



2021-2022

ANNUAL REPORT

A Mission

in the Heart of our Actions

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre is a hub of urban services, a living environment and a cultural anchor for First Peoples, dedicated to well-being, justice and social inclusion, it promotes harmonious coexistence in the community. Leader of a committed Indigenous civil society, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre actively contributes to the social, community, economic and cultural development of the community through innovative and proactive strategies. At the Friendship Centre, programming and service provision are based on human values of commitment, respect, integrity, solidarity.



A WORD
FROM OUR
PRESIDENT

OSCAR KISTABISH



Our traditional medicine, our values, our connection to the land and above all our sense of community are our path to healing.

This legacy forms the roots that bind us to our history, giving us the strength to project ourselves into the future and to walk resolutely towards our Mino Pimatisi8in (balance).

This is the path we choose to take every day at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre.

Kitci Meegwetc to our team, our partners and our urban Indigenous community

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Oscar Kistabish".

Kitci Meegwetc to the members of the 2021-2022 Board of Directors for their commitment to the good governance of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, with a participation in 13 meetings and numerous training and representation activities.

Oscar Kistabish, President

Sharon Hunter, Vice-president

**Hakim Mark-Thameri,
Secretary-Treasurer**

Marco Cloutier, Director

Viviane Poucachiche, Director

Doris St-Pierre, Director

**Taïsha Papatie-Anichinapéo,
Director**

Janet Mark, Director

Gina Richmond Mainville, Director



A WORD FROM
THE DIRECTOR
GENERAL

EDITH
CLOUTIER

Kwe,

Community reconnection in a pandemic context was a major priority for our Friendship Centre over the past year. The ties forged with the community over the decades are the foundation on which the Centre's collective action is based. Thus, when these ties are weakened by a global health crisis, there is a real risk of losing your community reference points. Fortunately, the long history of friendship between the Centre and its members has proven to be a beacon, a light in the pandemic night.

The gradual resumption of unifying activities, such as the Family Christmas Party, the Gabriel-Commanda Walk, National Indigenous Peoples' Day, the Mémégwashi academic perseverance gala, the Memorial Vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls and Women provided opportunities to reconnect with the Friendship Centre's big family. These happy reunions reflect a strong sense of solidarity and demonstrate a remarkable community resilience.

The heart of our Friendship Centre vibrates to the rhythm of its community's vitality. An innovative and proactive community working to develop a model of urban Indigenous community governance. In concrete terms, it is by directing the destiny of its community, particularly in terms of wellness, health, housing, education, fight against poverty and social exclusion, that the Friendship Centre demonstrates its autonomy, self-determination and governance.

Like our ancestors, with its moccasins on, the Friendship Centre will continue to walk with bravery and perseverance for the good of its community, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Friendship Centre team includes 77 employees

In recognition of the extra efforts made by our staff during the pandemic, three creative activities were organised to allow them to socialise, have fun and recover:

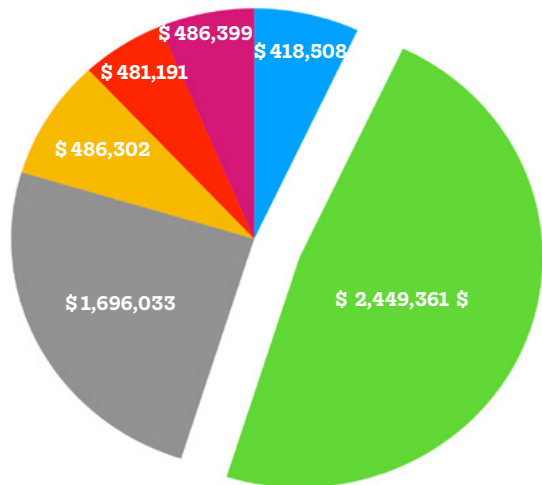
- a virtual happy hour and the distribution of a comfort box,
- a campfire bannock activity at the Kinawit cultural site with our elder Oscar Kistabish,
- a festive recognition event under the theme «Let's pat our backs» during which we celebrated employees' years of service.

In addition, adaptations to the COVID-19 prevention measures have been maintained to ensure the health and safety of staff and community members.



