



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

LIFELONG LEARNING:

Supporting Educational Success for Aboriginal People in Urban Areas

Position paper submitted by the *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec* to the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec* as part of the consultation process on a policy for educational success

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This position paper is being presented by the *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec* (RCAAQ) to the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec* as part of the consultation process on a policy for educational success.

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Summary

As part of the development of the first policy on educational success by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) announced by the Premier of Quebec, Philippe Couillard, and the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport, the Minister of the Family and the Minister responsible for the Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region, Sébastien Proulx, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) is tabling its position paper whose main objective is to demonstrate the importance and relevance of the educational services that are provided by the Native Friendship Centres to Aboriginal students and families that are living in cities in Quebec.

This position paper presents some of the issues being encountered by Aboriginal students in the Quebec school system.

Finally, the RCAAQ hopes that its recommendations will encourage the Quebec government to recognize and support the mediation and interface work being carried out by the Native Friendship Centres in the area of education within the Quebec school system.

Summary of the recommendations

1. The MEES must recognize the Native Friendship Centres that are members of the RCAAQ as key players contributing to the educational perseverance and success of Aboriginal students who attend the Quebec school system.
2. The MEES must promote the deployment of the RCAAQ's expertise as a provincial association that can structure and coordinate the implementation of innovative educational services that meet the needs of Aboriginal students and families.
3. The MEES must support and assist the RCAAQ in documenting the social, economic and cultural determinants of Aboriginal education with a view to developing an education strategy for urban Aboriginal students that reflects their singular and modern reality.



Introduction to the Friendship Centre Movement

The Friendship Centre Movement was implemented in Canada more than 60 years ago. Composed of 118 Native Friendship Centres, 6 Provincial and Territorial Associations (PTAs) and the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), we are the largest urban service infrastructure for Aboriginal people in Canada's cities.

The Native Friendship Centres share a common mission, which consists of improving the quality of life of Aboriginal citizens living in or passing through urban areas. They are multi-service centres that are located in an urban setting which target Aboriginal clients, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit, while promoting an «open door» policy regardless of status, nation or place of residence.

**We are Aboriginal, democratic and non-partisan community organizations that work
within a spirit of complementarity with First Nations communities as
well as our local partners.**

The Native Friendship Centres that are members of the *Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec*

The mission of the Native Friendship Centres of Quebec is to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal people in urban areas, promote culture and build bridges between peoples.

The Native Friendship Centres are urban service hubs, living environments and cultural anchors for Aboriginal people. As they fight and advocate for the rights and interests of Aboriginal peoples, the Native Friendship Centres work on a daily basis to promote a better understanding of the issues, challenges and problems facing Aboriginal people while promoting harmonious coexistence in their communities. Moreover, the Native Friendship Centres actively contribute to the social, community, economic and cultural development of their communities through innovative and proactive strategies.

In Quebec, the Friendship Centre Movement has been operating for more than 45 years. We have over 130 employees, a majority of whom are Aboriginal people and women, and we offer a continuum of more than 50 services as part of a multi-service delivery environment, which means we offer a multitude of services which gravitate around the individual. We mobilize more than 100 volunteers and serve thousands of Aboriginal people.

The Friendship Centres are accountable to their members, the Aboriginal people.

The *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec*

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) advocates for the rights and interests of Aboriginal citizens in the cities by actively supporting the development of its member Native Friendship Centres¹. Our mission takes place on two levels. First of all, the RCAAQ works towards the implementation of provincial projects and programs that support its members in carrying out their mission by providing advice, support and technical resources. Secondly, the RCAAQ represents the Native Friendship Centres and establishes partnerships at the provincial and national levels. Our mission of support and representation, which we have carried out since 1976 in Quebec, allows us to have an overview of the challenges encountered by Aboriginal citizens in the cities.

The RCAAQ fosters a concerted approach for its member Native Friendship Centres that share a common mission but work in different environments and contexts. Indeed, the autonomy of each Friendship Centre constitutes a strength at the heart of this Movement because it allows for social innovation. It ensures that the organization is rooted in its environment while being in line with its culture of outreach services.

