

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



# A Mission at the Heart of all our Actions

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre is an urban service hub, a living environment and a cultural anchor for First Peoples. Dedicated to well-being, justice and social inclusion, it promotes harmonious cohabitation in its community. As a leader of a committed Indigenous civil society, the Centre actively contributes to the social, community, economic and cultural development of its community through innovative and proactive strategies.

At the Friendship Centre, programs and services are based on the human values of commitment, respect, integrity and solidarity.





**A WORD  
FROM OUR  
PRESIDENT**

OSCAR  
KISTABISH

At the Friendship Centre, on days of joy or sorrow, young people, women, children and Elders mix together - a diverse urban Indigenous community with its own challenges, but also rich in culture and human values. We must admit that the past year has often been a trying one. We've lost colleagues, friends and loved ones, but we've been there for each other in times of grief, as one big urban Indigenous family, and life has moved on.

On the way back to post-pandemic normality, we've been able to happily come together again, although remobilizing the community has been difficult. Our team devoted a great deal of energy to bringing our people back together and breaking down their isolation. This effort has proved rewarding. We have supported some of our brothers and sisters in great distress, and we have spared no effort in reaching out to them and offering them the dignity to which they aspire and to which they are entitled. We're continuing to work on this, particularly with the 20-unit housing project for people in situations of social breakdown that's about to be built.

At the dawn of its half-century of existence, our Centre is resolutely looking to the future, and after several years of patient work, we are finally seeing the day when we can announce the start of construction of a modern carbon-free building, capable of meeting the needs of our community for the next fifty years. We are doing this with a view to protecting Mother Earth for future generations.

For their hard work, for mobilizing the community, for their friendship with our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, I extend my warmest thanks to the team of employees, to management, to my valued colleagues on the Board of Directors, and to our great partners.

We wish you all the best for 2023-2024!



**MESSAGE  
FROM THE  
DIRECTOR  
GENERAL**

EDITH  
CLOUTIER



Kwe,

On the summer solstice of June 21, 2021, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre inaugurated its Eagle Staff. The Eagle Staff is a sacred symbol that honours the First Peoples' traditions and culture. Eagle Staffs are to Indigenous people what a State flag is to its citizens: an emblem of a people's sense of belonging and unity.

The Friendship Centre's Eagle Staff reflects the strength, courage and honour of the Val-d'Or's Indigenous community. The introduction of the Eagle Staff at the Centre is part of a major effort to regenerate the Indigenous vision of autonomy and governance. Our Centre, a model of Indigenous community governance, offers a range of services tailored to the contemporary, urban reality of a dynamic community. On the eve of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Centre is pursuing its development with a decolonized vision of its services, that is, by taking into account and revitalizing Anicinabe ways of being and understanding the world. The decolonization of services reflects the Centre's transformative intentions and engages non-Indigenous partner institutions in a process of co-responsibility.

At the Centre, transformative intentions are driven by Indigenous agency. Agency refers to the collective capacity to take control of one's destiny, to reverse the course of colonization and to propose alternative responses to inequalities. Moreover, by emphasizing a co-responsibility approach, the Centre invites us to go beyond a simple contribution shared between partners. Co-responsibility leads to the recognition of everyone's valuable contributions and the creation of a new space for co-construction and innovation. Social innovation is a vector of transformation that proposes sustainable responses to the social challenges facing our community members, such as social inequality, homelessness and systemic racism.

In welcoming the Eagle Staff to the Friendship Centre, the Board of Directors and the employees are entrusted with a great responsibility: that of bearers of the Eagle Staff. An Eagle Staff carrier honors this privilege by accompanying community members on a path of wellness, that of Mino Pimatisi8in, with kindness, respect and love.

Together, let's proudly carry our Eagle Staff!

Kitci Meegwetc to the members of the **2022-2023 Board of Directors** for their commitment to the good governance of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, with participation in 7 regular meetings and 3 special meetings, as well as numerous training and representation activities.

