

REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC



MINO MADJÏ8IN :

For the Well-treatment and Respect
of Our Urban Aboriginal Elders



Position paper submitted by the RCAAQ to the Secrétariat aux aînés
(Ministère de la Famille) in connection with the renewal of the Governmental
Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse (2017-2022)

May 2016

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Table of Contents

The Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement	4
The RCAAQ	6
Background	8
Elders: at the heart of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement	8
Theme 1: Reaching out to Aboriginal Elders in urban areas	14
Priority issues	14
Promising practices.....	15
Recommendations.....	15
Theme 2: Fostering a culture of well-treatment of Aboriginal Elders.....	16
Priority issues	16
Promising practices.....	16
Recommendations.....	17
Theme 3: Strengthening actions to counter the financial or material abuse of Aboriginal Elders	19
Priority issues	19
Promising practices.....	19
Recommendations.....	19
Theme 4: Meeting Aboriginal Elders' needs in a context of social diversity	20
Priority issues	20
Promising practices.....	22
Recommendations.....	22
Summary of recommendations	23
References	26





The Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement

Native Friendship Centres (NFC) seek to improve the quality of life of urban Aboriginals, promote our culture, and foster mutual understanding between peoples.

This mission is articulated through a continuum of culturally relevant services, supported by a philosophy of empowerment within a context of multi-service delivery.



Since its beginnings more than 60 years ago, the native friendship centre movement has been the largest infrastructure of services for Aboriginals in Canada's urban centres. Including those in Quebec, there are 118 native friendship centres (NFC) across the country.

In Quebec and the rest of Canada, NFCs are urban multi-service outlets for Aboriginals with an "open-door policy" that welcome First Nations, Métis and Inuit regardless of status, nation or place of origin.

NFCs actively contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of the areas in which they are located. To carry out their missions and ensure a continuity of services, NFCs collaborate actively with the key stakeholders in their respective regions.

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) groups all of Canada's NFCs, while the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) oversees those in Quebec.

There are nine NFCs and one service point in Quebec. Located in Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Montréal, Québec, Saguenay, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and Val d'Or, they offer a continuum of more than 40 culturally relevant services in the areas of early childhood, youth, health and social services, education, training and employment. Two NFCs are currently under development in Roberval and Maniwaki.





Culturally relevant

The culturally relevant approach depends first and foremost on stakeholders' ability to achieve a true understanding of Aboriginals' historical, legal, political, economic and social contexts. This understanding must then be maintained to grasp its effects on unique individuals. In other words, the strategies used must take into account individuals, the contexts in which they exist and the ways in which these contexts affect those individuals seeking support, assistance or advice (RCAAQ, 2014).

Culturally safe

The culturally safe approach consists of building trust with Aboriginals and recognizing the roles played by socioeconomic conditions, history and service delivery policies. Ensuring cultural safety requires us to recognize that we are all bearers of culture. This approach is based on respectful participation, as well as on an understanding of the power imbalance inherent in service delivery and institutional discrimination, and that these inequities must be remedied by making changes to the system (RCAAQ, 2014).



Mino Madji8in

In the Anishnabe language, «*Mino Madji8in*» signifies an overall sense of harmonious and balanced well-being. This concept has a special resonance in most Aboriginal languages in Quebec.

Reflecting the spirit of our ancestors, *Mino Madji8in* is a specifically Aboriginal way of being and of understanding and interacting in the world in keeping with our traditional and contemporary values. *Mino Madji8in* evokes both a state of mind and a certainty that well-being consists of cultivating our desire to live in harmony with all things, as well as with time and space. This quest for well-being, whether individual or collective, is based on achieving a balance between the various aspects of the Circle of Life and how they interact; it is physically expressed in a type of perpetual motion that is able to find an anchor point without ever becoming permanently fixed in place.

Mino Madji8in is at the heart of efforts to promote social inclusion in Aboriginal communities. It is part and parcel of a dynamic in which individuals develop much like communities, with a view to achieving an overall sense of well-being that is both harmonious and integrated.





