



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

QUEBEC'S BUDGET RECOGNIZES THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

Wendake, Wednesday, March 21, 2012– The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) welcomes the measures announced by Finance Minister Raymond Bachand to provide specific support for Aboriginal people, as called for by the RCAAQ.

Contributions by Aboriginal people are vital to the economic and social development of Quebec. The RCAAQ is pleased to see in this budget the government's desire to provide Aboriginal people with the means to contribute to Quebec's growth, by allocating \$135 million to renew and enhance the Aboriginal Initiatives Fund. We are pleased also to see the government's recognition of Aboriginal diversity.

"By giving the Native Friendship Centres' projects as examples, the government is recognizing the importance of the RCAAQ's mission and the supporting role played by the Centres in providing urban services to Aboriginal people," noted RCAAQ President Édith Cloutier, who was present for the Throne Speech.

RCAAQ Executive Director Josée Goulet added that *"this mention of the work being accomplished by the Native Friendship Centres in delivering a multitude of services to urban Aboriginal people is the culmination of years of efforts, advocacy and awareness building."*

The budget promises hope for the development of the Friendship Centres, but the RCAAQ emphasizes the need for real, fair and equitable access to the different components of the Aboriginal Initiatives Fund to ensure an effective response to the needs and initiatives of urban Aboriginal people, particularly in the development of community-level entrepreneurship. We wish to emphasize again our desire to combine our expertise with that of the government as quickly as possible in order to fund innovative projects by the urban Aboriginal people in Quebec.

The RCAAQ defends the rights and interests of urban Aboriginal people, and supports the Native Friendship Centres in carrying out their mission to improve quality of life, promote culture and build bridges of understanding between peoples.

The Quebec Native Friendship Centres are located in Val-d'Or, Chibougamau, La Tuque, Senneterre, Quebec City, Joliette, Sept-Îles and Saguenay. Montreal and Trois-Rivières are in the development and mobilization phase.

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