

**News Release**  
For immediate release

**Aboriginals living in urban areas  
Québec's Native Friendship Centres and Québec Union of Municipalities  
to partner for the first time**

*Montréal, September 21, 2007* – The Québec Union of Municipalities (UMQ) and the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), today signed an historic partnership agreement. The agreement is intended to strengthen cooperation between the UMQ and the umbrella organization for Native Friendship Centres in the province, in the search for solutions to problems relating to Aboriginals living in urban areas. It suggests five definite measures to foster harmonious coexistence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations.

Over 50 Québec municipalities in 13 administrative regions are directly concerned with Aboriginal issues. Over the past 30 years, the number of Aboriginals living in urban centres in Québec has grown significantly. Already more than a third of the members of Québec's First Nations have become residents in municipalities – some by choice, others out of necessity.

As the phenomenon of urbanization of Québec's Aboriginal peoples and its related impacts remain largely unknown, the UMQ and the RCAAQ have committed, under the new agreement to (1) identify and document the problems and contribute toward finding solutions, (2) share ideas about the issues related to this phenomenon, (3) encourage Aboriginal municipalities and Native Friendship Centres to partner on projects that promote harmonious coexistence among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents, (4) encourage implementation of local partnership agreements between Aboriginal municipalities and Native Friendship Centres in Québec, and (5) contribute in a positive way toward social transformation in Aboriginal municipalities.

Readers may recall that in 2004 the UMQ formed the Caucus des municipalités voisines de Premières Nations to make these municipalities partners in First Nations development, encourage harmonious coexistence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and guarantee lasting social peace. In the course of the committee's work, the problems of Aboriginals living in urban areas have become a major concern for its members.

"I'm delighted to be signing this agreement with the RCAAQ today because it follows through on the commitments I made on behalf of the UMQ at the First Nations Social and Economic Forum in October 2006, and because it will help us better define the problems of Aboriginal urbanization and provide definite solutions," said Sherbrooke mayor and UMQ president Jean Perrault.

RCAAQ president Édith Cloutier stated that, "...this initiative clearly expresses the cooperative dynamics that Québec's Native Friendship Centres and the RCAAQ hope to develop in those Québec municipalities where large numbers of Aboriginals reside."

### **About the RCAAQ**

The mission of the RCAAQ is to advocate in favour of individual and collective rights and interests of Aboriginals dealing with urban reality, while supporting Québec's Native Friendship Centres in their efforts to improve the quality of life for Aboriginals and to promote culture and mutual understanding between peoples. Québec's Native Friendship Centre Movement is present in Chibougamau, Val-d'Or, La Tuque, Montréal, Senneterre, Québec City, Joliette and Sept-Îles.

### **ABOUT THE UMQ**

Founded in 1919, the UMQ represents municipalities of every size and in every region of Québec. Its mission is to contribute toward the progress and promotion of democratic, dynamic and productive municipalities that are dedicated to the well-being of their citizens. The UMQ organization, which groups its members into affinity caucuses (local municipalities, central municipalities, urban agglomerations, large cities and the Metropolitan area), is an expression of both diversity and solidarity among municipalities in Québec.

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