The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec

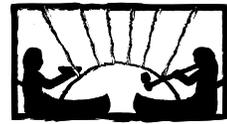
As Quebec's provincial association, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) has been working for 40 years to defend the rights and interests of urban Aboriginals in Quebec and support the NFCs across the province. Positioned as a key representative for urban Aboriginals and recognized by the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL)¹, the RCAAQ is a leader in the citizen movement of urban Aboriginals. Our mission has provided us with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and issues affecting the urban Aboriginal population.

The RCAAQ implements innovative and proactive strategies to meet the needs of urban Aboriginals and supports the development and implementation of province-wide programs and projects while providing NFCs with technical advice, support and resources. Representing NFCs in Quebec, the RCAAQ establishes partnerships at provincial and national levels, as well as with various government and Aboriginal authorities.

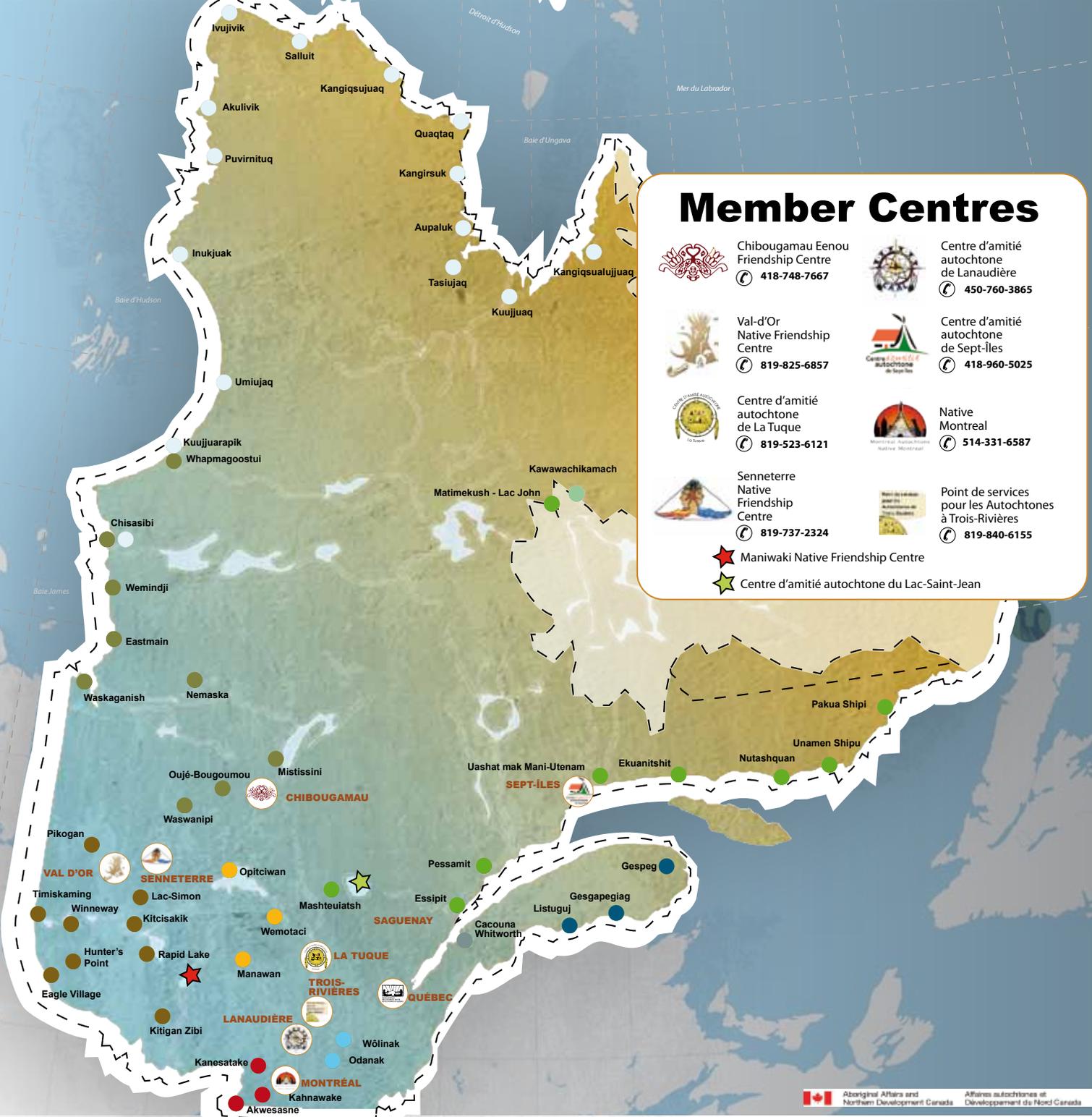
The RCAAQ and the NFCs are democratic and non-partisan Aboriginal organizations.

