

**Provincial budget 2017-2018:
Reactions of the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec**

Wendake, March 29, 2017 – The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) indicated that it is satisfied with the announced budgetary measures intended for the Aboriginal population for fiscal year 2017-2018. The budget includes positive elements and a consistent response in the wake of recent events in the Aboriginal communities.

The RCAAQ welcomes the amounts allocated through the Aboriginal Initiatives Fund with an investment of \$135 million in addition to \$60 million as part of the provincial government's action plan on Aboriginal social development over the next five years. The Budget 2017-2018 also provides for measures to combat poverty and social exclusion by improving the living standards of vulnerable populations. The RCAAQ emphasized the recognition for the specificities and realities that are specific to Aboriginal people with regard to poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, the budget provides for an investment dedicated to the construction and renovation of housing for vulnerable households including Aboriginal populations.

The President of the RCAAQ, Ms. Christine Jean, provided a positive assessment of the measures planned for the Aboriginal communities. "This government support is the result of an additional effort by the Government of Quebec to get involved in Aboriginal social development. The Native Friendship Centres will certainly have an important role to play for Aboriginal people in the cities to improve the range of services, community action and citizen participation, among other things," emphasized Ms. Jean. "The official announcement regarding the amount to be allocated to the provincial government's action plan on Aboriginal social development will provide Aboriginal community organizations, including the Native Friendship Centres, with additional capacity to intervene among the local Aboriginal community and to consolidate their ranges of culturally relevant and safe services. It remains to be seen how these measures will actually be deployed on the ground," added Ms. Tanya Sirois, Executive Director of the RCAAQ.

The RCAAQ hopes that these investments will respond to the emerging needs of Aboriginal people living in or passing through urban areas, considering the fact that the majority of the First Nations in Quebec lives in cities.

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec unites seven member Native Friendship Centres and one service point in the following cities: Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Montreal, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and Val-d'Or. Two Native Friendship Centres are currently being developed in the cities of Roberval and Maniwaki. The mission of the Native Friendship Centres of Quebec is to improve the quality of life of urban Aboriginal peoples, promote culture and foster reconciliation between peoples.

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