Distribution of revenues

\$6M



- Support to the mission - federal, provincial and Cree gov. grants
- Programs and services – federal grants
- Programs and services – provincial grants
- Programs and services – other grants
- Service contracts
- Self-financing revenues



Community

Services

Justice Access Service

The Justice Access Service aims to better respond to the community members' needs, by allowing them to be assisted and informed in order to understand and exercise their rights in matters of justice and public security, through a community-based approach focusing on individual and collective empowerment.

246 individual interventions with 101 persons



The increased number of actions in the area of access to justice makes it possible to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of partnerships in this area, particularly with the Youth Protection Director and the Criminal and Penal Prosecutions Director.

16 individuals were able to make a fresh start thanks to the Val-d'Or Anwatan-PAJIC program. This initiative, carried out in collaboration with the City of Val-d'Or, offers homeless or vulnerable people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, alternative means to have their municipal offence record cleared.

One of the highlights of the year was the development and implementation of an Urban Aboriginal Alternative Measures program (UA-AMP) in criminal matters.

Legal information clinics were held twice a week in our living environments, including Tuesdays in the community room of our Kijaté social housing.

The team responded to numerous requests for information and assistance on different class actions concerning iniquities experienced by First Peoples' members.

Jordan's Principle

Access to justice also means coordinating access to Jordan's Principle, a program to ensure that First Nations children have access to the care and services they need in the areas of health, social services and education. This service provides additional assistance for needs that cannot be met by existing provincial and federal programs.



Indigenous Health Clinic

The Indigenous Health Clinic is an innovative response to the improvement and renewal of health care and services. It increases accessibility to culturally safe services by providing a continuous service.

The growing importance of the Friendship Centres in Quebec, the recognition by our peers of our expertise and their numerous visits to our community, the arrival of two new doctors and a new nurse, as well as the organisation of the Mino Pimatisiwin Seminar are just a few examples of what we have been able to accomplish in recent months.

Social perinatal care

An entire Indigenous social perinatal component was added to our services in June 2021, combining biomedical responses with psychosocial and community responses. The medical aspect is associated with a community and cultural services component where group activities, knowledge transmission activities, traditional ceremonies, individual follow-ups, assistance in Quebec network services as well as awareness and prevention are offered.

Our clinic can now count on the good care and services of five doctors and two nurses, one of whom reports strictly to the Friendship Centre, all of whom are motivated to work with us in this process of cultural safety.

The services include, among others:

- Walk-in clinic
- Support during pregnancy
- Postpartum care
- Newborn care
- Child health
- Routine health care
- STIS
- Vaccination
- Contraception
- Screening
- Chronic illnesses
- Wound care
- Blood tests
- Prescriptions





A landmark announcement

Following the landmark announcement of funding by the Ministry of Health and Social Services for the Friendship Centre and the Centers movement in Quebec, it was essential to take a time to meet, discuss and attune ourselves. This was an important opportunity for us to pursue our development process.



Mino Pimatisiwin Seminar: An invitation to take action together!

This important event therefore took the form of a seminar, thought out and developed in collaboration with the Centre intégré de Santé et de Services sociaux de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue (CISSSAT). The event brought together about one hundred participants from CISSSAT's departments and heads of service, the Friendship Centre's directors and managers, as well as our allies from the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), the DIALOG Network, the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (SAA), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT).



Community Housing

Kijaté

In recent years, the Friendship Centre has gained extensive experience in the management of the Kijaté housing units, which has led to the development of our own community housing model. The year marked the beginning of an important reflection aimed at creating an organisational housing policy that reflects the multiple realities of the families served, is adapted to their needs and respects the legal aspects of operating a subsidised residential building

64 people live in Kijaté, including 40 children <<<

Anwatan-Miguam

The Anwatan-Miguam project has made considerable progress, especially in terms of funding confirmations. This project involves the construction of a 20-unit transitional housing building for vulnerable and homeless people. It will ensure residential stability and offer support and assistance to people on their path to wellness.



Community Life

The Friendship Centre's community services include a range of activities that allow people to forge ties through meetings, exchanges and sharing in a safe and healthy environment. At the heart of community action and citizen mobilisation, culture and ancestral traditions are combined with daily life activities.