¹ In May 2005, the RCAAQ and the AFNQL signed a relationship agreement by which the RCAAQ was recognized as having a pivotal role in addressing First Nations urban issues in Quebec.

The Native Friendship Centre Movement of Quebec



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Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada / Affaires autochtones et Développement du Nord Canada



Background

In April 2016, the Secrétariat aux aînés, a division of Quebec's Ministère de la Famille, launched a consultation process for a second concerted action plan with various organizations working on behalf of seniors. In 2017, Quebec is slated to launch a new five-year Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse.

This position paper sets out certain promising practices and recommendations concerning the status of Aboriginal Elders living in urban areas in Quebec.

Elders: at the heart of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement

Native Friendship Centres recognize the importance of Elders, not only for their knowledge and experience, but also for their key role in ensuring the vitality and well-being of their families, communities and nations. Since Elders are the guardians of learning, multiple generations turn to them as the primary source of traditional knowledge, wisdom and cultural continuity. The RCAAQ's network and democratic bodies favour Elders' participation, thanks to the presence of an Elder in our governance structure.

All activities, programs and services organized by the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement are culturally relevant and safe. Relations between NFCs and their members are based on trust and respect. Consequently, NFCs reach out to Aboriginals in urban areas and propose concrete solutions designed to strengthen their social and economic security net.

Elder abuse issues warrant examination from an Aboriginal as well as an urban perspective. In this regard, response strategies must be considered from a more holistic perspective, i.e. by understanding all aspects of Aboriginal Elders' lives.





“I have always felt like the Elders’ teachings and the knowledge they hand down are the very basis of our beliefs and culture. Future generations need a circle of happy and healthy Elders! Let’s give the Elders a central role in our lives, in keeping with the spirit of sharing knowledge and wisdom, and with the respect that has always characterized our intergenerational exchanges.”

- T8aminik (Dominique) Rankin, Senator of the National Association of Friendship Centres and RCAAQ Elder



Photo credit: Marie-Claude Bernier

Urban Aboriginals

In Quebec and the rest of Canada, the phenomenon of Aboriginal migration to urban areas has grown steadily for many years. In Canada as a whole, 60% of Aboriginals live “off reserve” (Statistics Canada, 2011). In Quebec, more than half (53.2%) of First Nations members live in urban areas (CCPNIMT, 2015). Some 50 cities or towns in Quebec are inhabited or frequented by Aboriginals. Montréal has a population of more than 26,000 Aboriginals, including 1,200 Inuit, while Québec is home to nearly 6,500 Aboriginals. Their numbers are also significant in a number of regional centres such as Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Roberval, Saguenay, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and Val-d’Or.





