

FALL GATHERING REPORT

Thursday, October 29, 2015

EVO Hotel
420 Sherbrooke Street West

ADOPTED ON FEBRUARY 19, 2016



AGENDA

Words of welcome and opening prayer with Norman Achneepineskum

Songs of welcome by the *Buffalo Hat Singers* drum group with Barbara Diabo, dance performance and energizing activity

Presentation and adoption of the agenda, adoption of the Gathering Report of February 27, 2015 and proposed changes to the Terms of Reference

Updates from the NETWORK's Steering Committee: Financial Statements 2014-2015; Budget 2015-2016

Networking break

Meet your NETWORK's Working Committees Interactive activity

Presentation by Marc Maracle, Chair of the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition

Presentation on the collaborative agreement between the *SPVM* and the NETWORK with Nakuset, Rachel Deutsch and Commander Khanh Du Dinh of the *SPVM*

Open forum on the collaborative agreement between the *SPVM* and the NETWORK

Networking break

Brainstorming on DESTINations' Aboriginal cultural programming 2017

Community announcements

Closing songs with the *Buffalo Hat Singers* drum group

Closing prayer with Norman Achneepineskum

Opening of the AGM of the Montreal Aboriginal Justice Centre

WORDS OF WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER WITH NORMAN ACHNEEPINESKUM

The Co-Chair, Nakuset, welcomed the participants. She declared the meeting open at 9:15am. She invited Mr. Norman Achneepineskum to deliver the opening prayer.

SONGS OF WELCOME WITH THE BUFFALO HAT SINGERS DRUM GROUP WITH BARBARA DIABO, DANCE PERFORMANCE AND ENERGIZING ACTIVITY

The Co-Chair, Nakuset, invited the *Buffalo Hat Singers* drum group to present their performance. They were accompanied by hoop dancer, Barbara Diabo.

Barbara Diabo then hosted an energizing activity.

PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA, ADOPTION OF THE GATHERING REPORT OF FEBRUARY 27, 2015 AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Nakuset read the agenda.

It was moved by Wayne Robinson and seconded by Alana-Dawn Phillips:
THAT THE PROPOSED AGENDA BE ADOPTED.
Adopted.

Nakuset stated that the members received the Gathering Report of February 27, 2015 in advance. She asked if any corrections were required.

Dolorès André requested a correction on page 4, second paragraph, third line from the end, to replace “designed” by “will design”.

It was moved by Rachel Deutsch and seconded by Jennifer Brazeau:
THAT THE GATHERING REPORT OF FEBRUARY 27, 2015 BE ADOPTED AS CORRECTED.
Adopted.

Regarding the Terms of Reference, Nakuset asked if the members wished to make any changes.

Jennifer Brazeau wished to propose an amendment to section 5A concerning the quorum for the Steering Committee meetings. Currently, the quorum calls for the presence of two representatives of Aboriginal organizations, which can be constraining. She proposed that the presence of one representative of Aboriginal organizations be required for quorum.

It was moved by Wayne Robinson and seconded by David Crane:
THAT SECTION 5A OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE, REGARDING THE QUORUM, BE AMENDED BY REPLACING “TWO (2) REPRESENTATIVES OF ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS” BY “ONE (1) REPRESENTATIVE OF ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS”.
Adopted.

UPDATE FROM THE NETWORK’S STEERING COMMITTEE: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2014-2015; BUDGET 2015-2016

Financial Statements 2014-2015 and Budget 2015-2016 were not available. Odile Joannette, Treasurer, being on medical leave, was not able to prepare them in time for the present Gathering. As soon as they are prepared, they will be submitted to the Steering Committee who will ensure that they are sent to the members by email. They will be approved at the next Gathering in February 2016.

MEET YOUR NETWORK'S WORKING COMMITTEES INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

The participants were invited to take note of the work and accomplishments of the various Working Committees by visiting their respective booths. It was suggested that they devote ten minutes to each booth so as to have time to visit all booths.