- Oscar Kistabish**, President
- Sharon Hunter**, Vice-President
- Janet Mark**, Secretary-Treasurer
- Marco Cloutier**, Director
- Tina Mapachee**, Director
- Hakim Mark-Thameri**, Director
- Danyka Gravelle Dumont**, Director
- Christine Desrochers**, Director
- Gina Richmond Mainville**, Director



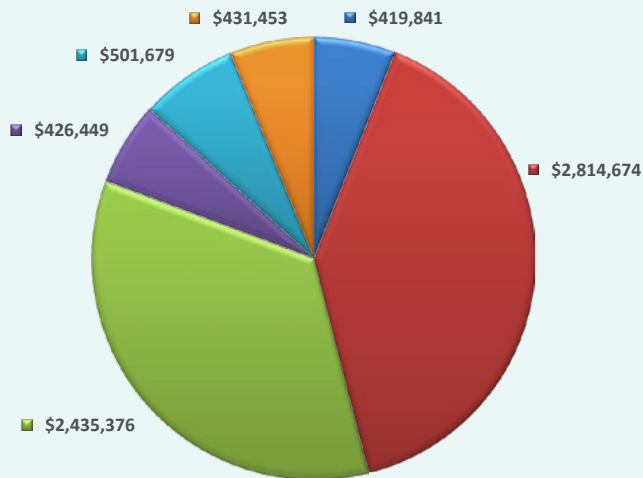
Thanks to  
**Doris St-Pierre**,  
who is leaving the  
Board of Directors  
after 33 years  
of volunteer service!

# The Friendship Centre team comprises 72 employees

20 employees and  
board members attended  
the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference of the  
Regroupement des  
centres d'amitié autochtones  
du Québec.



# Breakdown of Revenues



- 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

The medical transportation team responded to **1,260** requests for service.



# Our Great Partners

The Friendship Centre continues to work actively with a number of partners in pursuing its mission.

## Some of the Centre’s major partners:



**Centre intégré de Santé et de Services sociaux de l’Abitibi-Témiscamingue (CISSSAT)**  
The Friendship Centre and CISSSAT are implementing a joint Mino Pimatisiwin initiative aimed at renewing the service offer to promote wellness and improve health conditions.



**Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon**  
The Chagnon Foundation supports the Centre’s vision, organizational reinforcement and strategic positioning, as well as the Friendship Centre’s expansion project.



**Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSB)**  
CBHSSB is a major partner in the Centre’s expansion project to increase the number of accommodation facilities for Cree patients in Val-d’Or.



**DIALOG Network - research and knowledge network on indigenous peoples**  
The DIALOG Network is a research partner involved in the Friendship Centre’s innovation initiatives, particularly in the development of culturally relevant health services for Indigenous people.



**Table locale d’accessibilité aux services en milieu urbain pour les Autochtones dans la MRC Vallée-de-l’Or (Local table on accessibility to urban services for Indigenous people in the Vallée-de-l’Or RCM)**  
The Local Table aims to improve access to public services for Indigenous people in the areas of health and social services, education and employability, as well as public security and justice.



**Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec and National Association of Friendship Centers**  
The Friendship Centre is part of the broad movement of Native friendship centers in Quebec and Canada, which today includes over a hundred friendship centers in Canada, including a dozen in Quebec.







# COMMUNITY SERVICES



# Justice Access Services

The Friendship Centre's Justice Access services provide support and information to members of the Val-d'Or urban Indigenous community, enabling them to better understand and exercise their rights. The presence of two lawyers at the Centre has enabled us to provide high-quality legal support and guidance in a context where navigating the state justice system can be complex.

**600** interventions with at least 130 people, including 70 new persons served

## Jordan's Principle

This service coordinates access to Jordan's Principle, for which requests have increased considerably, making our services all the more effective in meeting the diverse needs of First Nations children. Jordan's Principle is a program designed to ensure that First Nations children have access to the care and services they need in the areas of health, social services and education, in conjunction with existing federal and provincial programs.

**237** requests to invoke Jordan's Principle



The **Anwatan-PAJIC** program (Programme d'accompagnement judiciaire et d'intervention communautaire), run in close collaboration with the City of Val-d'Or, offers homeless and/or vulnerable people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, alternative means of addressing their municipal offences.

