committed and proud of their identity.

With this in mind, Makusham jeunesse 2025 brought together Indigenous youths, aged 14–18 and from various regions of Quebec, along with Elders and representatives from the RCAAQ and our Observatory for a collective reflection about climate change. By honouring Indigenous knowledge and placing it in conversation with science, the initiative broke down barriers between different perspectives on climate change and strengthened young people's ability to devise solutions that reflect urban Indigenous realities. Elders' stories and observations gave youth valuable insights to better understand the changes on the land and imagine the future.

Through culturally anchored activities, such as beading, carving paddles with a curved knife and holding sweat lodges, participants reconnected with their roots, celebrated their cultural heritage and strengthened their sense of belonging. Discussion among young people from various nations also broadened their understanding of different Indigenous realities, traditions and perspectives.

The event also highlighted the importance of the land, as the underpinning of Indigenous knowledge, cultures and governance systems. Encounters with Elders and with Knowledge Keepers have fostered intergenerational transmission and enabled youth to deepen their understanding of collective responsibilities, leadership and guiding values. As a result, Makusham jeunesse strengthened participants' cultural identity and gave them the tools to play an active role in the future of their Peoples and of urban Indigenous communities.

28 youths,
aged 12 to 18

9 interveners

9 Friendship
Centres represented



Support local initiatives, strengthen collective impact

The Native Friendship Centre Movement draws on the strength, expertise and ties to the community of each of its members. Each Centre, in its own way, responds to the needs and aspirations of the communities it serves by developing initiatives customized to local conditions. To support this vital action, the RCAAQ provides strategic guidance, promotes the pooling of expertise and supports the network's development while respecting its members' autonomy.

407 meetings to support and guide

the Native Friendship Centres in organizational capacity, programming, service delivery, research and evaluation.



Building collective expertise

The RCAAQ pursued its efforts to build capacity within the Friendship Centre Movement by providing teams with professional development opportunities tailored to their specific circumstances. Learning Circles have been redesigned to encourage broader participation and better address the challenges organizations encounter in the day-to-day. Now focusing on crosscutting themes, these peer-to-peer forums are opportunities to share experiences, insights and practices, while also developing the skills within the network.

Similarly, to support organizational growth and longevity, the RCAAQ has also rolled out a management program designed for the Movement's managers, coordinators and leaders. Focused on strengthening management skills in the areas of human resources, finance and operations, this program strives to give leaders the tools they need to navigate increasingly complex environments and effectively support development among their teams and services.

20 Learning Circles

including **4** for professionals working in the Friendship Centres' Indigenous health clinics

19 training sessions and events

4 Management Pathway cohorts

In September 2025, the ***Our Cultures in Movement*** event gathered 170 members of the Native Friendship Centre Movement to discuss Indigenous languages and cultures, a theme that is both central and crosscutting to all of our efforts. The gathering was an opportunity to take the discussion further, sketching out a shared vision of culture and highlighting the role of languages, traditional knowledge and cultural grounding in urban Indigenous governance. The lessons learned and orientations brought out became the foundation for the RCAAQ's new cultural strategy.



"I really liked how we shared knowledge as a team, and the sense of belonging to a big family working toward the same goal: reclaiming our language and culture so they are not lost as time goes on."

Participant



“ Together, feeling all our cultures in movement—it was powerful. The discussions, workshops and encounters... everything reminded me of why we do this work: for our families, children, communities and traditions. I’m leaving with a heart full of gratitude, many new ideas and a renewed sense of belonging. ”

Participant

A cultural strategy to guide the Movement's actions

During the year, the RCAAQ led an extensive reflection and action process that led to the development of a provincial cultural strategy. Drafted with the Friendship Centres and many members, this initiative helped reaffirm the central role of Indigenous languages, cultures and knowledge in developing urban Indigenous settings. Reflecting the view that urban areas are legitimate spaces for Indigenous life, for putting down roots and for passing on culture, the strategy proposes a framework for collective action that is based on seven interconnected pillars: land, relations, rhythm, languages, art, knowledge and identity. More than a planning tool, this strategy is the

foundation on which are based all the Movement's other orientations, be it in health and wellness, education and youth supports, family guidance, justice, or skills development and social participation. The cultural strategy thus strengthens our collective capacity to promote self-determination, cultural vitality and wellness among First Nations members and Inuit in urban areas.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR NETWORK

Indigenous cultures are at the heart of the work of the Friendship Centre Movement. They are not limited to cultural activities; rather, our cultures inspire how we support families, assist young people, promote health, foster identity-based pride, increase self-determination and empower individuals and communities. Throughout Quebec, the Centres embody this vision. They develop initiatives rooted in

the very knowledge, languages, values and traditions that shape Indigenous identities. The highlights presented here reflect these vibrant cultures, which run through all areas of activity and form the common foundation for the Centres' work.



Health and wellness



Through its domestic and family violence prevention program, the **Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre** supported families in taking key steps to ensure their safety and wellness, particularly in terms of housing, parenting support and access to specialists. By adopting an approach that takes into account the social determinants influencing families' lived experiences, the Friendship Centre is promoting safety, increasing wellness and developing lasting protection factors.