¹ The following Native Friendship Centres are members of the RCAAQ: *Centre d'amitié Eenou de Chibougamau*, Native Friendship Centre of Senneterre, Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, *Centre d'amitié autochtone de La Tuque* and the service point for Aboriginal people in Trois-Rivières, *Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière*, *Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles* and Native Montreal. The Friendship Centres that are being developed while supported and assisted by the RCAAQ are as follows: Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre and the *Centre d'amitié autochtone du Lac St-Jean*.



The RCAAQ has collaborated with the *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur* (MEES) for more than 10 years. This collaborative relationship that evolved over the years into partnership developed following the 2006 First Nations Socioeconomic Forum where the RCAAQ sought the support of this Ministère. The commitment made by our two organizations during this event made it possible to consolidate the existing homework assistance services in the network of Friendship Centres² in addition to the development of an implementation guide for homework assistance services. In addition, in 2011, the Ministère agreed to fund two homework assistance pilot projects for high school students at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) and the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (CAAL). Also, the MEES supported the liaison officer pilot project that was implemented at the VDNFC from 2014 to 2016. Finally, the MEES agreed to fund an educational support officer position at the Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre for the 2016-2017 school year in order to provide support to Aboriginal students.

Profile of the Aboriginal people in the cities of Quebec



The phenomenon of the mobility of Aboriginal people towards the cities has been growing steadily for many years. The Aboriginal presence in the cities is not static, it flows as much between the city and neighbouring communities as it does in the city itself, where the Aboriginal people are extremely mobile. Whether they are permanently or temporarily residing in urban areas or just passing through the city, the great mobility of Aboriginal people is a major factor in the growth of Aboriginal populations in the cities of Quebec.

Many Aboriginal families are highly mobile, whether between the community and the city, from one city to another or within the same city (Cloutier and Lévesque, 2011). Many Aboriginal students leave their communities when they start school. Some live with their immediate family, others with an extended family member (aunt, uncle, grandparents) or a school foster home. These conditions are challenging for children who have to adapt to a new social and cultural environment, a new school and new ways of teaching and learning (Blanchet-Cohen, Geoffroy and Trudel).

Aboriginal people living in cities often face a system that is foreign to them, with barriers that are difficult to overcome such as fluency in English or French, prejudice and a lack of understanding of Aboriginal realities, access to health and social services, quality housing, finding and keeping a job, etc. Despite obvious needs, they have little recourse to the services of the city where they live and in which they are subjected to racism while faced with exclusion. Racism and exclusion lead to multi-generational effects and loss of self-confidence as well as confidence in one's skills.

In Canada, 60% of Aboriginal people live off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2011). In Quebec, more than half (53.2%) of First Nations are in the cities (FNILMAC, 2015). The main reasons for migration towards the cities are education (35.4%), work (24.6%) and housing (11.1%), while the reasons for returning to the community are related to family and culture (FNQLHSSC, 2008).

² In 2016, primary homework assistance services were provided by the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, the Centre d'amitié autochtone La Tuque and the service point for Aboriginal people in Trois-Rivières Aboriginal Service Point, the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Québec, the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière, the Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre, Native Montreal and the Chibougamau Eenu Friendship Centre.

According to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, Aboriginal people, particularly urban Aboriginal people, are among the groups that are most likely to be discriminated against and/or racially profiled in Quebec. In fact, racism constitutes a barrier to the full participation of Aboriginal people in the development of Quebec society.³

In this context of urbanization and accelerated mobility among Aboriginal peoples, the increasing presence of Aboriginal children attending schools in the Quebec network reveals a lack of awareness among school staff who are unprepared and lack appropriate resources to support them.⁴ Indeed, they face a number of academic and social challenges that affect their educational progress and require planned, concerted and culturally sensitive interventions.

The Native Friendship Centres in Quebec are therefore a solid starting point for reaching a portion of the most vulnerable segment of the population, urban Aboriginal children and their families.

Culturally relevant and safe approaches for Aboriginal students

The Native Friendship Centres have almost half-a-century's worth of expertise relating to the complexity of the dynamics of urban Aboriginal populations. This know-how has led to innovative and reassuring initiatives that promote Aboriginal identity, languages and traditions. Indeed, several initiatives that have been conducted within the Native Friendship Centres in Quebec demonstrate

that developing safe living environments that reflect the cultural competence of those who work among the public and community services encourages behaviours, attitudes, and congruent policies that enable them to work effectively as educators, practitioners or professionals so as to effectively reach the targeted population.