Throughout the year, the Centre continued to rapidly adapt its activities and services to the applicable sanitary measures. After the Christmas holidays, i.e. during the period gradually leading to deconfinement, the team made a collective and sustained effort to reach out to the members of the community and to adjust and develop its service offer in line with the realities expressed. The two years of the pandemic brought a significant drop in participation, but gradually members were returning to the Friendship Centre to connect with others, experience their culture, enrich their skills, take steps towards wellness and much more. Here is a selection of community life activities offered:

Family Christmas

Outdoor activities to celebrate Christmas with the families took place with the Wellness Small Farm, inflatable games, hot chocolate, a fishing game, Santa Claus and a small Christmas train.

"It was just... MAGIC!"
- A dad

"My daughter had a lot of fun.
Thank you and Merry Christmas!!"
A mother



On the move and having fun

Activities for teenagers are held regularly in different locations. The animators listen to young people's needs and develop creative, musical, sports or social involvement projects according to their desires.

A guitar and music mixing course with the Young Musicians of the World organisation was held in March.

In order to offer sports activities to young people of the urban Aboriginal community, the Centre collaborated with the Canadiens' Children Foundation to organize the official opening of the Bleu Blanc Bouge skating rink in Val-d'Or, while respecting traditional protocols in Anicinabe territory

After-school activities offer opportunities to burn off energy, stay fit, have fun as a group and promote healthy lifestyles.

The mobile unit makes it possible to reach out to young people in different environments, such as parks, around high schools and the public places where they usually hang out, including the City of Val-d'Or's green spaces and the Golden Valley school grounds.

The teenager's room is a safe and socializing space that brings together between 10 and 20 young people at lunchtime each school day.

We have reached nearly
100 different young people
in the year 2021-2022.



Elders group

The group offers an activity program that can be adapted to the Elders' needs and requests, such as sewing and craft workshops, collective kitchens, outings to Kinawit and cultural activities. In addition to breaking isolation and contributing to the development of a support and mutual aid network, the group allows Elders to enrich their knowledge by connecting with their culture.

On the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021, local Elders were in Gesgapegiaq for a basket weaving workshop and talking circle with Elders from Mi'gmaq territory. A remembrance ceremony around a sacred fire warmed the hearts.



Coffee meetings

Coffee meetings resumed in the cafeteria. These activities have created moments of encounter, exchange and sharing.

Cultural Days

On such days, members can enjoy sharing, teaching, traditional cooking and nature outings. Often enriched by a meeting around a fire, these activities become a good place to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and regain energy.

The donation of a moose nose by a community member provided an opportunity to call upon the Elders and to find out who among them had the knowledge of how to cook the nose. A kokum shared her teachings on the use of this part of the moose during a cultural day in Kinawit. Several young people were able to discover this cooking tradition.



A mobilized community

Following the discovery of the 215 remains of children who attended the Kamloops residential school in British Columbia, young people enrolled in a skills enhancement program went to Saint-Sauveur Church to put shoes on the ground to underline the tragic fate of Indigenous children. Members also went on a walk with the Pikogan community along the road to the St. Marc de Figuerly residential school site.

In the hope of healing, the Elders had made traditional skirts for their granddaughters for the occasion.



Birth and growth / Parenting support

At the Friendship Centre, parents find support to fully participate in their children's development. The parenting experience is enriched through occasional activities, outings and individual assistance according to needs.

Parent-baby group 0-2 years

The Awejish* group is a parent-baby and pregnant women's space that includes various fun and learning activities. * "little being of light"

Parent-child groups (3 to 5 years)

Based on exploration and discovery, the 3-4 and 4-5 year old parent-child groups prepare children for school. Children learn to socialise while having fun. The educators work together with the parents on the global development of each child and on a strong identity building.



After-school activities

A variety of after-school activities are offered throughout the school year for primary school children to socialise and develop a sense of belonging to the group. These activities also provide an opportunity to review certain academic concepts through play. Children are introduced to culture, sports, music, science, nature and technology.

Summer activities

The summer day camp took the form of a six-week exploratory adventure where children aged 3 to 10 were able to discover, explore and learn in a playful atmosphere.

