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ANNUAL REPORT

The Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK

Organizational Update 2019-2020

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WE BRING THE --- COMMUNITY --- TOGETHER

Our organizational members include community and volunteers, nonprofit organizations, governments and institutions, and some businesses.

We facilitate intentional connection building by bringing together key groups and people to work on specific priority areas. These spaces are physical and virtual, from multi-stakeholder working committees and seasonal gatherings, to community newsletters and spaces to work alongside one another. The NETWORK also develops and collaborates on a variety of high-impact projects, including research projects, awareness building tools, strategies, and much more.

We believe in the power of working together in order to address complex issues.

OUR JOURNEY

... SO FAR

Originally created in 2008 under the name, Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community NETWORK, the **Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK** supports the ecosystem of individuals and groups committed to improving the quality of life of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people living in the greater Montreal area.

TOGETHER, WITH OUR PARTNERS, WE:



**SHARE information
& TRANSFER
knowledge**



**PRIORITIZE
needs**



**ADDRESS gaps &
REDUCE duplication of
efforts**



**CREATE & STRENGTHEN
relationships**

1 | ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

RESTRUCTURING AND INCORPORATION

Since 2018, the NETWORK team and budget has expanded significantly through the restructuring of the NETWORK which included a newly member-developed strategic plan.

This restructuring came with a lot of firsts:



**FIRST INCORPORATION
APRIL 2019**



FIRST BOARD OF DIRECTORS



FIRST SET OF BYLAWS



FIRST AGM



FIRST OFFICE SPACE



**FIRST SET OF POLICIES,
PROCEDURES, AND MORE!**

THE NETWORK'S NEW HOME

Our growth included our first home to accommodate the staff member team growth by relocating to 1555a Papineau!

ADAPTING TO THE PANDEMIC

Community needs and organizational realignment

During the last two weeks of March, we adapted all of our day-to-day activities and we quickly realized that we would be working long hours to accommodate those in need during this pandemic.

We did so by taking action in the following areas among others:



ONLINE GATHERINGS

When the pandemic hit, two gatherings that were scheduled had to be postponed. We have since hosted several online gatherings with our Youth Advisors, community members, and other community partners.

A Youth Gathering was planned for February 28th. This was a youth led initiative to provide direction on the Safety, Wellbeing, and Belonging Strategy which also will be rescheduled in a virtual or post-pandemic setting.

The gathering scheduled for March 13th, Gathering Our Thunder, was also postponed due to the Pandemic



WORKING GROUPS

The NETWORK developed and facilitated two working groups to address the immediate needs of the community.

The working groups each focussed on the needs 1) of the street community, and 2) those precariously housed.

The following key organization participated in these spaces:

- The First Peoples' Justice Center of Montreal
- Projets autochtones du Québec
- Native Women's Shelter of Montreal
- The Indigenous Support Worker Project
- Resilience Montreal
- Southern Quebec Inuit Association
- Makivik Corporation
- Native Friendship Center of Montreal
- Native Montreal
- Quebec Native Women
- Santropol Roulant
- Chez Doris
- The Open Door Montreal and more.

From these working groups emerged creative ways to equip centres and shelters with cleaning products and services, meals, volunteers, funding, personal protective equipment, meals, food baskets, and grocery gifts cards, and much (much) more.

ADAPTING TO THE PANDEMIC (CONT.)

Community needs and organizational realignment



DIGITAL CONTENT

Distribution of weekly newsletters with the most up-to-date information for community members, as well as partners and authorities.



FUTURE EVENTS

We are hoping to host the next National Urban Indigenous Coalitions meeting in Montréal, which is dependant on how the global pandemic evolves.



COMMUNICATION

We ensure regular communications with nonprofit and public sectors to ensure that information was being shared regularly and to ensure that essential services were receiving the support that they needed in terms of funding, volunteers, equipment and more (like cleaning products, PPE, food, transportation, housing, etc.).



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SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

... AND OTHER UPDATES



STRATEGY PROJECT

The Strategy for Safety, Belonging, and Well-Being of Indigenous people in Montreal is a project meant to gather all the work that the working committees have done and to combine it with the current information, knowledge, experiences, and expertise of the Indigenous community available to us. We are using an umbrella approach to cocreate an overall strategy for Montreal through community led research. Until the pandemic hit, our team had collected all existing documents and had begun analyzing it for presentation to the community. This phase will resume when the effects of the pandemic stabilize.



RESEARCH PROTOCOL

We have drafted a Community Research Protocol to encourage community-led research and equip Indigenous people with tools to engage more critically with researcher and research about themselves.



YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We have also recruited approximately 27 youth advisors between December 2019 and March 2020. The youth advisors are invited to contribute to the organization in different ways and receive a remuneration of \$20 per hour for their time, including a variety of tasks and learning opportunities to develop their overall skills and abilities. We have since hired two of the youth advisors to be staff members of the NETWORK as an event planner and a communications officer.