Culturally relevant

The culturally relevant approach begins with a genuine understanding among the practitioners of the historical, legal, political, economic and social contexts in which Aboriginal people find themselves. Then, this understanding must be retained in order to grasp the effects it has on an individual as a whole. In sum, the strategies deployed must take into account the individual, the context in which they find themselves as well as the ways in which this context affects the individual asking for support, help or advice (RCAAQ, 2014a).

Culturally safe

The culturally safe approach consists of building trust with Aboriginal people and recognizing the role of socio-economic conditions, history and policy in the area of service delivery. Cultural safety requires recognition that we are all bearers of culture. This approach is based on respectful participation as well as an understanding of the inherent power imbalance in service delivery, institutional discrimination and the need to rectify these inequities by making changes to the system (RCAAQ, 2014a).

³ The evaluation report for measure 30108-B also mentions that the lack of knowledge of the characteristics and needs of Aboriginal students, and the difficulty of having staff in this respect, are two significant obstacles (MELS, 2010). Bouchard, G., C. Taylor, 2008, *Fonder l'avenir : rapport de la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles*, Quebec, Quebec government, pp. 84, 122.

⁴ The evaluation report for measure 30108-B also mentions that the lack of knowledge of the characteristics and needs of Aboriginal students, and the difficulty of having staff in this respect, are two significant obstacles (MELS, 2010).



The Friendship Centres offer learning support services in a culturally safe and relevant context that complement the educational activities provided by more than twenty elementary and high schools among the French-speaking and English-speaking networks of Quebec each year. In fact, more than 100 Aboriginal students are enrolled and receive services every year. Services are offered to respond specifically to Aboriginal urban realities while respecting cultural peculiarities. They are provided in a complementary fashion with no intention of replacing school or parental responsibilities.

Support for learning provides academic support while stimulating interest and motivation for education; it is part of a broader program of socio-cultural activities aimed at developing pride among urban Aboriginal children. In addition to providing concerted academic support, learning support services strengthen the social identity of Aboriginal youth and focus on developing self-esteem, an emotional variable that influences academic motivation (RCAAQ, 2008).

The Friendship Centres have identified in recent years some of the challenges faced by Aboriginal students who use the learning support services:

- ✓ The availability of Aboriginal and qualified human resources;
- ✓ The gap between urban schools and community schools in relation to the use of the French language, education level and supervision;
- ✓ The low level of education of the parents who feel disadvantaged with regard to school requirements.
- ✓ High dropout rates;
- ✓ The involvement of parents to ensure the educational progress and success of their children;
- ✓ The absence of models of school perseverance;
- ✓ The lack of educational resources to support Aboriginal students;
- ✓ The transition between the schools of the communities and those of the provincial network;
- ✓ The transition between elementary school and high school;
- ✓ The transition between high school and the postsecondary level;
- ✓ The lack of promotion of Aboriginal languages and culture among urban schools;
- ✓ Lack of awareness or streamlining of efforts among the schools to address bullying and discrimination against Aboriginal people.

The homework assistance service being provided in the Native Friendship Centres of Quebec was evaluated in the spring of 2014 (Blanchet-Cohen, Geoffroy and Trudel). The evaluation demonstrated the impact and added value of the service, which not only provides concrete support for learning, but also takes place in a context that is conducive to the integration of new knowledge and the development of self-esteem among students. The homework assistance service encourages them to learn and to continue their efforts by providing support and positive reinforcement, offering supervision and rigour, diversifying learning strategies and creating intergenerational and cross-community linkages. Among the possibilities to be considered, the evaluation report also identified the desirability of strengthening collaboration and a concerted approach between the school environment and the Native Friendship Centres in order to ensure a better streamlining of resources and greater support for children in terms of their educational progress.

As indicated in the Guide to Inspiring Initiatives (MELS, 2015), an alliance between the Native Friendship Centres and schools allows for building a bridge between youth, families, Aboriginal communities and schools.

