



SOCIÉTÉ IMMOBILIÈRE
REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Announcement of the New Everyday Living Environment for Indigenous Students in Sept-Îles

Sept-Îles, August 24, 2021 – Today, the Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ) and the Government of Québec announced the new everyday living environment for Indigenous students in Sept-Îles. This innovative project was made possible by the Cégep de Sept-Îles' invitation to host the living environment on its campus.

A promising project for Indigenous students

Inequities in socioeconomic conditions can be significant obstacles to Indigenous students' education. These challenges are often the reasons Indigenous students stop their studies temporarily or permanently before graduation.

This infrastructure initiative will help create the conditions for these students' success. Much more than just a student residence, it will offer a supportive environment where Indigenous students can live safely with their families. Offering 30 affordable housing units, the project also includes common areas, such as a multipurpose room, collaborative spaces, a collective kitchen, playgrounds and areas for Indigenous cultural activities.

Unique in Quebec

An unprecedented concept by and for Indigenous people, the living environment has been designed to fit harmoniously into the urban landscape while also emphasizing the connection with nature. Tasked with the project, the Sept-Îles-based architecture and urban design firm BGLA took inspiration from the concepts of Innu community spirit, culture and traditional camps that came up during the focus groups.

The SIRCAAQ's unique model will set the example for other such initiatives in Quebec and across Canada. It demonstrates how creating spaces that correspond to Indigenous values and cultures will contribute to their educational success.

“For Indigenous peoples, self-determination involves governing ourselves and freely making the most of our opportunities for economic, political, social and cultural development,” said Tanya Sirois, Vice-president of the SIRCAAQ. “For over 45 years, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec has been a role model and forerunner in this regard. We now are ensuring that Indigenous people's right to housing is being met—a key to improving our socio-economic conditions. Going forward, our urban Indigenous infrastructure should serve as economic levers and sources of cultural safety for First Peoples, especially for Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous people are present across Quebec. This investment confirms once again that we are a vital economic and social force. Furthermore, the project will boost the economic vitality of Sept-Îles and bring peoples closer together.”

A project built on major partnerships

Led by the SIRCAAQ, this project is the result of partnerships between different levels of government and other players in the region. The Government of Québec, via the Société de l'habitation du Québec, the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, the Société du Plan Nord and the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, will invest more than \$13.4M to build this infrastructure. Under its Rapid Housing Initiative, the Government of Canada will be contributing \$6.1M. The Ville de Sept-Îles is participating in the development of this non-profit project by granting the SIRCAAQ a municipal tax break. The Ministère de la Famille will contribute to the project's success by opening 29 childcare spots for a new facility within the CPE Metuetau. A kindergarten classroom for four-year-olds will be made available, thanks to a partnership between the Du Fer school service centre and the Le Boisé school.

Community housing and services will also be available to the Indigenous students attending adult education centres. For example, a collaboration between the ITUM and the SIRCAAQ will open the living environment to students attending the Mitshapeu regional adult education centre and to adult students in the Du Fer school service centre and the Eastern Shore School Board.

In addition to all of the above-mentioned partners, we note the contribution of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, the Cité des Bâtisseurs and the Institut Tshakapesh.

About the SIRCAAQ

The Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ) was founded in 2019 to collectively develop and apply innovative and sustainable real estate infrastructure solutions that contribute to the wellness of Indigenous people.

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec is made up of a network of 10 Friendship Centres that offer Indigenous people culturally relevant and safe services that contribute to the harmony and reconciliation between peoples in Quebec cities. The Centres are the largest urban infrastructure created for and by Indigenous people in Quebec.

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