STAFF VISIONING

Our growth has required us to create space and time to reflect on our organization, which we made possible at a staff retreat in November 2019. In that space we brainstormed and planned for the following : Creating a true consultative process, measuring and assessing impact of our work, and diversifying revenue.



WORKING COMMITTEES

Indigenous Support Worker Project

The homeless working committee launched the Indigenous Support Worker Project which is a peer-led support program for the street community in the Plateau Mont-Royal area.

Pow Wow

The Youth committee project was postponed due to the pandemic, which was initially organized for August 2020. This large Pow wow will be organized by the youth committee in 2021, in collaboration with the City of Montreal.

Since the NETWORK's restructuring, the team began relaunching working committees. The first of which was focused on the street community sector during the pandemic, and the second revolving around food security for those who are precariously housed.



A DECOLONIZED THE HIRING PROCESS

The NETWORK values lived experiences and learning potentials, understanding that education from colonial institutions is a privilege. During the hiring process, we ask questions about knowledge, experience, and critical thinking. Once hired, we invest in teaching, shadowing, accompanying, empowering, in order to build leadership skills among Indigenous community members. We aim to empower Indigenous community members to present themselves as experts of their own experiences and cultures. It is important for us to engage and hire Indigenous individuals, organizations, and volunteers as much as possible.



PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT

We have also partnered with *Land is our Teacher* (previously named *Restoring our Roots*) from Concordia University since their project's goals for supporting youth aligned with the NETWORK's Strategy project.

The NETWORK also supports young Indigenous organizations through shared resources such as:

- The hiring of a shared bookkeeper for the NETWORK, the Southern Quebec Inuit Association, and Mikana.
- The sharing of office space to encourage our Indigenous entrepreneurship and changemaking: Mikana, Canadian Roots Exchange, and Yandata were housed at our offices in 2019-2020 among others.

3 | STRENGTHENING OF ALLIANCES

The NETWORK continues to work towards creating reciprocal relationships with other partners. A few to name are:

NETWORK ENVIRONMENTS IN INDIGENOUS HEALTH RESEARCH

The NETWORK is a partner in the NEIHRs project, which is a collaborative project aimed at increasing Indigenous health research capacity across Quebec. For the NETWORK, it's an opportunity to: prioritize and amplify Indigenous expertise and build mechanisms from the bottom up, share practices and learn through connecting with other Indigenous networks, coalitions, and groups beyond Montreal, re-connect through deepening relationships with communities of origin of Indigenous people living in Montreal, and find new ways to collaborate and maximize the exchange of information about systems change between groups. It is a 5 year project with the possibility of being renewed twice (15 years total), and it is in the beginning stages.



TABLE LOCALE D'ACCESSIBILITÉ DES SERVICES EN SANTÉ ET SERVICES SOCIAUX POUR LES AUTOCHTONES À MONTRÉAL

NETWORK staff member, Leilani Shaw, co-chairs the CIUSSS centre-sud d'Île de Montréal *Table locale d'accessibilité des services en santé et services sociaux pour les autochtones à Montréal* which is a place to exchange dialogue between various health and social service branches and Indigenous groups. From this process, the creation of the *Montreal Indigenous Health Advisory Committee* was created to provide a safe space for local Indigenous and Indigenous-serving organizations to come together and discuss priorities as it pertains to health and social services in the public systems.



INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP

The NETWORK also works towards strengthening alliances among settlers who wish to repair relationships with Indigenous people, but don't always know how. Some of this work is done through the Indigenous Ally Toolkit launched in fall 2018, which has since been shared hundreds of thousands of times internationally, and used in workshops, conferences, colleges, universities, governments, nonprofits, and so much more. The sale of physical copies of the publication is one way that the NETWORK is able to generate revenue, and facilitating workshops on the subject

is another. The toolkit has also been adapted for specific regions, cultures, communities, and languages.

The toolkit put the NETWORK on an international map, as the NETWORK won the *Prix du Fonds Benenson-Humphrey* Award from *Amnistie Internationale Canada Francophone* for their continued work towards the bettering of socioeconomic conditions for Indigenous populations within Montréal.