During the day camp's «indigenous science» exploration week, the children were taught about the medicinal properties of plants, roots and animal parts such as moose legs. They also made birch bark moose calls. During the musical exploration week at the day camp with Young Musicians of the World, drumming and pow-wow activities were carried out.

Family camping

A family camping activity allowed members to get out of the city and have fun as a family. Parents reported that they really enjoyed this activity, which allowed them to relax and have a good time together

Educational and cultural kits

The educational kits are intended for preschoolers and their families. The kits content varies according to the season, but offers activities that allow children to continue learning at home while having fun!

189 kits were distributed to **56** different addresses, a different kit for each of the four seasons.



Support and Assistance

Psychosocial follow-ups

Community members receive psychosocial and community support at different stages of their lives and whatever challenges they face.

Social and community interventions by age group

6400 interventions carried out with **696** different people

Age group	Number of persons	Number of interventions
0-5 years.....	85	651
6-12 years.....	124	971
13-17 years	100	979
18-25 years.....	117	1147
26-49 years	255.....	2485
50 years +	15	167

Self-help groups

Self-help groups, supervised by support workers, provide safe spaces for people to talk and support each other through thematic discussions and projects of their choice, in particular the women's group and the sobriety-wellness group.

Administrative procedures

There are weekly periods dedicated to assisting and supporting members in the management of their administrative documents such as: application for social assistance, health insurance card, birth certificate, registration at the food bank.

Willie's Place

Willie's Place respite centre is a safe place open during the day and evening where people experiencing social breakdown are welcomed in a caring, safe and non-judgmental environment.

It was relocated in August 2021 to 3rd Avenue. Our new location provides a safe and secure environment better suited to the needs of our community members.

Alliances serving the most vulnerable

In support of the various social issues experienced by our members in highly vulnerable situations, we collaborate with several partners to implement various initiatives:

- Halte-Chaleur for homeless people during extreme cold weather
- Overflow centre in the basement of a church for the homeless population
- Using our partners' various buildings to define green and red zones during COVID-19 outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness

446 different persons attended

Willie's Place

Total of

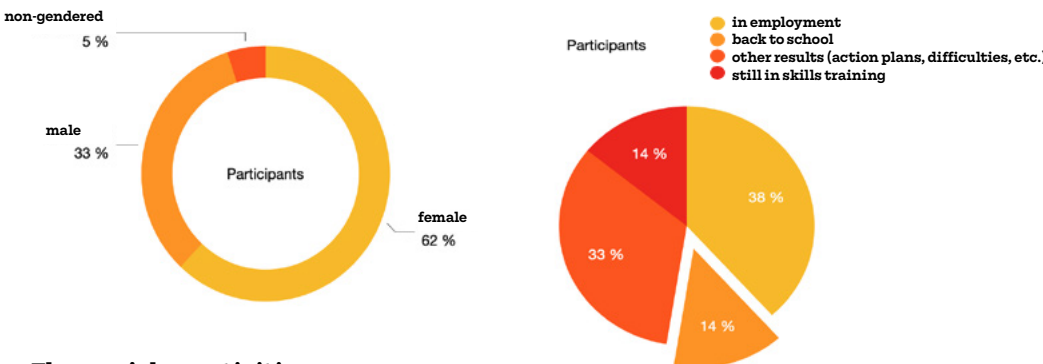
10 807 walk-ins



Employability

Despite more difficult periods in terms of recruitment, the Centre maintained its skills development activities throughout the year by offering individual follow-up and group workshops. All the activities have enabled the participants to access the labour market, to return to school or simply to find a social and cultural anchor within the group. Some were able to start their driving courses in order to have more opportunities in the labour market and ultimately to engage more easily in an active life.

21 different participants enhanced their employability



The year's key activities:

Participation in the construction and experimentation of a sweat lodge at Kinawit.

Multimedia activities with the Boîte Rouge vif which introduced participants to video, sound and image recording

Trip to Montreal to allow participants to push their limits, discover new horizons and have an enriching experience on all levels

Week of activities with Exeko «A tree in the city» where each day was rich in beautiful exchanges and consisted of reflection workshops on the self and the collective.