The Aboriginal population is mobile. The primary reasons for migrating to urban areas are education (35.4%), work (24.6%) and housing (11.1%), while Aboriginals return to their communities of origin for family-related and cultural reasons (First Nations Regional Health Survey for Quebec, 2008). The concept of “area of territorial influence” developed by the Réseau de recherche et de connaissances relatives aux peuples autochtones (DIALOG network) sheds some light on mobility dynamics. An area of territorial influence is delineated not only by socioeconomics, but also by the services provided to the Aboriginal population. This term takes into consideration all types of relations between Aboriginals and urban areas. Mapping out the areas of territorial influence of Quebec’s NFCs shows that the presence of a Native Friendship Centre transforms the dynamics and patterns of mobility of Aboriginal individuals and families. NFCs serve as hubs towards which Aboriginals converge, whether they are residing permanently or temporarily in urban areas or simply passing through. Consequently, the Aboriginal population served by a NFC greatly exceeds the number of Aboriginals reported by Statistics Canada in the areas where NFCs are located (Levesque et al., 2012).

We know that the presence of Aboriginals in urban areas is not static and, in fact, in various cities and communities, it is very much in flux. This constant movement has a major impact on the need for services in urban areas, as well as on their quality and quantity. In addition to providing services to Aboriginals living permanently in urban areas, organizations must also expand their services to include more transient individuals (over the short, medium or long term) and must forge links with community based service providers to establish an effective continuum of services for Aboriginals passing through urban areas. There are four categories of personal relocation characterizing the Aboriginal presence in urban areas :

- **Occasional or transitory relocation**, which applies to the vast majority of Aboriginals, who relocate for medical or work reasons, to pursue education or training, to purchase goods, to deal with government agencies, etc.
- **Forced relocation**, associated with difficult living conditions that may be experienced in Aboriginal communities (domestic violence, lack of adequate services, individuals with decreasing autonomy, overcrowded housing, unemployment, addiction problems, etc.).

- **Involuntary relocation**, resulting from legal decisions (placing children in foster homes, individuals being released from prison or jail away from their communities of origin, women who lost their Indian Status prior to 1985, etc.).
- **Voluntary temporary or definitive relocation**, stemming from a deliberate relationship choice, from the desire to pursue post-secondary studies or to gain access to a larger labour market and from any other “differentiated” advantage over life in the community of origin.

Alongside Aboriginal migration to cities is the growing reality of Aboriginals born and raised in urban areas but who nonetheless proudly identify as Aboriginal and show interest in their culture.

In addition, a significant increase in the Aboriginal population was seen in the wake of the Supreme Court’s *Mclvor* ruling, handed down in 2008. Under this ruling, Indian status was granted to a generation that had not previously had access to it. In other words, the growth of the Aboriginal population in urban areas is not exclusively caused by exodus from the communities, but rather from the number of Aboriginals who were already living in urban areas and acquired Indian status just recently (Levesque et al., 2012).

There is a significant gap between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals for many physical, psychological and socio-economic well-being indicators. This reality is all too visible in NFCs. Aboriginals who frequent NFCs tend to be vulnerable and are usually facing personal and social obstacles. A psychosocial services needs assessment carried out by the Native Friendship Centre Movement showed that 65% of individuals frequenting NFCs had not graduated from secondary school and were facing significant personal difficulties, whether emotional or psychological (51%), financial (58%), substance abuse (26%) or domestic violence (12%) (RCAAQ, 2009). This assessment confirms that NFCs are places of choice for reaching urban Aboriginals in vulnerable situations.

Aboriginal realities are marked by the past, including unequal power relations, barriers, racism, discrimination, identity loss and structural alienation (Cunningham et al., 2009). Centuries of colonial policies and practices aimed at ensuring dispossession of territory, culture and identity were designed to exclude Aboriginals and push them to the





margins of society in Quebec and the rest of Canada. The imposition of the Indian Act and the residential schools are prime examples of policies and practices that caused severe trauma, which has been handed down from generation to generation and still hinder Aboriginals' equality today (NCCAH, 2015). The findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and its 94 calls to action underscore the significant structural inequalities Aboriginal face (TRC, 2012, 2015a).