PRESENTATION BY MARC MARACLE, CHAIR OF THE OTTAWA ABORIGINAL COALITION

Before proceeding to Mr. Maracle's presentation, Geneviève Collard, who works at the Montreal Urban Service Centre and is Project Manager of the Pakatan socio-professional integration program, wished to introduce the 10 participants of the program present at the NETWORK's Gathering, along with their instructor, Jasmine. There is only one woman among the group. She explained that Pakatan means "portage", to illustrate that we all have a load to carry on our shoulders and that we have to get from point A to point B. She thanked the funders who support the project: *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec*, First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec (FNHRDCQ), First Nations Regional Adult Education Centre of Kahnawake as well as the team of the Urban Service Centre and the NETWORK that provides a forum within the community. She thanked the members of the NETWORK for their welcome.

The group is composed of young people between the ages of 17 and 35, of various origins, from Quebec, Nunavik, Western Canada, francophone and anglophone.

Marie-Josée Parent chaired the afternoon session. She invited Mr. Marc Maracle to present his organization, the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, its operating structure and strategic plan.

Mr. Maracle thanked the NETWORK for the invitation to share the Coalition's experience in the implementation of a collaborative approach between various Aboriginal service providers. He also wished to provide an outline of the Urban Strategy's contribution from 1997 to 2014, one of the outcomes of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples of 1996. Changes were made in 2014 and the National Association of Friendship Centres took over the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

While the Friendship Centre Movement is important, with its 119 centres nationwide, there are 6000 urban Aboriginal organizations in Canadian Cities. One can therefore count on great diversity and significant capacity within the Aboriginal communities. And in major cities such as Montreal, it is important to seize opportunities that emerge from the presence of a strong Aboriginal community, which is recognized by the federal government.

With regard to the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, Mr. Maracle wished to highlight its priorities, the importance of building relationships between its members and the collaboration established with the City of Ottawa, a level of government not traditionally perceived as a partner of Aboriginal people. In fact, in Ontario, the federal government continues to maintain special relations with Toronto, Ottawa and Thunder Bay on the basis of the Urban Strategy.

The Coalition was established in 2000-2001 stemming from a federal program on homelessness which was to be administered by the municipalities of Ottawa. The Aboriginal community therefore approached the City of Ottawa in order to be recognized as a stakeholder in the program since Aboriginal people then represented 19% of the City's homeless. This first contact led to the establishment of an ongoing dialogue.

Currently, 10 service organizations are part of the Coalition. Its aim is to contribute to an effective provision of services that meets the needs of individuals at the grassroots level. For its part, the City has a multicultural relations program that helped train 15,000 people and it made an effort to recruit Aboriginal people, mainly through student summer jobs.

Five years ago, the City invited two Algonquin communities of the territory to participate in a consultation and launched a call to recruit Algonquin artists to contribute to the design of identification signs in the City. And recently, the Mayor and other dignitaries have begun underlining that the City is located on unceded Algonquin territory. He also shows respect for Aboriginal history and contribution. The City Council also issues a statement each year on National Aboriginal Day and has established an Aboriginal reality awareness day by organizing training activities for their staff. Last year, it focused on the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that had just been released.

The Coalition primarily rests on a continuum of relationships between the members which begins with awareness and progresses to the education level.. The trust thus established between members leads to the ability to share risks together. It is what allows maintaining an open dialogue with the City representatives and it is not one-sided. The representatives hear the requests of the community, and also propose projects to the community members. They consult with the community on various issues that concern them, for example in the fields of health, social services, culture, protocols to be followed, etc.. This type of relationship also exists with other entities, including the police department, the local health services network and several school boards.

A task force was established in 2007 composed of representatives of various municipal services. Action Canada has also published a report on the work accomplished by the cities of Ottawa and Vancouver within the Aboriginal communities. It is available on the Action Canada website.

A relationship with United Way was established early in the creation of the Coalition. Five years ago, United Way raised \$33 million in the Ottawa area but only \$250,000.00 was allocated to three or four Aboriginal organizations. Yet, the mission of United Way consists of supporting the most vulnerable segments of society that show the greatest potential for improvement. Aboriginal youth and children meet this definition. Recommendations were made to United Way and it recognized the needs of the community and helped fund the development of the Coalition's capacity to make its voice heard within United Way. As a result, United Way introduced funders to the Coalition who were interested in funding projects for the Aboriginal community. It also worked with the community to identify Aboriginal persons who could sit on

boards of directors and, for the past four years, the Coalition has a representative who sits on United Way's board so that Aboriginal concerns are brought forward by an Aboriginal voice.