Reconciliation

Space



Kinawit Cultural Site

The Kinawit Cultural Site is a space for cultural discovery, expression, preservation and vitality promoting healing and reconciliation.

Major work has been carried out to provide a drinking water supply and wastewater treatment system that is sufficiently efficient to support the growing number of visitors to the site, especially during high-profile events such as National Indigenous Peoples' Day. The new facilities will also include a sanitary block and washrooms in the small cottages to enhance the experience of those who come to participate in cultural and healing activities at Kinawit.

Beautiful moments of cultural connection or reconnection took place in Kinawit, including traditional collective cooking activities, exploration and discovery of the territory by kayak, testimonies of Elders speaking in Anicinabe and a sweat lodge ceremony.

Exhibition

"I Wear my Identity"

Presented in large format photographs and launched in June 2021, the exhibition «I Wear my Identity» features nine graduates of the 2020 school year as well as Elder Oscar Kistabish. Through a significant element of their Aboriginal identity, the models express in their own way the pride they feel in being Indigenous.

Lodging Services

The lodging services remained closed due to the pandemic, but we continued to provide catering services for the Abinodjic-Miguam Early Childhood Centre.



Action Week against Racism

With the Montreal Canadiens as spokesperson, the 22nd edition of the Action Week Against Racism is included many activities. Committed partners such as the City of Val-d'Or, the Centre de services scolaires de l'Or-et-des-Bois (CSSOB), the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the DIALOG Network (Research on Indigenous Issues), the Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi and the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre contributed to the success of this campaign.

The 22nd Gabriel-Commanda Walk was the highlight of the week, bringing together more than 600 people in the rain and snow!

The walkers showed their solidarity with the Ukrainian people affected by the war, a solidarity that warmed the hearts.

From Reconciliation to Action - A day of sharing on reconciliation

An initiative of the DIALOG Network, in collaboration with UQAT and the Friendship Centre, this day of reflection, punctuated by artistic performances and the recording of a podcast «Quand pensez-vous?», mobilised nearly one hundred people from various backgrounds on the theme of reconciliation, including actors from the mining industry.

Local Urban Indigenous Services Accessibility Table

The partners in health, social services, education, employability, public security and justice who form the accessibility table seized the opportunity of the Action Week to come together to find solutions to the various issues facing the Indigenous population of Abitibi and to advance the reconciliation process.



National Indigenous Peoples' Day

National Indigenous Peoples' Day 2021 was celebrated with the cultural and artistic know-how of some fifteen creators from the Anicinabe, Atikamekw and Cree First Nations through an artisans' tour. The day began early with a sunrise ceremony to welcome the summer solstice. In keeping with the traditions of Canada's Indigenous

Peoples, the ceremony began with a «Grand Entry». The NIPD was also the occasion to officially present the «Eagle Staff», a sacred object representing the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, made by Anicinabe artist Karl Chevrier.

Over 600 people attended the event throughout the afternoon

In order to comply with the sanitary measures in force at the time, the capacity was limited to 250 people at a time.



Mēmēgwashi Gala

In the context of the pandemic, the annual «Mēmēgwashi» student perseverance gala was replaced, for a second year, by a recognition activity aimed at highlighting the contribution of families to the educational success of students. Some 50 indigenous students from 29 families, including 4 graduates, took part in the activity, which was mainly based on taking family photos, prior to the NIPD.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

On the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, employees were invited to wear their orange shirts and share their photos on social media to honour missing children and residential school survivors.





Sisters in Spirit Vigil

On October 4, the Centre held a vigil to honour the memory of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across the country and took the opportunity to pay tribute to children whose remains were found at former residential school sites..

More than **130** people came to Albert-Dumais Park to attend these events

Crush of the Year

In the trials that affected members of the urban indigenous community, the Friendship Centre’s team mobilised to provide support and comfort. Families who were victims of a fire could count on the dedication of the whole team, and even the rescued kittens received good care!

Edith Cloutier appeared on the Tout le monde en parle TV show on the subject of territorial recognition protocols following the Montreal Canadiens’ initiative to introduce this protocol before hockey games at the Bell Centre.





Centre d'amitié
autochtone
de Val-d'Or



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