NATIONAL URBAN INDIGENOUS COALITION

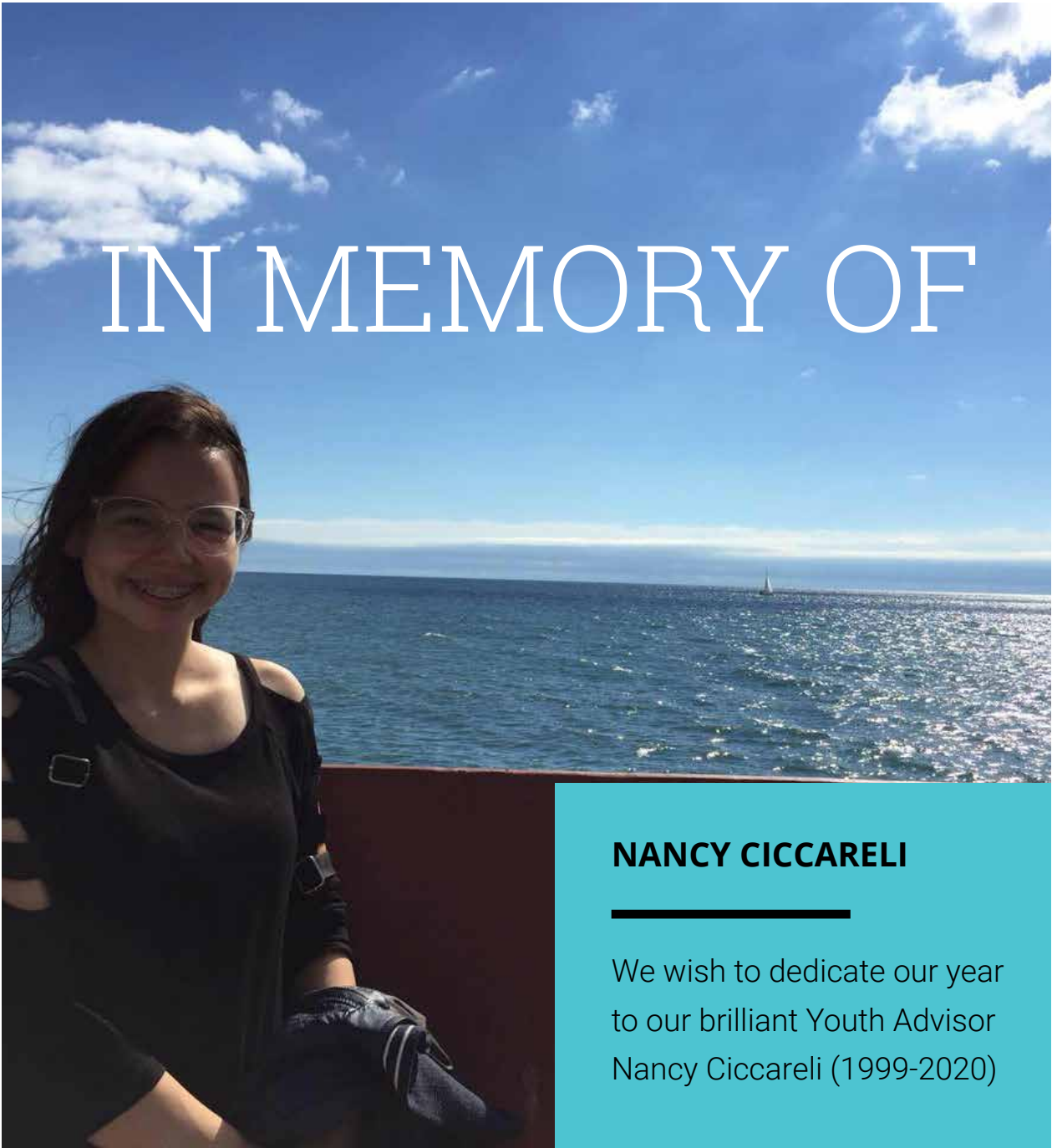
The NETWORK is a member and participated in the creation of a National Urban Indigenous Coalition, bringing together groups like ours from cities from coast to coast to cast. The groups come together semiannually to share information and knowledge, and identify priorities for Indigenous people living in urban centres. This coming-together of groups also allows for the strengthening of urban Indigenous voices in discussions with Indigenous Services Canada.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

The NETWORK collaborated with a 400-Level geography & urban studies course at Concordia University, on a project called "Changing the Lens". Students were challenged to explore and present the colonial history of a neighbourhood, landmark, or name in Montreal.

VOLUNTEERS AND DONORS

The NETWORK mobilized and redirected hundreds of volunteers and donors to Indigenous-serving shelters & centers during the first wave of the pandemic, while also coordinating material donations (clothing, meals, PPE, and more) for these same shelters and centers.



IN MEMORY OF

NANCY CICCARELI

We wish to dedicate our year to our brilliant Youth Advisor Nancy Ciccareli (1999-2020)

Nancy was an brilliant young woman, eager to try new tasks and learn new skills. She joined the team of NETWORK youth advisors during the winter of 2019, and she immediately became one of the most dedicated members of our team. Nancy contributed to summarizing research, played a vital role in contributing to the Safety, Wellbeing, and Belonging Strategy project, and took a lead role in planning the youth Gathering scheduled for March 27th (postponed due to the Pandemic).

We could count on Nancy coming into the office daily (even some Saturdays!), and joining staff on weekend brunches, tea breaks, and late night meetings. Did you know she was also the best dumpling maker!?

Nancy is greatly missed and the entire NETWORK team wishes her a peaceful journey to the other side. Nancy, may you rest in peace - you will always be with us in our hearts.