Innovative solutions to foster educational perseverance and success

From an Aboriginal perspective, education is characterized by holistic, lifelong learning, based on experience and featuring a spiritual dimension. It is community-based, rooted in languages and cultures while integrating indigenous and western knowledge. Learning among Aboriginal people far exceeds the boundaries of the classroom and the concept of graduation rates and encompasses lifelong learning with family and community. A holistic perspective of educational persistence and success takes into account all forms of Aboriginal relationships and academic achievement.

In Quebec, the vast majority of off-reserve First Nations (76%) and Métis (78%) and one-third of Inuit (32%) have a high school diploma or the equivalent, compared to 87% of the non-Aboriginal population of Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2011, 2012).

Support and assistance services: In 2013, Aboriginal families in Lanaudière, as well as the school and educational sectors in Joliette, highlighted issues related to educational success and perseverance among young Aboriginal students living in or passing through the city of Joliette. Therefore, in order to address this issue, the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (CAAL) hired an educational support officer to improve support and assistance for Aboriginal families and their children. Since the establishment of this service, communication between the various school workers, the CAAL and the families has allowed for the implementation of innovative solutions to improve the educational success of Aboriginal students. Today, the partnership with the Joliette school board has been extended to the CEGEP in order to ensure consistency in the CAAL's actions to ensure the educational success of the students at all levels of schooling.

Yet, the dropout rate remains high for Aboriginal people in Quebec ages 20 to 25 years living off-reserve, estimated at 43%, which is three times higher than the rest of Quebec's population (Richards, 2011). The experiences and cultural values that Aboriginal youth are familiar with do not necessarily correspond to what is taught at school, particularly in curricula that reflect the colonial history of the country. This, in addition to experiences of personal and institutional racism, contributes to a sense of marginalization and negative educational experiences that hinder the academic success of Aboriginal youth (UAKN, 2013). Several studies, including the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study (Environics Institute, 2010, 2011), indicate that Aboriginal people in cities want education services that allow them to fully participate in the education system as Aboriginal people.



Cultural mediation activities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples: The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) developed a thematic activity educational toolkit (Gabriel Commanda's pedagogical toolkit) for elementary and high school students in order to promote living together and develop reciprocity through the discovery of the culture, history of values and spirituality of the First Peoples. This toolkit aims to be a tool for collective and social change. It has been validated by schools that will be able to use it this year with their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

The Native Friendship Centres have implemented innovative solutions by developing learning support services for elementary school students and their families in order to respond specifically to the urban Aboriginal reality in a culturally appropriate fashion. In addition, as they are aware of the high dropout rate among Aboriginal high school students, the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (CAAL) developed a service intended for them in 2005 and the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) implemented specific services for these students in 2008. The VDNFC banks on personalized support and activities as part of a holistic tutoring framework that brings young people to balance the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental dimensions and build a life project.

The VDNFC conducted the 2014-2016 liaison officer pilot project in order to foster a concerted approach and a better streamlining of the activities of the Friendship Centre and the elementary and high schools attended by the Aboriginal students in Val-d'Or and Senneterre. Indeed, the Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre (CEAAS) also participated in this innovative project. Building on the strength of this experience, an educational support worker began their mobilization work in their area in Maniwaki. In less than two months of work, the Maniwaki Friendship Centre has already reached more than 100 Aboriginal students.

As for the service point for Aboriginal people in Trois-Rivières, this year, it is offering workshops for Aboriginal postsecondary students in order to provide them with tools to assist them in their studies.

The Native Friendship Centres therefore provide innovative urban services that meet the needs of Aboriginal people. The structures that were set up by the Friendship Centre Movement more than 60 years ago are constantly redefining themselves and evolving according to the emerging urban realities.

Among First Nations living off-reserve, participation in extracurricular activities was associated with an increased likelihood of obtaining a high school diploma at no later than 18 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2012).

The focus areas of educational success

The achievement of the full potential of all students

The continuum of services offered within the Friendship Centres includes, among other things, early childhood services, education and capacity-building for essential skills development and employability. This concerted and continuing programming allows for fostering the achievement of the full potential of Aboriginal students in the city by building on the strengths of each youth.