Thanks to work by the **Centre d'amitié autochtone Capetciwotakanik – La Tuque** team and sector partners, a child was born in a planned and safe birth on the land. This first in over 50 years marked significant cultural reclamation and reconnection with traditional birthing practices.



In launching its Family Nest Program, **Native Montréal** provided families with a gathering space designed to strengthen parent-child bonds and build a peer-support network. A wellness navigator on site and appointments held directly in the clinic exemplify the holistic health approach, as these factors ensure ready access to support and resources tailored to families' needs.

School retention and success



The **Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière** launched the Maskosiwin educational caravan, an outreach initiative designed to reach Indigenous youth and families right in their communities. It is a powerful tool for strengthening young people's cultural identity, promoting their wellness and supporting their overall development.



The launch by the **RCAAQ real estate company** of two community living environments for Indigenous students—one on the Université Laval campus in Québec City and the other in Chibougamau—illustrates its beyond-housing approach. With the start of construction on a living environment for families in Loretteville, these projects transform housing into a catalyst for belonging, empowerment and collective wellness.

Early childhood and family



The **Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre** opened an eco-friendly cottage for early childhood activities on its Shabogamak site, marking an important milestone. Designed as a place for discovery, healing and cultural transmission, this space allows children to grow close to nature in a way that nurtures their cultural identity.

Justice and the promotion and defence of rights



With three new staff members, the expansion of the legal team at the **Centre MAMUK**, has increased the Friendship Centre's capacity to support members with legal matters. Through support, prevention activities and the provision of legal information, and by refining its practice in trauma-informed and culturally safe interventions, the team makes the legal process more accessible, respectful and attuned to Indigenous needs.

Transmission of Indigenous knowledge and cultures



The **Chibougamau Eenu Friendship Centre** organized a Walking Out Ceremony with families, loved ones and community members around a meaningful tradition, highlighting the importance of identity, belonging and cultural transmission. By opening this event to the general public, the Centre created a chance to forge lasting bonds between peoples and showcased the richness of Indigenous cultures.



The **Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles** held a cultural week for all ages, with workshops on traditional cooking, bannock-making, beading and other cultural activities. By weaving cultural activities into daily life, this event strengthened community members' sense of belonging, identity-based pride and intergenerational bonds.

Social change



Working with the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles and several local partners, the **Centre d'amitié autochtone de Manicouagan** relaunched the Local Table on Service Accessibility for Urban Indigenous People. This effort reflects a shared commitment to building bridges among local actors, strengthening collaboration and promoting community wellness.



The **Centre d'amitié autochtone de Trois-Rivières** celebrated the first anniversary of the Cawonok charter of commitment, which aims to improve the quality and cultural safety of services provided to Indigenous people in urban areas. By engaging networks in the health, education and community sectors, it fosters lasting relationships based on respect and dialogue.



After several years of work and advocacy, the Anwatan-Miguam Centre, at the **Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre**, has been completed, marking the culmination of a major homelessness prevention project for First Nations. Its upcoming opening will expand housing and services tailored to Indigenous needs in Val-d'Or.



SUSTAINED GROWTH AND REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

In 2025–2026, the RCAAQ experienced steady growth in its activities while maintaining sound financial management. The result was a 25% increase in net assets—now amounting to \$2.33M—and demonstrating our ability to manage significant public funds transparently, efficiently and responsibly, for the benefit of urban Indigenous communities.

The RCAAQ's revenue reflects the trust placed in it by its financial partners and the growing relevance of its work among urban Indigenous communities. Derived primarily from agreements with the governments of Canada and Quebec, these funds help support Native Friendship Centres' service delivery, infrastructure project development and capacity building. Every dollar allocated helps provide culturally relevant services, support promising initiatives and generate tangible benefits for individuals, families and urban communities. Managed in accordance with recognized governance, financial oversight and accountability practices, these funds are rigorously administered to maximize their impact on the ground.

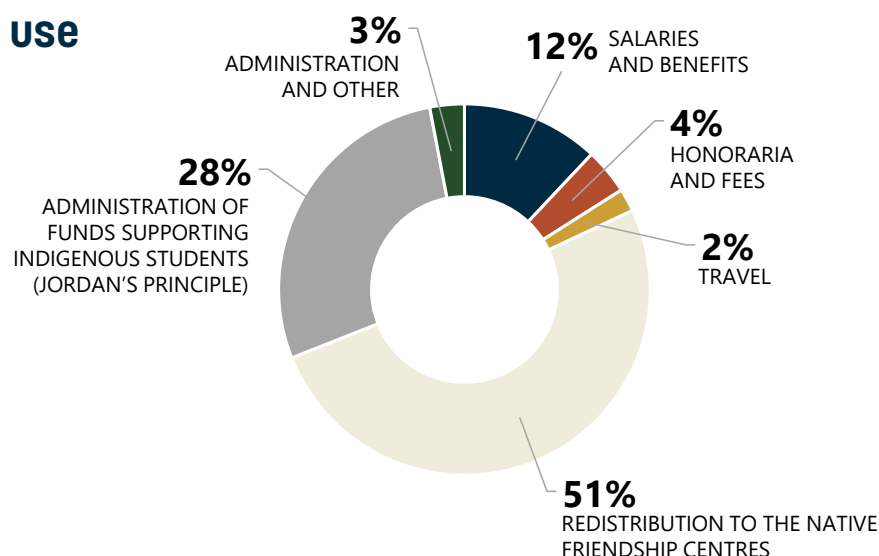
28 funding agreements

The management of these agreements reflects the RCAAQ's organizational maturity and the effectiveness of its governance practices. Each agreement is subject to rigorous monitoring, both financially and in terms of results, to ensure the responsible use of public funds and compliance with commitments to donors and partners.