A relationship stemmed from the Urban Strategy, which allowed for the establishment of urban networks in 15 cities across Canada. Ten executive directors of organizations sit on the Coalition's board; but they are all very busy and it is difficult to follow up on meetings. This is why the Coalition hired a coordinator and a facilitator to ensure that the Aboriginal voice is heard.

The Coalition maintains relations with the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs of Ontario. At one time, it was on equal footing with the federal government in terms of capacity-building support, by completing the funding that was granted to the Coalition by the federal government. This was not the case in the 14 other cities that were part of the Urban Strategy.

Significant efforts were invested with the school boards in order to increase academic success essential for accessing the labour market. If issues of inadequate housing, health and education are not addressed, it is very difficult to access quality jobs. The goal of the Coalition is to open as many doors as possible so that the Aboriginal community has a variety of choices. Ultimately, it is up to the individuals, families and organizations to determine the door to be crossed. And if they stumble along the way, it is up to the Coalition to support and assist them at each step.

The Coalition is currently improving on the employability file. With the election of a new government, one might hope to establish a dialogue, which was not the case with the previous government. The Coalition requested that the mayor of Ottawa write a letter of support addressed to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, acknowledging the work accomplished by the community. It is recommended that the six cities with the highest Aboriginal population (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa) undertake joint action with the new Minister to restore the direct relationship that formerly existed, without necessarily calling into question the role of the Friendship Centre associations. We need help to better make our voices heard, and municipalities can play a significant role and provide new momentum in the current context. We need greater transparency in order to understand how public funds, dedicated to Aboriginal peoples, are used.

Our demography plays in our favour, and it is important to target our youth in at least 50% of our interventions, otherwise we risk missing the boat. We must find ways to make room for our youth in our organizations to enable them to voice their concerns and to take part in decisions that affect them.

It is important to build links with municipalities in the manner that is presented in Action Canada's report. Mr. Maracle approached the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to discuss the topic of the urban Aboriginal population. Their response was that municipalities maintain relationships with many Aboriginal communities, but these are actually First Nations reserves adjacent to municipalities, which share certain public services (police, fire department, etc.). There was no mention of the urban Aboriginal demographic. On November 20th, he was invited to address the Board of Directors to present the work accomplished in Ottawa regarding the potential relationship between municipalities and the Aboriginal demographic. The 15 cities covered by the Urban Strategy comprise 50% of the urban Aboriginal population. If one were to go further by aiming for 25 municipalities that have a significant Aboriginal population, it would climb to 80% of the population. This would represent substantial economies of scale, generated

from working with a group of municipalities and implementing collaborations. The Ottawa experience shows that it works, and this is so because Mayor Watson championed the cause.

Mr. Maracle agreed to address the NETWORK because he considers that it's essential to maintain links even if the Urban Strategy is no longer in effect. He wished to invite the NETWORK to establish a more direct relationship with the Mayor of Montreal.

Questions and comments

The example of United Way leads one to believe that an approach could be undertaken with *Centraide*. One might ask *Centraide* how it compares with United Way in terms of support to the most vulnerable.

Under the Urban Strategy, it was possible for the organizations of the participating cities to meet. Is this still possible? It would be desirable.

One of the first requests to make to the new government would be to provide organizations the means to work on common issues in a concerted manner. Mr. Maracle asked the NETWORK if it is willing to engage in such a process and to directly call on Mayor Coderre to intervene with the federal government.

Dolorès André said she cannot speak on behalf of the NETWORK but mentioned that it includes representatives of the three levels of government as well as of the First Nations and Inuit. As representative of the Education and Employability Committee, she said that she is pleased to learn about what is happening in the west and believes that Montreal could benefit from this. In Montreal, there are many Aboriginal people who come from all parts of Canada and it would be useful to establish partnerships.

Indeed, one will note common characteristics among the various cities and, while maintaining flexibility in order to adequately respond to local needs, it is important to know what is happening elsewhere. Our strength lies in our numbers. Under the former Urban Strategy, a type of coalition or steering committee was in place in which any interested group could participate. It provided an opportunity to the three levels of government to sit at the same table to discuss planning. It was the same for the Aboriginal parties (First Nations, Inuit and Métis). It was not possible for any single organization to control the table because it represented a diversity of interests. The focus was on service delivery rather than on political issues. And since the Urban Strategy did not have a significant funding envelope, Aboriginal political organizations were not particularly interested in it. It was thus possible to work more on community development.