This evaluation allowed us to confirm that the homework assistance services being provided by the Friendship Centre network are meeting the need for belonging among Aboriginal youth while also strengthening their Aboriginal identity and stimulating their interest in school. «The homework assistance service offered by the Friendship Centres also provide an opportunity for students to alleviate the difficulties experienced on a daily basis that can hamper the pursuit and success of their studies» (free translation) (Blanchet-Cohen, Geoffroy and Trudel, 2014).

For Aboriginal youth living in urban areas, it is important to strengthen community ties through activities that provide a positive image of the group: getting together for fun, sharing solutions to common problems and strengthening intergenerational ties in order to keep culture alive and, above all, show pride through concrete achievements.

The learning support services offered by the Native Friendship Centres are therefore enhanced through the provision of a variety of recreational, social and fun activities that allow the workers to build trusting relationships with children and their families as well as the Aboriginal community in the city while also developing linkages with school practitioners. The Native Friendship Centres organize activities aimed at stimulating artistic creation, the transmission of culture, reading and writing, while at the same time fostering the involvement of parents and families. Also, family and recreational activities are organized during pedagogical days. The provision of support to students throughout the school year, working with parents and promoting Aboriginal culture all contribute to educational success.

A context that is conducive to development, learning and success

The Native Friendship Centres that are members of the RCAAQ provide a welcoming living environment and a place of Aboriginal

belonging that values culture and fosters socialization, mutual aid and solidarity between children. The holistic approach to services with a broader mandate than the integration of academic knowledge and the accomplishment of homework contributes to the educational success of Aboriginal students.

The strength of the learning support services of the Native Friendship Centres lies in the integrated approach to needs and complementarity with existing services:

- ✓ Continuous services provided to specific children;
- ✓ A service provided by permanent Aboriginal or culturally sensitive resources;
- ✓ Resources that can communicate in Aboriginal languages to facilitate students' understanding;
- ✓ Complete support including transportation, materials and snacks;
- ✓ The provision of a place of Aboriginal belonging;
- ✓ Assistance for parents through tools and training;
- ✓ Support for the development of Aboriginal pride through social activities.

The Friendship Centres allow students to take pride in being Aboriginal, experience their culture and protect or secure their identity while maintaining an environment free of intimidation.





On April 21, 2016, as part of the inauguration of the new premises of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière, the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, Geoffrey Kelley, highlighted the crucial importance of maintaining effective collaboration with grassroots organizations for Aboriginal people, by stating:

«They [the Native Friendship Centres] have a clear understanding of the needs and realities of Aboriginal people across Quebec. This knowledge is extremely valuable to us and we are determined to continue this vital partnership, for it is by proceeding in this manner that we will all be able to build a better future» (free translation) (Secrétariat aux Affaires autochtones, 2016)

Players and partners that are rallied around success

The Native Friendship Centres work in partnership with the players in their communities in order to foster exchanges, ensure that their actions are streamlined and thus contribute to improving quality of life for Aboriginal citizens. School perseverance and educational success among Aboriginal students require the involvement and collaboration of Aboriginal families, schools and community organizations such as Friendship Centres.



One of the best practices that was implemented by our Movement is the memorandum of understanding between Simon P. Ottawa Elementary School, Des Mésanges Elementary School and the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (see appendix). This mobilization of partners aims to support the educational success of Aboriginal students through close collaboration between the three organizations. This MOU allows for concerted interventions among Aboriginal students and their families in addition to cultural awareness activities for teachers. The Friendship Centre becomes the bridge between the community's school and the city's school and makes sure that the families are supported in this transition.

In addition, as part of the management of the federal Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) program, the RCAAQ has consulted with many partners at the local and provincial levels for the work relating to a Chantier en éducation that has led to the development of a frame of reference (see appendix) detailing, among other things, the vision and issues identified by the players who are rallied around the issue of educational success. The RCAAQ and the Friendship Centres have already created a momentum and raised awareness among partners in the field of education as to the importance of developing a culturally relevant and safe service model for Aboriginal students.