There are multiple approaches that could improve the living conditions of Aboriginal Elders in urban areas. Initiatives within the Native Friendship Centre Movement are focused on providing assistance, fostering empowerment and bringing about social transformation. The combination of these three goals allows us to provide a short-term response to Aboriginals' needs while engaging them in a medium-to-long-term process of empowerment and social transformation that favours the development of individuals and communities.

Brief description of Aboriginal Elders in urban or periurban settings

While Aboriginal peoples make up approximately 3% of Canada's population, Aboriginal Elders represent only 1% of all Elders. In Quebec, Aboriginals are regarded as Elders as soon as they reach age 55. The proportion of Elders is estimated at 14.7% of the population, or approximately 12,800 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2001).

In other words, Aboriginal Elders are comparatively fewer than non-Aboriginal Elders. In 2001, only 4% of Aboriginals were 65 years of age or older, compared with 13% of non-Aboriginals (Statistics Canada, 2001). In 2011, Aboriginal Elders aged 65 or older represented 9% of the population, compared with 25% of non-Aboriginals (Dinsdale et al., 2011). These disparities raise disturbing questions about life expectancy among Aboriginals and about their socio-economic conditions (Statistics Canada, 2001). In this regard, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called upon "the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities (...). Such efforts would focus on indicators such as (...) life expectancy" (TRC, 2012, Call to Action 19).



Photo credit : Point de services pour
les Autochtones à Trois-Rivières

In 2006, 5% of Aboriginal women were age 65 or older, compared with 15% of non-Aboriginal women. However, the number of female Aboriginal Elders, although relatively low, doubled from 1996 to 2006, while the number of female Elders within the non-Aboriginal population grew by 20%. As in the non-Aboriginal population, women make up a majority of Aboriginal Elders. In 2006, 55% of Aboriginals aged 65 or older were women. More specifically, women accounted for 56% of First Nations Elders and 51% of Métis and Inuit Elders aged 65 or older (O'Donnell et al., 2011). Female Aboriginal Elders face marginalization on multiple fronts: not only as women within their community of origin, but also as Aboriginals within Canadian society.

In general, Elders are more likely to suffer abuse, but are less likely to report it. The rate of victimization reported to the police is lower among Elders, and the risk of being a victim of a violent crime is higher among female Elders than among their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Since most Aboriginal Elders are women, the rate of victimization among Elders is definitely much higher than the official statistics would indicate. This is all the more true in the case of Aboriginals, who, for obvious cultural and historical reasons, often have strained relations with public services and are often reluctant to avail themselves of services provided by governments and their agencies.

In submitting this position paper, the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement wishes to share information on promising practices that have contributed to the welfare of urban Aboriginal Elders. It also proposes a number of recommendations aimed at ensuring that the new Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse offers a culturally relevant response to the needs of Aboriginal Elders in urban areas.





THEME 1: Reaching out to Aboriginal Elders in urban areas

Priority issues

During the 2010 survey conducted by the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) on the living conditions of First Nations Elders in Quebec, nearly half of the respondents mentioned that Elders are housed in senior living facilities outside their communities of origin (FNQLHSSC, 2010). Chronic physical health problems and resulting complications account for this. This situation presents numerous difficulties for Elders, including loneliness, isolation, linguistic barriers, non-traditional diet, lost culture and traditions, distance from family and community members, depression and a loss of the continuum of care offered in their community of origin.

Certain Elders leave their community and relocate to cities to access the healthcare they need. These individuals may have to stay in urban areas for several days or months, depending on their health conditions. In addition, some leave their community to follow family members, who often decide to move to the city in search of a better life (for study or employment purposes, for instance). Regardless of the context or environment in which Aboriginals live, NFCs are places of choice where problems can be detected or prevented and where effective intervention can be provided.

Promising practices

- ▶ NFCs can help to end Elders' isolation by organizing group get-togethers and discussions, focusing specifically on abuse issues. The **NFC in Val-d'Or** and the **NFC in Lanaudière** are two cases in point.
- ▶ The **NFC in Sept-Îles** offers a free weekly meal to Elders to end their social isolation and enable them to spend time with their peers. The Elders also help to prepare the meals. The NFC staff members offer transportation services on a voluntary basis.