Catherine Joncas from the Arts and Culture Committee mentioned that a City representative participates in the NETWORK. But she maintained that it would undoubtedly be interesting to develop a direct relationship with the Mayor. For example, as part of the 375th anniversary celebrations of Montreal in 2017, the Arts and Culture Committee has been spearheading a project for the past few years. It aims to create an Aboriginal arts and culture centre but the project is experiencing difficulties. It would perhaps be taken more seriously if it were to benefit from greater support from the City. There needs to be some reflection in this regard within the NETWORK.

Nahka Bertrand, coordinator of the Youth Committee, said she finds that a relationship with the municipality is beneficial because 50% of the decisions and policy that affect the community are made at a municipal level. She mentioned that she supports the comments put forth about making place for the youth and noted the potential offered by charitable organizations.

Mr. Maracle invited the members of the NETWORK to the Coalition's next annual forum to be held on December 10th on premises loaned by the City. He also mentioned that the Aboriginal community was called upon to work with the City to plan the festivities surrounding the celebrations of 2017.

Geneviève Beaudet wished to know if the Coalition is involved in other movements. She mentioned the Peoples Social Forum held in Ottawa in 2014 where significant attention was given to Aboriginal peoples through the 25 workshops that were offered on Aboriginal-specific issues. The World Social Forum will be held in Montreal in 2016. Would it not be a good opportunity for the various organizations to hold discussions and work together?

Indeed, members of the Ottawa Coalition attended the Peoples Social Forum. If a similar event is held in Montreal, it would provide a good opportunity to work together and to make our voices heard.

Nadine St-Louis, founder of a NPO in the cultural sector, served on the board of directors of an Aboriginal organization in Toronto for four years. Returning to Montreal, she was able to note the differences between the two organizations. In Toronto, the members of the various committees sat together at the same table with AANDC and a municipal representative. In terms of governance, it is important to ensure intersectoral representation at all levels. She mentioned that in Montreal, she feels that representation is fragmented; the City does not participate in our meetings in a true spirit of inclusion.

What exists in Toronto in terms of integration is similar to the experience in Ottawa. Mr. Maracle said that he is available to act as a resource person for the Montreal NETWORK.

Thanks were extended.

PRESENTATION OF THE COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SPVM AND THE NETWORK

The Chairperson invited Nakuset, Rachel Deutsch, Coordinator of the Cabot Square project, and Commander Khan Du Dinh to present the collaborative agreement signed between the *SPVM* and the NETWORK on June 25th. The agreement stems from an initiative of the Homelessness Sub-committee. It is the result of important preliminary work conducted with several neighbourhood police stations and the *Brigade de l'espace public*, which led to the conclusion that a higher level of intervention and a general agreement is necessary. Rachel mentioned that other members of the NETWORK also collaborated in the negotiations that led to the agreement, including Sylvia Souza, Wayne Robinson and Vivian Carley.

The agreement includes four components:

1. Strengthening partnerships

Aboriginal organizations, such as *PAQ*, already conduct joint patrols with the *SPVM*. In view of deepening existing partnerships, the *SPVM* created an Aboriginal community liaison officer position, filled by Mr. Carlo de Angelis.

An email consultation was conducted among the various Aboriginal organizations of Montreal to find out if they, themselves, wished to develop relations with the local police services. A reminder will be sent out which will also serve to publicize the role of the liaison officer.

The primary objective of the agreement is to create a vigilance committee made up of representatives of the *SPVM*, and partners/organizations that work with Aboriginal communities, as well as members of the *NETWORK*. A first meeting will be held on November 9th. The vigilance committee will serve as a platform for information exchange on issues that arise on front lines. The committee members will not merely be there to listen, but also to make decisions and take action.

2. Raising awareness among *SPVM* officers

Methods of raising awareness are in development, a process that has taken more than a year. We've studied what is being done in other cities in order to determine best practices. Community members have been consulted in order to know their concerns. Finally, a 25-page guide was prepared and will be used to provide training to all police officers on various topics, such as cultural realities, colonialism, residential schools, anti-oppression, etc.

