

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

The official launching of a NETWORK of partners! A strategic initiative intended to serve the 8th largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada.

Montreal (QC) November 3, 2010 – The city of Montreal has the 8th largest Aboriginal population in Canada. However, are the Montrealers more familiar with the realities of this population? Do organizations all use concerted approaches to improve the services that are provided to them? Are the members of the community regularly consulted for the purpose of evaluating and implementing projects that pertain to them? Well, this is what the *Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network (NETWORK)* is proposing to do.

The Aboriginal population face numerous and unquestioned challenges, issues and needs. The alarming statistics which, in the end, determine the poor state of health of the community are more often than not, the only accessible information consequently depicting a rather negative image. The NETWORK, comprised of more than 500 members (organizations and individuals, as well the three levels of government, the Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and the Makivik Corporation) therefore wishes to promote a different message and a new approach inspired by solutions, joint efforts and shared responsibility.

“We are part of a history, one that led to the alarming statistics and which placed us at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale of Quebec, but we will also be part of a future, one that will be built from the results of our efforts. The NETWORK is a forum for dialogue between those who develop and deliver services, those who use the services and those who fund and contribute to their implementation. Together, we can plan strategies and actions to improve the well-being of all Aboriginal people living in the greater Montreal area, according to our values and respect for our traditions”, said Odile Joannette, Co-Chair of the NETWORK.

To improve the coordination of activities, six working committees were established with each their own respective priorities in the areas of health, social services, employment, training and education, art and culture, communications and youth. In addition, thanks to the contribution of the City of Montreal, the “Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones”, the Office of the Federal Interlocutor and the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec, the NETWORK now has a coordinator and ensures seasonal gatherings with its members.

Today, the NETWORK announced its intentions: solid partnerships, unveiling of a logo containing strong and powerful symbols, the launching of a website as well as a resource directory initially prepared by the City of Montreal but that will now be hosted by the NETWORK.

BIRTH OF THE NETWORK

There are 18,000 Aboriginal persons living in the greater Montreal area. This area ranks eighth among Canada's census metropolitan areas where the largest Aboriginal populations are found. At the First Nations Socioeconomic Forum in 2006, it was declared that it is essential to better understand the needs of Aboriginal people living in urban areas. Since its initial stages in 2008, the origin of the NETWORK was based on the importance of partnerships and the necessity to address several identified factors such as: a higher poverty rate than cities of comparable size, a growing number of homeless persons, an increase in the number of Aboriginal students, an employment rate which is still much lower than the non-Aboriginal reality, a rising number of children under the care of the Youth Protection Directorate.

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