- ▶ NFCs create environments in which bonds of trust are forged between Elders and staff members, thereby facilitating the delivery of personalized support.
- ▶ The **Minowé and Acokan clinics** (run by the NFCs in Val-d’Or and La Tuque) provide a wide range of culturally relevant and safe healthcare services and reach out to the Aboriginal population in these urban areas, including Elders.

Recommendations

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should recognize** the RCAAQ as a partner of choice on issues facing urban Aboriginal Elders.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should recognize** that NFCs are places where the abuse of Aboriginal Elders living in urban areas can be detected and prevented.





THEME 2: Fostering a culture of well-treatment of Aboriginal Elders

Priority issues

Fostering a culture of well-treatment of Elders using promotion of this concept in the urban Aboriginal population would be a major step in ensuring the social inclusion of and respect for Aboriginal Elders. In this regard, the Native Friendship Centre Movement's continuum of urban services includes activities that promote the well-treatment of Aboriginal Elders.

In addition, ensuring the well-treatment of our Elders calls for the organization of group get-togethers, not only involving Elders, but also Aboriginal adults and youth (recreation, arts and crafts, workshops, information sessions, community kitchens, etc.). These activities give Elders a chance to come together, socialize and recognize the importance of transferring knowledge to younger generations.

As culturally safe places, NFCs already play a key role in preventing Elder abuse. That Yayenra' workshops (see insert) are not only well attended, but that attendees speak and actively participate attests to Elders' interest in this issue. NFCs play a pivotal role in providing information and support. They also offer people opportunities to improve their knowledge of their rights and the available resources, in addition to providing individual assistance, guidance and spaces that are conducive to discussion.

Promising practices

- **Do8dei8in** : The NFC of Val-d'Or is setting up a program to prevent the isolation of Elders through cultural and social activities focused on knowledge sharing, recognition and network creation. Do8dei8in means visiting and exchanging knowledge. Aboriginal Elders are a valuable resource for the entire community. This project is organized around activities to foster Elders' social participation, strengthen intergenerational relationships and improve Elders' living conditions.



- ▶ **The NFC in Senneterre (CEAAS)** offers a program of Elders-only activities designed to foster a culture of well-treatment and social inclusion. Traditional activities are organized two days a week in a cottage outside of town. Each year, Elders help design a community quilt based on traditional life scenes, thereby recognizing the participation of each Elder. The CEAAS also offers Elders use of the cottage to commemorate the death of a loved one in keeping with Aboriginal traditions. In addition, activities designed to share expertise with younger generations serve to promote respect for Elders and intergenerational communication.
- ▶ **Kinawit-Anicinabe mackiki** : Sharing traditional knowledge and identity-based pride through an educational project and activities on medicinal plants, the Kinawit-Anicinabe mackiki project is geared towards Aboriginals living in the Vallée-de-l'Or MRC, including the towns of Val-d'Or, Malartic and Senneterre, and more specifically towards former students of residential schools. The project aims to contribute to the advancement of Aboriginal Elders' education by bringing them closer to their own culture, by allowing them to express themselves via their own culture and by fostering the sharing of traditional knowledge between them, as well as with younger generations of Aboriginals and local non-Aboriginals. In addition to ending isolation, fostering community participation and contributing to the development of a support and assistance network (through the creation of a Circle of Elders), this project increases the identity-based pride of Aboriginal Elders and their holistic balance (body, heart, soul and spirit).



Recommendations

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should promote a culture of well-treatment of Aboriginal Elders dealing with urban realities and the Quebec healthcare and social services system.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should provide NFCs with the resources they need to organize activities aimed at increasing Elders' knowledge of human-rights-related issues.