Dr. Elizabeth Fast, who is Métis, contributed to the design of the training. It can be subdivided into three different modules. In an ideal world, it would extend over a period of three days – and in some Canadian cities, it is even longer – but this may not be realistic in Montreal. It will be up to the various stations to determine the modules that would initially be most appropriate for them. In time, we hope to be able to provide a complete training.

A bilingual Aboriginal person will be hired to visit the various police stations to provide the training. Nadine St-Louis expressed her interest in the position.

3. Establishing a protocol for prevention in airports

The protocol is similar to what the YMCA has established with regard to bus terminals (First Stop program). It is a prevention program proposed by Officer Angelis concerning the arrival of persons from the North who are not familiar with Montreal and who may be vulnerable to certain dangers. The protocol aims to provide information about the resources available to them.

Such a protocol already exists in other cities. However, financial resources are required in order to hire staff.

4. Establishing a protocol for missing and murdered Aboriginal women

This dramatic situation is occurring at an alarming rate, even in Montreal. Given the lack of confidence of Aboriginal people towards the police, there is a strong reluctance on their part to turn to them, especially, since in the past, cases reported to them were not taken seriously although they should have been. Alana Boileau from Quebec Native Women laid down significant groundwork with the Aboriginal community to highlight its perceptions and expectations and with the *SPVM* to compile a list of resources that it can use.

Research has been conducted surrounding existing protocols related to human trafficking, violence and missing persons in order to improve the handling of cases. For example, when a person is reported missing, the case should be considered a priority. The measures retained include the creation of a coordinator position that will be filled by an Aboriginal person who will act as intermediary between the *SPVM* and the Aboriginal community which, frequently, resists communicating directly with the police. This person could also be contacted by women wishing to let their family know that they are safe but not ready to return home. The duties will include prevention and education. Thus, women arriving in Montreal could be provided a welcome kit consisting of metro tickets, a list of telephone numbers and invitations to get in touch with various organizations, because building a community network helps ensure safety.

Nakuset reported that last month, she and Alana attended a conference in Edmonton on missing Aboriginal women organized by the police services. The work accomplished by the NETWORK Committee around the protocol was presented and received positive feedback, indicating that the NETWORK is on the right track on this issue. Funding sources were suggested.

Subsequently, the NETWORK requested a contribution of \$10,000 from the Mayor of Montreal to implement an emergency hotline connected with a trusted member of the Aboriginal community who could, in turn, call families, friends, shelters and hospitals to establish the profile of a person deemed missing and then be able to report the case to the police. Also, research has shown that the police force does not communicate enough with the families of missing persons; it would be appropriate to establish regular reports on the progress of the investigation and even implement a database of Aboriginal crisis centres that could provide support. A number of Aboriginal organizations could contribute to funding the service, such as the Cabot Square project, Quebec Native Women, the Native Women's Shelter. *PAQ* could also provide expertise. The file is advancing rapidly, and the Sub-Committee on Missing Aboriginal Women meets every week.

Rachel Deutsch ended the presentation by underlining the collaboration of the *SPVM* and she thanked all those who have participated in the work, which has concluded in an agreement.

OPEN FORUM ON THE COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SPVM AND THE NETWORK

In the context of the revelations made in Val-d'Or, certain participants mentioned that they find it difficult to trust the police. The question was raised as to why Aboriginal police are not called on to work in their community.

Commander Khanh Du Dinh said that he recognizes that trust is not a given and must be earned within the community, considering its history of relations with the police services. Work on this file is conducted not only on the basis of structure, but especially with the heart. There is still a long way to go, but he is convinced that a collaboration with the NETWORK and various partners will lead to concrete results. He also mentioned that the *SPVM* has a dozen Aboriginal police officers. Nakuset added that one can also count on the presence of a vigilance committee comprised of Aboriginal members and an Aboriginal policewoman. She invited the youth to participate in the committee.

It was mentioned that Yves Francoeur, president of the police union, told CBC that there were only a handful of Aboriginal people in Montreal and that there was no actual community. How might one rectify this as soon as possible?

Commander Khanh Du Dinh stated that Mr. Francoeur's remarks do not reflect the opinion of the *SPVM*. The union and the *SPVM* are two separate entities. He acknowledged, however, that the latter must ensure clear communication in order to rectify perceptions.