## Court Diversion Programs

After a year of implementation of the Urban Aboriginal Alternative Measures Program (U-AAMP), which offers a personalized rehabilitation process to people charged with certain criminal offences, the results have been very encouraging. We have three U-AAMP cases whose members have successfully completed their measures in the past year, allowing diversion in parallel with the traditional judicial process.

# Indigenous Health Clinic

The clinic is an innovative response to the health needs of the urban Indigenous community. It is part of an overall effort to improve and renew the delivery of culturally safe health care and services. The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre is, in fact, at the forefront of a decolonial approach to social transformation, constantly seeking, through data collection in the field combined with collaboration with scientific research, to give power back to members of the urban Indigenous community (whether living in Val-d'Or or just passing through), a power that is rooted in a better balance of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual health.

In line with this vision, the Centre aims to be a work environment where professionalism is enriched by a unique interdisciplinary approach that cares not only for the individual in all aspects of his/her life, but also for his/her family and environment, in order to provide the support necessary for his/her well-being: protection, quality of relationships with the immediate and extended community.

Supported by a team of 2 nurses and a nursing assistant, 5 visiting physicians, 2 psychotherapists specialized in trauma, a psychiatrist and an orthopedagogue, our health clinic is able to offer a wide range of personalized services that are constantly evolving.

The mother-and-child clinic, offering consultations for mother and child before and after birth and up to age 5, is a fine example of a meaningful initiative for the community. Having been upgraded and refitted for better operation (reception, addition of a consultation room), the premises enable nurses to better operationalize the walk-in consultation offer for ITSS, vaccination, contraception, screening, wound care and blood tests, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**25** psychotherapy appointments for 11 different people \*

**430** medical appointments for 204 different patients, 68% of whom were women or girls \*

\* For half a year, from October 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023



# Community Housing

Kijaté, our 24-unit subsidized apartment building, is in full swing with a renewed and restructured animation. A number of skills-enhancement activities bring residents together around key themes to help them stay in their homes, create a balanced living environment and forge bonds of friendship and mutual support between tenants.

**400** interventions with some 89 building residents, including 63 children.



## Anwatan-Miguam

«Maison des eaux calmes»

The Anwatan-Miguam project, consisting of the construction of 20 social housing units for vulnerable people and/or those experiencing social disruption, is progressing through the AccèsLogis program of the Société d'habitation du Québec. Construction will begin in fall 2023, with occupancy scheduled for fall 2024. Residents of the building will be able to enjoy residential stability while having access to a number of support services to help them progress towards greater well-being.





# Community Life

The Friendship Centre's community services encompass a range of activities that help build relationships through encounters, exchanges and sharing, in a safe and healthy environment.

Community life is back on track after two difficult years marked by the pandemic. In 2022-2023, the Centre has reopened its doors to activities, festivities and gatherings to the delight of all. Here are just a few examples of community activities that took place during the year:

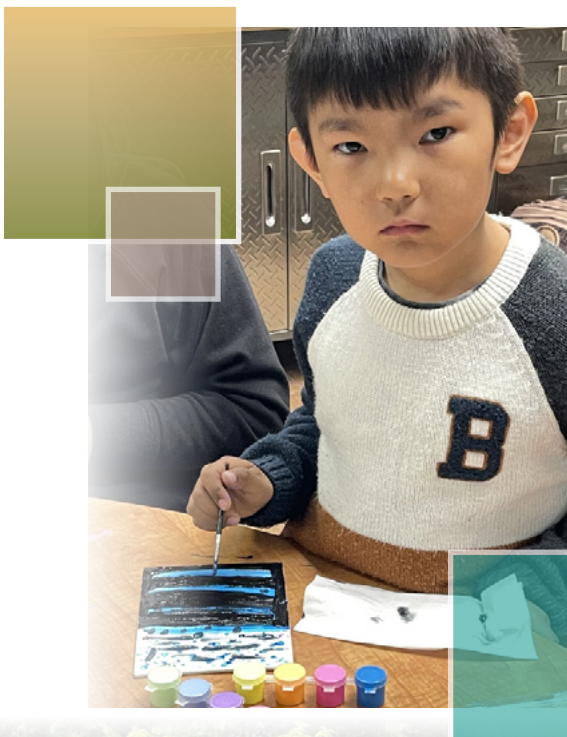
## Children

### Afterschool

After a busy day at school, children aged 6 to 12 were able to take advantage of the recreational activities offered by the Center. The art group offered arts and crafts, karaoke and... slime! The sports group enabled the children to play at the Centre multisport Fournier, or to take part in outdoor sports such as skating.