In the Aboriginal context, there exists an expanded network of biological, social and territorial kinship that includes rights, obligations and responsibilities. The Aboriginal community, for example, does not just refer to a place of geographical rooting, but also and above all the synthesis of the social, relational and spiritual connections that make up the history and affiliation of each person, their belonging to the group and their place in the world. These connections are deployed at the individual, family, community, territorial and cosmogonic levels.

Development of relevant public policies

The realities of urban Aboriginal people living in Quebec have evolved considerably in recent years. Aboriginal citizens living in or passing through cities in Quebec have chosen, for various reasons, to take root in cities as places where they hope to build fulfilling lives as both Aboriginal people and, consequently, stakeholders in their communities.

The Native Friendship Centres develop social innovation initiatives in collaboration with Aboriginal, governmental and academic institutions that allow for constructive dialogue and the creation of knowledge tools that reflect the values and traditions of indigenous peoples. The implementation of these projects by Aboriginal community members provides a better understanding of the historical, social, economic and political realities of the Aboriginal world.

Immersed in the process of social and population transformation in the cities of the province (which is dependent on the increased presence of urban Aboriginal people), the Friendship Centres are called upon to innovate, particularly in the areas of education, housing, economic development, youth and early childhood services, health services and social services. By implementing projects that promote strong and proud Aboriginal identities, the Friendship Centres work towards the emancipation of a colonial past and the emergence of a legacy that undermines the agentivity approach⁵ of Aboriginal people in the cities.

The RCAAQ and its Native Friendship Centres contribute to meeting the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people in urban areas. They offer ongoing support for the strengthening of their individual and collective cultural identities; a place that allows for finding a strong sense of belonging; the provision of quality and safe services to improve their quality of life; support for affirming, defending and recognizing the rights and interests of Aboriginal citizens and actively working to create a mutually beneficial, respectful and fair relationship of reconciliation.

As you can see, moving to the city also entails special challenges for Aboriginal youth who face many specific challenges, particularly in relation to the provision of services for Aboriginal youth and the collaboration between the Native Friendship Centres and the various circles (family, community, Quebec school networks and the various stakeholders). Aboriginal students must be given access to culturally relevant services and problems related to education must taken into consideration such as racism, coaching and support for Aboriginal students and their families, screening for at-risk students, awareness raising among schools, low parental education and loss of cultural points of reference.

The RCAAQ now therefore wishes to explore new possibilities for collaboration with the MEES to improve and consolidate the existing services and to align the actions of the Friendship Centres with those of the schools in order to ensure that Aboriginal students attending the Quebec school network receive appropriate support to promote educational perseverance and success.

⁵ Concept used in the social sciences to mark the capacity of an individual or a community to take action for their own destiny in response to social, political, economic, environmental or institutional conditions and structures that they did not necessarily determine or intend so as to change the situation to their advantage, based on their own priorities.



With this aim in mind, the RCAAQ recommends the following:

The MEES must recognize the Native Friendship Centres that are members of the RCAAQ as key players contributing to the educational perseverance and success of Aboriginal students who attend the Quebec school system. The RCAAQ recommends that the MEES adequately fund the learning support services (elementary and high school) that are provided by the member and developing Native Friendship Centres which would allow for consolidating quality educational services and hiring a worker to create linkages between the Centre, the school, the parents and, in some cases, the Aboriginal communities. The signing of a five-year agreement would make it possible to consolidate the educational services of the Friendship Centres and ensure the future of urban initiatives for the children and their families.

The MEES must support the expertise of the RCAAQ as a provincial association that can structure and coordinate educational services that meet the needs of Aboriginal students and families. The RCAAQ has taken care of the provincial coordination associated with the learning support services offered among the Friendship Centres using its own resources for the past 10 years. The RCAAQ ensures the implementation of projects and the monitoring of the programming being developed, develops tools for the workers and shares its expertise, maintains communications between the various players, conducts evaluations and maintains linkages with various partners including the MEES. The signing of a five-year agreement would allow the RCAAQ to ensure efficiency in the management of the range of services in relation to the local and provincial expertise that was developed over the course of the last ten years.