Nadine St-Louis said she believes that during the trainings, statistics on the presence and distribution of Aboriginal nations in Montreal should be disseminated. It would undoubtedly be useful to offer online training, which would help the commanders to disseminate it more quickly to a greater number of police officers. Commander Khanh Du Dinh mentioned that the second objective of the protocol covers police training, not only on the basis of figures, but especially on that of the reality experienced. Online training as well as the use of video capsules are part of the strategies and are already used in the case of various cultural communities.

Danielle St-Laurent, herself Aboriginal, works at the Aboriginal Initiatives Branch of Correctional Services Canada. She said that it is not always easy to work for the government and deal with racism and discrimination. She mentioned that the training should focus on the positive aspects of Aboriginal cultures, not only the problems. It would be commendable to bring police officers to communities so as to increase their understanding of realities, the sense of belonging and the reasons that lead some people to relocate to Montreal.

Mélissa Mollen-Dupuis, of Idle No More, Quebec, expressed her satisfaction with the agreement signed with the *SPVM* which, for once, was carried out not for Aboriginal people, but by them. She wished, however, to echo the comments made by the Pakatan project youth. In the same way that police officers do not make a distinction between the various nations, for the youth "the police are the police", regardless of the police force involved. Her concern is that the investigation on the *Sûreté du Québec* officers implicated in the Val-d'Or events was entrusted to the *SPVM*. Will the *SPVM* have the necessary hindsight? Secondly, the protocol is related to front line work, will it also cover mobilizations in public spaces? The question arises since a major vigil is being held today at *Place-des-Arts*.

Another participant mentioned that Aboriginal people do not trust the *SPVM* to conduct the investigations on the Val-d'Or events. What is called for, and proper, is an independent investigation.

Commander Khanh Du Dinh said that he understands the difficulty in distinguishing between different police forces. However, he can affirm today that the will is there. It is by working together that one will be able to make the distinction. The training will also be useful in terms of

managing services related to order during demonstrations. In regards to entrusting the Val-d'Or investigation to the *SPVM*, it was a political decision.

A question was raised as to whether it is still possible to join the vigilance committee and, if so, how does one proceed? Is it a committee that will take our concerns into account or is it merely a committee of "token Indians"?

At its first meeting on November 9th, the committee will focus on its operating mode and the recruitment of members willing to engage in a sustained manner. Those interested in joining the committee may send an email to Rachel. The question of a "token" committee remains a concern, and it will be necessary to exercise vigilance. But so far, things have gone well, and the *SPVM* has moved much faster than anticipated.

Geneviève Collard, Innu from the North Shore, works for the Pakatan program. She mentioned that the *SPVM* is invited to the Mamu Fair. The *SPVM* attended with a young Wendat who now works for the police force. It is true that the mistrust continues. It would doubtlessly be useful to highlight the Aboriginal members of the police force, as well as Aboriginal members of the fire department, and to draw strength from this. However, it can not be easy to be a police officer as well as Aboriginal person and be stuck between a rock and a hard place. Many Aboriginal people do not want to appear as such. There may be a need to take a census.

Thanks were extended to Commander Khanh Du Dinh, Nakuset and Rachel Deutsch.

BRAINSTORMING FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROGRAMMING 2017

Before undertaking the brainstorming activity, Marie-Josée Parent presented an update on the DestiNATIONS project, which is intended to be the Aboriginal cultural embassy proposed by André Dudemaine in 1983. His dream implies designing a cultural centre in Montreal that celebrates First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures. In 1983, no Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal government was ready for such a project. This is why André Dudemaine turned instead to the creation of the First Peoples' Festival. When the NETWORK was established, he resumed the effort with the Arts-Culture Committee, and thus, DestiNATIONS took shape.

The founding meeting was held in May. Since then, the business plan was reviewed to include a tourism component, giving international exposure to the project. A partnership was established with Quebec Aboriginal Tourism in order to make the centre known worldwide. Letters were sent to four government departments soliciting investments, and the response was encouraging. They consist of the *Culture Ministry*, the *Tourism Ministry*, the *Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat* and the *Metropolitan Secretariat*. It is hoped that an interdepartmental agreement can be obtained to allow specification of the start date of the construction. At the moment, the aim is 2017 with inauguration in 2018. Initially, the opening of the centre was set for 2017. With the change of government in Quebec, the whole process slowed down. Finally, the budget of \$12 million reserved by the Marois government became available again. Mayor Coderre was informed of the release of funds and he was asked to reintegrate DestiNATIONS into the legacy of the 375th anniversary. The CEO of Tourism Montreal, for his part, has agreed to request a meeting with the Mayor in order to put the project back on track. The Chair of the board of directors of DestiNATIONS, Ghislain Picard, will present the project to the Table of Chiefs in mid-November in view of obtaining a resolution of support for the project.