Yayenra' Project: respecting our Elders

The Yayenra' Project (meaning “springtime” in Wendat) promoted and recognized Aboriginal citizens' individual rights under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This project was primarily but not exclusively focused on preventing the abuse of Aboriginal Elders. The Yayenra' Project sought to introduce Native Friendship Centre Movement members to their legal rights and freedoms with a view to raising their awareness of the importance of individual rights.

Yayenra' adopted a culturally relevant and community-based approach to ensure

- ▶ **Elders' participation**, expressed through volunteering and concerted action to end social isolation, boost self-esteem through skills recognition and raise awareness of abuse and mistreatment issues.
- ▶ **A culturally relevant approach**, designed to recognize Elders' knowledge and boost their self-esteem, while also enhancing values such as pride and positive leadership.
- ▶ **An intergenerational approach**, used to raise awareness of Elder abuse among Elders, adults and young people.

A series of activities were carried out from 2013 to 2015:

- ▶ **A provincial meeting** to present the Yayenra' tools with the six NFCs taking part in the project.
- ▶ **Eight workshops** designed to raise awareness of Aboriginal rights, organized by the NFCs in collaboration with the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse du Québec (CDPJQ).
- ▶ **Video clips** designed to raise awareness of various types of Elder abuse (available online at www.rcaa.qc.ca/info).





THEME 3: Strengthening actions to counter the financial or material abuse of Aboriginal Elders

Priority issues

Aboriginal Elders are more likely to be victims of financial or material abuse and, because of their age, are more likely to fear reprisals or origin-based discrimination. Financial or material abuse is a known phenomenon among Aboriginals, who often live in overcrowded conditions with indirect family members or distant relatives. Looking after their children's financial and material interests without the entire family's financial support can place a heavy financial and material burden on Aboriginal Elders.

Providing individual assistance to family members via the NFCs may be one way of achieving a better understanding of this type of abuse. Among other things, workshops on new technologies (so Elders can look after their own financial matters) may avoid financial abuses by proxies.



Promising practices

- ▶ The **Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre** provides personalized assistance to families in need by explaining their rights and jointly developing a strategy to combat financial and/or material abuse (financial abuse, abuse of trust, abuse of hospitality, etc.).

Recommendations

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should provide for the **development** of resources with a view to raising awareness of financial and/or material abuse, in collaboration with the RCAAQ.



THEME 4: Meeting Aboriginal Elders' needs in a context of social diversity

Priority issues

Aboriginal Elders face specific conditions and much greater risk factors than non-Aboriginal Elders. Risk factors for abuse stem from the social and human environment (high levels of violence and addiction, fear of reprisals if abuse is reported, or fear of being isolated or excluded from the community, etc.). Approximately 20% of Aboriginal Elders live in urban areas in Canada (PAM, 2010–2015). This proportion is no doubt actually much higher since the number of Aboriginals living in or passing through urban areas is typically underestimated. These Aboriginal Elders have a crying need for health and social services, and the resources currently being offered within the Quebec network are either not meeting their needs or are underused. Aboriginal Elders suffer from poor physical health, often including chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiac problems. In addition, Aboriginal Elders, who have often faced negative treatment by the state (e.g. police, residential schools), are nearly always reluctant to seek out government services (health and social services, police authorities, complaint filing process, etc.).

Overcrowded housing may lead to or exacerbate the abuse of Aboriginal Elders (this phenomenon is very rare among non-Aboriginal seniors elsewhere in Quebec).

In terms of education, according to the Institut national de la santé publique du Québec (INSPQ), some 70% of First Nations Elders aged 65 or older did not complete their secondary studies, compared with around 50% of Quebec seniors (INSPQ, 2003). It should be noted that the more isolated the region, the higher the dropout rate. Most Aboriginal Elders' schooling ends at the primary level.

These low levels of formal education add to the cultural difficulties and language barriers that Aboriginal Elders often face in exercising their rights. In addition, a lack of information and adequate resources means that some Aboriginal Elders do not know how to detect abusive situations.