The MEES must support and assist the RCAAQ and its members to document the needs, issues and challenges faced by Aboriginal students and families in order to continue the work that began this year to develop a strategy for Aboriginal students in urban areas. Indeed, in recent years, we have noted the findings mentioned earlier in this memoir. However, in-depth work, supported by research, needs to be carried out in order to have a clear picture of the needs, issues and challenges faced by Aboriginal students in the Quebec school system and thus develop an education strategy that reflects their singular and modern reality. This work would allow us, among other things, to propose measures in order to identify and provide appropriate support to Aboriginal students. In addition, we need to address the needs and challenges of students enrolled in adult learning centres as well as those who are pursuing post-secondary education in order to provide services that will enable them to succeed in their academic careers.



Appendix A – Profile of the Native Friendship Centres that are members of the RCAAQ and the Native Friendship Centres that are being established

The Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre



The Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre (CEFC) has been incorporated since 1969 and was the first Friendship Centre to open its doors in Quebec. For the past 45 years, the Centre has provided outreach services and various activities in English, French and Cree to Aboriginal citizens residing in the Chibougamau region. The vast majority of the CEFC's users are Cree who originate from the communities of Oujé-Bougoumou, Mistissini and Waswanipi. The mobility of the Aboriginal people from Chibougamau is a challenge for the CEFC since the Cree communities are located in the vicinity of the Centre and trips from the community to the city and vice versa are frequent.

In a city where the services are provided in a French-speaking environment, the members of the Cree communities are predominantly English-speakers. On a day-to-day basis, the challenge related to the language of communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of access to services is one of the main areas where the CEFC intervenes in order to carry out its mission and improve the quality of life of the Aboriginal people of Chibougamau.

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre



The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC) has been incorporated since 1974. A hub of urban services, a living environment and place of cultural rooting for indigenous peoples based on the principles of the social economy, the Friendship Centre actively participates in the social, community, economic and cultural development of the city. Committed to justice and social inclusion, the VDNFC pilots innovative projects in order to meet the aspirations of Aboriginal citizens in the region. Throughout its history, the Centre has made significant efforts to promote harmonious coexistence in its community, increase its financial autonomy and participate in the collective wealth of its community. An urban rallying point that is deeply rooted in its setting, the VDNFC has been able to build innovative partnerships and become the main employer of an Aboriginal workforce in Val-d'Or.

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de La Tuque and the service point for Aboriginal people in Trois-Rivières



The Centre d'amitié autochtone de La Tuque (CAALT) has been incorporated since 1974. The Friendship Centre offers culturally relevant services to a predominantly Atikamekw and Innu population. With more than 40 years of experience in the community, the CAALT is committed to representing the interests of Aboriginal citizens by participating in various committees, boards of directors and local events which enable it to create new partnerships in the community and meet the needs expressed. The CAALT is also responsible for serving the Aboriginal citizens of Trois-Rivières via the service point that has been in operation since 2013.

The Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre



Since 1978, the Centre d'entraide et d'amitié autochtone de Senneterre (CEAAS) has provided services and programs to Aboriginal people in the Senneterre area who mostly come from the Cree, Algonquin and Atikamekw communities. Over the years, the Friendship Centre has earned a solid reputation among non-Aboriginal partners and organizations in the city of Senneterre.



The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière (CAAL) opened in 2001. The people it serves mostly come from the Atikamekw community of Manawan. The Friendship Centre offers lots of support, coaching and information services through programs that are specifically designed for the Aboriginal families in Joliette. The Friendship Centre banks on working in partnership with local organizations in order to implement various projects and strategies to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal citizens.



The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles

The development of the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Sept-Îles (CAASÎ) began in 2006. The Friendship Centre was created as a result of local mobilization, supported by the Innu and Naskapi communities of the North Shore who wanted to ensure that their citizens receive culturally relevant services. The Aboriginal population living in or passing through Sept-Îles is estimated at approximately 7000 Aboriginal people. The majority of them are people who come from the communities in the Lower North Shore region who move to Sept-Îles for services that they cannot access in their community of origin.