The project is progressing well, but there remains a large amount of work to be completed. The goal is to secure 2/3 of the budget by spring 2016. The implementation site has not yet been determined, but three downtown locations are being studied. Aboriginal Tourism will be invited to the next gathering so as to allow everyone to become familiar with the project. Marie-Josée Parent plans to conduct a new public consultation.

It must be noted that DestiNATIONS, through the Urban Partnerships program of the *Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones*, received funding to conduct research on Aboriginal cultural development across Quebec. Phase 1 is underway in five urban areas: Gatineau, Montreal, Quebec City, Saguenay and Sept-Îles. The aim is to draw up an overview of the situation in terms of jobs, production, consumers and visitors. Afterwards, another grant will be requested from Urban Partnerships for phase 2 to conduct a study in smaller towns so as to cover the entire territory. The project benefits from partnerships with the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec*, the Arts Council of Montreal, Quebec Aboriginal Tourism and the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec. All these partners are committed to implementing the recommendations arising from the research in their funding structure to support Aboriginal artists and organizations.

Nadine St-Louis recalled that during the discussions, some confusion arose between DestiNATIONS and her own cultural project, Ashukan, Sacred Fire. Did this represent an issue as regards city hall and other levels of government?

When Ashukan opened, there was the usual reaction "that we already had a cultural centre and that is enough". But with the support of Nadine St-Louis and André Dudemaine, it was shown that the respective missions of the two organizations were different, that they somewhat complemented each other and that they had to be located close to each other. In fact, Sacred Fire Productions as well as Ondinook will be housed in the DestiNATIONS building. With the First Peoples' Festival in the sector, one could almost speak of an Aboriginal district in the heart of Montreal, which will have to be developed.

Catherine Joncas wished to know about the original concept that aimed to create an arts and culture venue. Her concern is that there may be a reproduction of the Wendake hotel-museum and that it would become a hybrid project approved by the governments to get rid of us, but to which we no longer adhere, nor want to invest. Marie-Josée Parent replied that she shared these concerns for a few months during the negotiations with Aboriginal Tourism. The governmental funders had set the condition of acceptance of a partnership with Aboriginal Tourism. In fact, the recreational-tourism component will have its own space and Aboriginal Tourism will provide expertise in relation to the reception. But otherwise, the project remains intact. Aboriginal Tourism recognized that it is important that the project emerge from the Montreal community and that it will primarily have a cultural vocation.

In terms of Aboriginal cultural programming for 2017, which is the year marking the 375th anniversary of Montreal and the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation, it was considered essential to ensure a strong Aboriginal cultural presence on the occasion. Planning efforts have been undertaken in which several organizations are collaborating. An application for a grant was submitted to the Society of the 375th Anniversary in view of designing an extensive communication strategy.

It is important for the NETWORK to be associated to the initiative, and this is why a consultation is being conducted today in the form of brainstorming to determine how Aboriginal programming can be put forward downtown for 2017. The participants were requested to form four groups to respectively consider the following:

- communication tools;
- the development of a visual identity that conveys a common identity;
- other cultural projects that might emerge and be included in the programming;
- solutions to ensure that the programming extends beyond 2017.

A funding application has been submitted to the Society of the 375th Anniversary to carry out a marketing campaign.

Suggestions will be collected on mobile sheets and posted in a Facebook group where they can be completed.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nakuset underlined the presence of a representative of Amnesty International.

❖ Vigil

At 6:00 p.m. today, a vigil will take place on the esplanade of *Place-des-Arts* in solidarity with the women of Val-d'Or in order to make the government understand that violence against Aboriginal women must stop. Many organizations will be present, including Quebec Native Women, AFNQL, and Idle No More. The Regional Chief will speak as well as Nakuset and other members of the Aboriginal community. All those present here are invited to attend.

