

**The new *Programme d'aide aux Autochtones en milieu urbain*:
Acknowledgement of urban Aboriginal realities**

Wendake, October 17, 2016 – The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) congratulates the Government of Quebec for its *Programme d'aide aux Autochtones en milieu urbain*, a new funding program for urban Aboriginal organizations, thereby fulfilling the province's commitment to a nearly 9-million-dollar investment, as foreseen in its 2016–2017 budget. The program is specifically intended to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal people living in Quebec's cities and towns by providing the community organizations serving these citizens the means to offer them direct and quality services.

“After the whirlwind of the Val-d'Or events, the launch of this program is a step in the right direction. It truly acknowledges women's and all urban Aboriginal citizens' reality, a reality around which the RCAAQ has been working to raise the awareness of government bodies for nearly 40 years,” notes Christine Jean, President of the RCAAQ. Given the constant growth of Quebec's urban Aboriginal population, the needs and concerns about service accessibility are very real, particularly in the health, social services, education, employability and the legal sectors. Making sure that these services are offered in culturally relevant and culturally safe ways in our cities is key to reaching this clientele. “There is a major gap between Aboriginal people and other Quebecers in terms of physical, psychological and socio-economic wellbeing indicators. The *Programme d'aide aux Autochtones en milieu urbain* will help community organizations, such as the Native Friendship Centres, take frontline action with Aboriginal citizens, including women,” Ms. Jean points out.

The Native Friendship Centres are direct service hubs for Aboriginal citizens living in or passing through Quebec's cities and towns. Every day, the Native Friendship Centres welcome Aboriginal people in urban areas by offering them support and guidance via a continuum of over 50 culturally relevant and safe services in a multiservice setting. While Ms. Jean feels that today's announcement is a sign of progress, she reminds us that concerted action within the Government of Quebec on the urban Aboriginal issue is nonetheless crucial.

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec groups seven Native Friendship Centres and one service point. Its members are found in Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Montréal, Senneterre, Sept Îles, Trois-Rivières et Val-d'Or. Two Friendship Centres are currently being developed in Roberval and Maniwaki. The Native Friendship Centres of Quebec works to improve the quality of life of urban Aboriginal people, promote their culture and build bridges between peoples.

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