Native Montreal

Native Montreal is a response to the needs expressed by the city's Aboriginal citizens as part of the needs assessment on the urban Aboriginal people of Montreal that was conducted in 2006-2007, which identified, among other things, a lack of services for Aboriginal families and youth. The processes for the development and implementation of a multiservice and community gathering centre for Aboriginal people in Montreal began in 2012. Almost five years ago, Native Montreal began to develop a range of services that contributes to the holistic health, cultural strength and success of the urban Aboriginal individuals, families and community of Montreal.



The Centre d'amitié autochtone du Lac-Saint-Jean

For many years, the city of Roberval has been a place of convergence for many Aboriginal people from the Atikamekw community of Opticwan and the Innu community of Mashteuiastsh. The members of these two communities live in or visit this city for various reasons including the use of public services, continuing education or access to more employment opportunities. A first needs assessment was conducted in 2015-2016.



The Maniwaki Native Friendship Centre

A mobilization of Aboriginal citizens and Aboriginal organizations allowed us to set up the foundations for a Native Friendship Centre in Maniwaki in 2016. A needs assessment was conducted between November 2015 and February 2016 and it made it possible to identify problems and gaps related to services that are being experienced by Aboriginal citizens in Maniwaki which have an impact on Aboriginal youth. As the surrounding Aboriginal communities are English-speaking, Aboriginal citizens encounter difficulties related to accessing services that are offered in French in the city of Maniwaki.



**Appendix B – Memorandum of understanding to support the
educational success of Aboriginal students**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

to support the educational success of Aboriginal students

BETWEEN

Simon P. Ottawa elementary school

AND

Des Mésanges elementary school

AND

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière





OBJECTIVE: *Support the educational success of Aboriginal students through collaboration between Simon P. Ottawa elementary school of Manawan, Des Mésanges elementary school of Joliette and the Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière.*

1. SCHOOL REGISTRATION

The Des Mésanges elementary school commits to:

- *Get the parent to sign the personal information disclosure authorization form and forward it to the CAAL's Educational Support Officer.*
- *Explain to the parent the documents to be provided to the school while specifying which documents are required at registration.*
- *Explain to the parent important information related to the operations of the school (code of life, calendar, schedule, transportation, childcare, etc.).*
- *If it is a matter of a move to Manawan, inform the Special Education Coordinator at Simon P. Ottawa school if the student has a support file.*

The Centre d'amitié autochtone de Lanaudière commits to:

- *Support the parent for registration when they ask for support.*
- *Explain to the parent, in collaboration with the school team, important information pertaining to the operations of the school.*
- *Offer an Atikamekw interpretation service at the request of the school or parent.*
- *Notify the parent that they must provide a school departure notice when moving.*

Simon P. Ottawa elementary school commits to:

- *When moving to Joliette, have the parent sign the «departure notice» and «information authorization» and send them to the new school.*
- *Notify the new school's secretariat of the arrival of a student on its territory and provide a copy of the report cards and other identification in the student's file.*
- *Provide information regarding the resources available at the CAAL, have the parent sign the «authorization to disclose personal information» form and send it to the CAAL's Educational Support Officer.*



SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENTS

The Des Mésanges elementary school commits to:

- *Vary the methods for communicating with the parents (in writing, by telephone and email).*
- *Notify the resource teacher of the Aboriginal students when communication with parents is difficult or when a student experiences academic or social difficulties.*
- *Contact the CAAL's Educational Support Officer promptly when a student has academic or social issues.*
- *When there is an intervention plan, have the parent sign the «consent of parents or guardians for signing intervention plans» form and send it to the CAAL's Educational Support Officer.*
- *Collect statistical data on the school perseverance or success of the Aboriginal students.*

The CAAL commits to:

- *Accompany the parent to individual school meetings when they request it.*
- *Provide regular support to the Aboriginal student resource teacher and the school team.*
- *Offer an Atikamekw interpretation service at the request of the school or parent.*
- *Remind parents of important dates in the school calendar.*
- *If necessary, provide transportation to parents when report cards come out.*

CULTURAL AWARENESS

The Des Mésanges elementary school commits to:

- *Reach out to the CAAL in order to see the opportunities for cultural or educational activities related to Aboriginal peoples.*

The CAAL commits to:

- *Facilitate workshops or cultural exchanges at the request of teachers.*





Appendix C – Frame of reference of the Chantier éducation



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