30 M\$ redistributed to the Native Friendship Centres

and to various organizations to support service delivery, project implementation and the development of initiatives that address the needs of urban Indigenous communities. This amount underscores the RCAAQ's strategic role as a trustee and manager of public funds, ensuring that investments are turned into tangible benefits.

Allocation and use of funds





Trusting partners



Responsible governance



Rigorous management



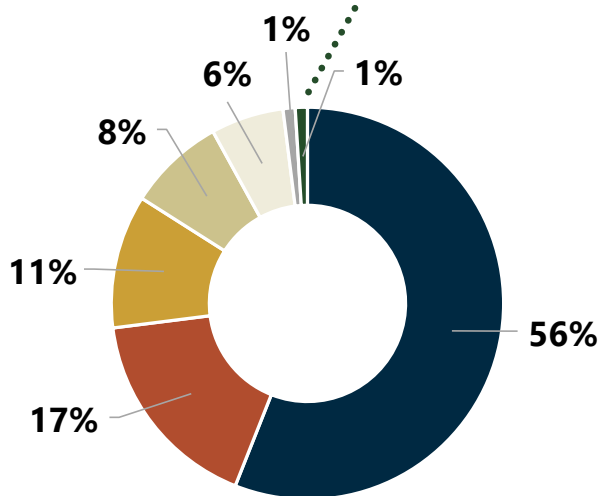
Concrete impact



The results demonstrate our ability to manage significant funds transparently, efficiently and responsibly, for the benefit of urban Indigenous communities.

Distribution by sector

• Culture is the common thread running through all the RCAAQ's work
• Present in each of our initiatives, Indigenous cultures transcend our areas of focus and guide our work with urban First Nations and Inuit communities. The investments presented here illustrate the diversity of our areas of activity; they also reflect a shared vision in which Indigenous culture, knowledge and identities remain at the heart of every initiative, service and project.



- HOLISTIC HEALTH AND WELLNESS
- SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS
- EDUCATION, EMPLOYABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING
- LEADERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT
- EARLY CHILDHOOD, FAMILY AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES
- JUSTICE, CRIME PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
- CULTURE, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL SAFETY

LEADERSHIP THAT INSPIRES

The awards received this year highlight the impact of the people who keep the Native Friendship Centres Movement thriving every day. Whether they highlight individual or collective achievements, they demonstrate the indispensable role of the Friendship Centres as agents of change, reconciliation and social innovation throughout Quebec.

Recipients of the King Charles III's Coronation Medal

- Jennifer Brazeau
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière
- Edith Cloutier
Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Dominique Rankin
Elder
- Aby-Gaelle Jerome
Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles
- Nancy Jourdain
Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones
du Québec



Executive director of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière, Jennifer Brazeau is one of the 20 nonprofit managers driving change in 2025, according to ESPACE OBNL.

Through her committed leadership, ability to rally support for Indigenous issues and dedication to building bridges between communities, Jennifer actively contributes to a more just and equitable society.

The innovative work of the clinic at the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière was recognized in the IRIS report *L'accès aux soins de santé et aux services sociaux dans Lanaudière*. Hailed as an inspiring example of the holistic health approach, the clinic demonstrates the power of culturally safe care models that meet the needs of urban Indigenous communities, and it serves as inspiration to the entire network.



The Prix Profession Santé 2025 Interprofessional Community Team category

The team of the Native Montréal for its innovative approach that places cultural safety and Indigenous realities at the heart of health services. This distinction underscores the importance of providing care that is grounded in Indigenous cultures, knowledge and needs.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this report, one consistent theme emerges clearly: cultures are central to change. Far more than just a legacy to be preserved, they serve as a catalyst for transformation, healing and resilience. The progress made this year, particularly in health, demonstrates the tangible impact of the Movement's approaches in improving the living conditions of urban Indigenous populations. This progress also points out that promoting health involves much more than meeting physical needs: the determinants of wellness are also social, cultural, educational and legal. Our actions—whether supporting educational success, promoting access to justice, strengthening intergenerational ties or creating inclusive living environments—foster the conditions Indigenous communities need to thrive.

By focusing on culturally safe services, Indigenous leadership and innovative solutions, the Movement will pursue its mission to build strong, inclusive communities rooted in their cultures. Building on 50 years of achievements and shared commitment, we move forward with confidence, guided by the richness of our cultures and the conviction that the most promising solutions arise from the expertise, knowledge and aspirations of Indigenous people themselves.