It is impossible to ignore the existence of Indian residential schools and the irreparable consequences and trauma these institutions caused. Residential schools were at the heart of an assimilation project by the Canadian government.





MINO MADJIBIN :

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The attacks on Aboriginal identity began as soon as children set foot inside these schools. It should be noted that these children were forbidden to speak their own languages and, in addition to losing their cultural bearings, they were subjected to physical and sexual abuse. They were forced to forget the freedoms they had known in their communities of origin, and when they returned to their communities, they felt alienated from their families and culture. In addition to losing their native languages, they developed neither the skills that would have enabled them to engage in traditional economic activities nor those that might have helped them succeed in the Canadian economy. These children never experienced family life or proper parenting. For the most part, our Elders are survivors who, despite everything they had to endure, are still standing today (TRC, 2015b).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has issued calls to action involving various levels of government, and some of these recommendations concern our Elders. Call to Action #20 recommends recognizing the specific health needs of Métis, Inuit, and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples. Call to Action #21 recommends providing “sustainable funding for existing and new Aboriginal healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms caused by residential schools”. Call to Action #22 recommends recognizing “the value of Aboriginal healing practices and [using] them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders” (TRC, 2012).

Often isolated, Aboriginal Elders in urban areas require personalized attention tailored to their needs and culture in order to identify and recognize their rights and to avail themselves of the services to which they are entitled. They must grapple with larger and more numerous difficulties and obstacles than their non-Aboriginal peers in Quebec. In our view, providing personalized attention should be the highest-priority action area when it comes to preventing and detecting abuse and providing effective intervention.



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Promising practices

- ▶ **The Minowé and Acokan clinics**, located in the NFCs in Val-d’Or and La Tuque, are exemplary service delivery models that are fully integrated in Quebec’s health and social services network.
- ▶ The hiring of a **team of psycho-social workers** at the NFCs in Sept-Îles and La Tuque and at Native Montréal, has facilitated the delivery of emergency psychological, social and legal services for urban Aboriginals in situations of vulnerability. These initiatives are examples of promising practices that favour service accessibility in urban areas.
- ▶ **Mino Pimadziwin**: “Living in peace with life: past, present and future.” Hoping to contribute to the well-being of Aboriginals, the Native Friendship Centre of Val-d’Or established the Mino Pimadziwin health support program in 2006. This program for residential school survivors aims to restore balance in all spheres of their lives—bodies, hearts, souls and spirits—so that they might live in harmony with themselves and those around them.

Recommendations

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should include** the RCAAQ in the various advisory committees on Elders to incorporate specific measures that are culturally relevant and safe for Aboriginal Elders in urban areas.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should recognize** and include the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should ensure** resource continuity, delivery and accessibility so that NFCs may offer these services.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse should revise** the definition and understanding of the concept of abuse from an Aboriginal and urban perspective as part of a culturally safe approach.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme 1

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should recognize the RCAAQ as a partner of choice on issues facing urban Aboriginal Elders.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should recognize that NFCs are places where the abuse of Aboriginal Elders living in urban areas can be detected and prevented.

Theme 2

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should promote a culture of well-treatment of Aboriginal Elders dealing with urban realities and the Quebec healthcare and social services system.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should provide NFCs with the resources they need to organize activities aimed at increasing Elders' knowledge of human-rights-related issues.



Photo credit: Marie-Claude Bernier



Theme 3

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should provide for the **development** of resources with a view to raising awareness of financial and/or material abuse, in collaboration with the RCAAQ.

Theme 4

- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should **include** the RCAAQ in the various advisory committees on Elders to incorporate specific measures that are culturally relevant and safe for Aboriginal Elders in urban areas.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should **recognize and include** the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should **ensure resource continuity, delivery and accessibility** so that NFCs may offer these services.
- ▶ The **Governmental Action Plan to Counter Elder Abuse** should **revise** the definition and understanding of the concept of abuse from an Aboriginal and urban perspective as part of a culturally safe approach.



Photo credit: RCAAQ

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