❖ Pakatan Project

Dolorès André, representative of the Education and Employability Circle of the NETWORK and who also works at the Montreal Urban Service Centre of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec, wished to provide an update on the Ka Mamukanit socio-professional integration project for the youth. A new project, Pakatan, has started and is in its second cohort. In the first group that finished, on the 10 participants enrolled, 7 completed the entire course, and most of them are now employed or have returned to school. The second group consists of 10 youth. A few of them will be coming to the gathering later today.

The project is running smoothly. The search for funding continues. Thanks were extended to the organizations and individuals who collaborated over the past year.

In addition, the Circle had produced an Aboriginal Reference Guide on employment. It was depleted. It has been updated and the new version was supposed to be presented today, but there was a delay with regard to the graphics. It will thus be available next week and it will be possible to obtain copies on the premises.

❖ Education Workshops

Rachel Deutsch announced that a series of free workshops will begin soon at the Friendship Centre and are intended for all persons involved in the Aboriginal community.

❖ **Wapikoni mobile**

Virginie Michel, who works in communications for Wapikoni mobile, wished to inform the members that in recent months, Wapikoni has endowed itself with a fully equipped recording studio that can be made available to the community. Professional filmmakers as well as the more advanced filmmakers of Wapikoni, currently following film-editing training at *UQAM*, could provide assistance for the production of videos. It also provides job opportunities for the youth who are in training. There are costs associated to the use of the studio, but they are lower than on the market. Information on this subject is found in the “services offered” section on the Wapikoni website. One can also find dubbing in Aboriginal languages, musical recording, etc.

❖ **Blue Dot Movement / Right to a Healthy Environment**

Cam Cheema, from the David Suzuki Foundation, is coordinator of the Blue Dot Movement / Right to a Healthy Environment in Quebec. The movement was launched 18 months ago with a Canadian tour by David Suzuki on environmental rights and the responsibility of each individual in the protection of our air, water and soil.

So far, 110 countries worldwide have recognized the right to a healthy environment, but Canada is not among them. The campaign aims to bring all levels of government to adhere to the movement by focusing on the creation of grassroots organizations across Canada. The initial objective was to obtain declarations from three major municipalities in favour of a healthy environment. But the movement significantly gained momentum and, one year later, 150 municipalities have endorsed the declaration, including the City of Montreal. We received testimonials from many communities, including a certain number that do not have access to drinking water sources. This mobilization led the government of Manitoba to enact a bill of rights that recognizes that environmental rights cannot be dissociated from human rights.

Ultimately, the goal of the campaign is to get the government of Canada to adopt an amendment to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms so as to insert the right to a healthy environment. For those who feel this is not possible, one must remember that the Canadian Constitution has been amended 11 times so far, and for reasons much less important than the right to breathe clean air and eat healthy food.

He said he attended the NETWORK gathering today in order to listen and to see if there are possibilities as to the NETWORK and the Foundation working together. His role is to develop links with grassroots organizations and to offer training to young leaders. He will be on-site all day to talk with the participants.

In the past, he worked in the field of social justice, particularly in New York with ethnic and racial minorities. He found that the members of those communities are precisely those who are most affected by the poor quality of the environment. For example, in the Bronx, 40% of the children suffer from respiratory problems. In Canada itself, certain communities live in conditions that resemble Third-World conditions as they do not have access, for example, to drinking water, all because it is not part of recognized rights.

❖ **Mobile Legal Clinic**

Donald Tremblay and Sara Archambault wished to present the Mobile Legal Clinic which, as its name suggests, travels around to assist vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness and who have legal problems. It works a lot with *Projet autochtones du Québec (PAQ)*. They will be available during the day to talk with the participants.

❖ **Musique nomade**

Nadine St-Louis announced that on November 20th, *Musique nomade*, a group of emerging young Aboriginal musicians, will be opening the show of a Mohawk musician from Ontario, Logan Statts, at the Ashukan Cultural Space.

CLOSING SONGS WITH THE BUFFALO HAT SINGERS DRUM GROUP

The Buffalo Hat Singers closed the Fall Gathering with a drum performance.

CLOSING PRAYER WITH NORMAN ACHNEEPINESKUM

Norman Achneepineskum was invited to deliver the closing prayer.

The agenda being exhausted, the Fall Gathering of the NETWORK ended at 4:15 p.m. with a new draw. It was followed by the AGM of the Montreal Aboriginal Justice Centre at 4:30 p.m.