



# Press Release

For immediate release

## **Nine Quebec Cities and their Native Friendship Centres Join Forces to Improve Services for Urban Aboriginal People**

**Val-d'Or, March 23, 2017 — As the second meeting between mayors and the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement draws to a close, representatives from nine cities and their nine Native Friendship Centres signed the *Mutual Commitment to Improve the Living Conditions of Urban Aboriginal People* and set up a Joint Committee to solidify dialogue and support direct actions.**

"This unique agreement will implement joint actions and promote dialogue on innovative practices so that we may live together more harmoniously," explains Pierre Corbeil, Mayor of Val-d'Or and co-chair for the event. For Corbeil, the presence of top decision-makers and their desire to encourage and take concrete actions is another step in mutual understanding and open-mindedness between peoples. "These are two key elements in current and future dialogue and they set the tone of this new agreement."

According to Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre President Oscar Kistabish, "This second meeting between Quebec mayors and the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement being held in Anicinabe territory is a great source of pride for us at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. We are all the more proud since this meeting is part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Awareness Week for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Val-d'Or, a broad-reaching campaign the Friendship Centre launched in 2001 that our entire community has adopted as a shared responsibility."

### **MUTUAL COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

The primary accomplishment of this second meeting between the mayors and Native Friendship Centres is, without a doubt, the signing of the *Mutual Commitment to Improve the Living Conditions of Urban Aboriginal People* by nine municipalities and nine Native Friendship Centres. The signatories assume their responsibility to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginals who live in or pass through urban areas. They commit to working together and building partnerships. The Commitment was signed by city and Native Friendships Centre representatives from Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Montréal, Roberval, Senneterre, Sept-Îles and Val-d'Or.

Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec President Christine Jean pointed out that this process of collaboration between the Native Friendship Centres and municipal authorities

is unprecedented and therefore indicative of a common desire to improve urban Aboriginal citizens' quality of life. "We are most pleased by the signing of this Mutual Commitment that reinforces the foundations of our work together and will guide future dialogue and action," adds Ms. Jean.

### **JOINT COMMITTEE ON URBAN ABORIGINAL ISSUES**

The Union des municipalités du Québec is pleased to announce the creation of the Joint Committee on Urban Aboriginal Issues, which will bring together municipal elected officials and representatives from the Native Friendship Centres and the First Nations. "The various initiatives presented here today are inspiring and show just how important a role cities have to play, particularly in Aboriginal anti-racism and anti-discrimination efforts, in ensuring the wellbeing of all citizens in our communities," said UMQ Chair and Mayor of Sherbrooke Bernard Sévigny.

The Joint Committee was launched at a UMQ Board meeting in November 2016 and its mandate was determined by the elected officials in attendance today. The Committee will identify priority issues and strategies to review public policies affecting urban Aboriginal citizens. It will also promote dialogue, collaboration and the diffusion of best practices between partners.

"I firmly believe in the importance of the work ahead of this Committee. I'd like to reiterate the Ville de Montréal's full support of all our partners in putting this reconciliation into motion. This is why our 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary events will also highlight Aboriginal people's historical and cultural role in our city's history. Come celebrate with us!" said Mayor of Montréal Denis Coderre.

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