

Filing of the Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Real Change on the Horizon?

Wendake, June 3, 2019 – The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) has taken note of the report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and recognizes the work done by the commissioners and their team. The RCAAQ applauds the courage of everyone who testified and salutes the national mobilization the Inquiry sparked. Once again, Canada was witness to the strength and resilience of Indigenous women and families.

According to Statistics Canada's 2016 Census of Population, 55% of First Nations people and 15% of Inuit people in Quebec live permanently in cities or large urban centres. A large number of Indigenous people also live in urban areas over a short or longer period to attend school, work or for other reasons. Regardless of their different reasons for living in cities, the urban Indigenous population is growing significantly and is predominantly made up of women.

Over the last several years, the federal government disregarded this reality in its public policies. "Native Friendship Centres see day in and day out situations that infringe on Indigenous women and girls' right to safety in cities," says Philippe Meilleur, President of the RCAAQ. "Our service infrastructure is a show of innovation on a day-to-day basis, in the goal of meeting as many requests as we can."

It is vital for the RCAAQ that the different levels of government adopt concrete strategies to support and recognize the organizations that offer frontline services to Indigenous people in cities, to be able to meet urgent needs. "With 440 recommendations by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 94 calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and now the filing of this report, we can only hope that pragmatic measures will quickly be implemented," says Tanya Sirois, Executive Director of the RCAAQ. "Indigenous issues are certainly some of the most documented in the country, but unfortunately, the socioeconomic gap between Indigenous people and the rest of the Canadian population continues to widen, especially for Indigenous women."

The Native Friendship Centres are part of the solution to protecting Indigenous women and girls, contributing to the emergence of a vibrant Indigenous civil society that will ensure the safety and prosperity of future generations.

The RCAAQ represents 11 affiliated Native Friendship Centres in the following Quebec cities: Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Montréal, Québec City, Roberval, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and Val-d'Or. The Centres' mission is to improve quality of life for Indigenous people living in urban areas, to promote Indigenous culture and to build bridges between peoples.

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Source: Flore Bibeau, Communications Advisor, 418-842-6354, ext. 240