



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Municipalities and the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement

Join Forces to Address Urban Aboriginal Issues

La Tuque, October 27, 2016 – Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) President Christine Jean, La Tuque Mayor Normand Beaudoin, and Atikamekw Nation Great Chief Constant Awashish report their satisfaction following a October 27 provincial meeting held in La Tuque. This important meeting brought together municipalities and the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement, as well as provincial and federal government officials and First Nations authorities.

Spearheaded by the mayor of Senneterre, Jean-Maurice Matte, this initiative was unprecedented. During the meeting, urban Aboriginal trends and issues in Quebec were explored; information about existing partnerships between municipalities, Friendship Centres and neighbouring communities was shared; and common future directions for the public policies affecting the lives of Aboriginal city-dwellers were decided upon.

"We are proud that La Tuque hosted this most rewarding meeting," said La Tuque Mayor Normand Beaudoin. "I'd like to thank all the participants who attended, particularly fellow mayors who, like me, believe it is important to work together in response to the challenges arising from the growing migration of Aboriginal people to cities. These individuals enrich our cities and towns, and the Native Friendship centres are a point of connection that allow us to live together harmoniously."

"Today, cooperation between various stakeholders and concerted action by the different levels of government will make it possible to develop relevant public policy aimed at supporting the social, cultural and economic development of Aboriginal city-dwellers," RCAAQ President Christine Jean points out.

"Living in urban areas is often a forced choice for the Atikamekw Nehirowisw," said Constant Awashish, Great Chief of the Atikamekw Nation. "Our members come up against various obstacles, and municipalities must be involved in finding solutions in partnership with the Native Friendship Centres and the Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw, when necessary. We hope this meeting will have a positive and constructive outcome."

Also participating in this meeting was Charlotte Commonda, the interim director of the Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre. "Our Friendship Centre in Maniwaki opened in September 2016, so there is still much to be done," Commonda said. "It is through partnership with the Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, the Aboriginal citizens of Maniwaki and the MRC de la Vallée-de-la-Gatineau, and through initiatives like today's that we will succeed."

The president of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière, Éric Labbé, stated: "This meeting has allowed us to forge solid connections between mayors and the Friendship Centres. It is in this spirit that we agreed on a declaration of solidarity, signed between the city of Joliette, the community of Manawan and the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière."

“This meeting and the process leading up to it show us how important it is for municipalities to participate in the ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal Nations, said Montréal Mayor Denis Coderre. “Montréal will continue taking part in this dialogue by hosting a meeting of mayors with the Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador.”

This meeting has thus laid the foundations of partnerships that will foster tangible and productive action.

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Source:

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The Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec groups seven Native Friendship Centres and one service point located in the following Quebec cities: Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Montréal, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and Val d’Or. Two Friendship Centres are currently under development in Roberval and Maniwaki. The mission of the Native Friendship Centres is to improve the quality of life of urban Aboriginal people, promote Aboriginal culture and build bridges between peoples.