### Day Camp

All summer long, the team of animators, supported by two coordinators, offered daily activities for children and their families. They enjoyed the Kinawit cultural site, outings to the Refuge Pageau, the Jardins à fleur de peau and the Malartic mineralogical museum, as well as the town's various water bodies.



## Teens

Teens have had the opportunity to have lunch at the Center every day during the school year, in a safe place where they can relax, use computers or simply chat with friends.

The youth programs have enabled us to open the teens' room one evening a week and offer activities in different environments thanks to the mobile unit, as well as a wide range of special activities on pedagogical days and through sharing opportunities outside the region.

In September 2022, a number of teens took part in the Great Youth Gathering of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre movement on Atikamekw territory near La Tuque. This event was an opportunity for local youth to take part in activities aimed at forging links with young people from elsewhere in Quebec, to receive cultural teachings from Elders and to take part in the Wemotaci powwow.



## Elders

After two difficult years during the pandemic, the Elders' group was back on track this year, with participation surpassing even that of pre-COVID years. In addition to their regular sewing, craft and collective cooking activities, the Elders enjoyed a number of wonderful outdoor activities.

A sugar shack-style lunch was served to some 15 Elders, who then played board games and sang their hearts out.

*"It was lovely to see their smiles, we put on songs and everyone sang along."*

**Quote from an intervention worker**

A trip to Quebec City provided a few kokoms with an unforgettable experience. They were welcomed by a group of Elders from the Quebec Native Friendship Centre for a caribou dinner, where they met new people and shared lots of laughs. The group also took the opportunity to go apple-picking on Île d'Orléans.





## Activities for All

### Bingo

Community bingos were a resounding success in 2022-2023, growing from a dozen members in attendance to nearly 80 at the biggest bingo of the year just before the holiday season. Initially part of a plan to bring community life back to the Centre after the pandemic years, the bingo quickly became a weekly gathering for members and their families.

### Community Kitchens

The Center offered collective kitchens in Kijaté. Every month, 6 to 10 community members come together to cook. This self-help group helps lighten the load of daily chores, while each participant leaves with meals for the week.

### Special events and celebrations

A number of one-off activities were held throughout the year to celebrate holidays such as Easter, Father's Day, Christmas and Halloween, as well as to promote civic participation, cultural activities and pride in our identity.

### Le Centre s'embellit

Le Centre s'embellit is an activity in which members took part once again this year. After a thorough clean-up around the Centre and Kijaté, families enjoyed a community BBQ.





### **Nikamu Mamuitum show**

Young people from the community attended the Nikamu Mamuitum show in Val-d'Or. This band of musicians, made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers, gave young people the opportunity to experience a beautiful evening, reconnect with their language and feel a sense of pride in being Indigenous.

### **Rock your mocs**

Rock your mocs offers a positive opportunity to unite and celebrate First Peoples' pride of identity. Center staff invited all community members to wear their moccasins.



**184** community and cultural activities



# Birth and Early Childhood

Birth and Early Childhood services include perinatal services, a parent-baby area (0-2 years), early learning and stimulation activities (2-5 years) and support for parents of children aged 0-5 years. They provide spaces for sharing and enable community and cultural connections. Parents and children can experience a variety of activities and learn from each other.

**273** meetings with early-learning and stimulation groups (ages 2 to 5) and 37 different children

All children improved their language skills thanks to new programs and individual speech therapy support.

## Social Perinatality

Thanks to our social perinatal services, parents can find support right from the start of their pregnancy, through family meetings and the Awejish (meaning Little Being of Light) parent-baby group.

*"I loved the atmosphere at yesterday's meeting, it was so special to hear everyone share their thoughts. It creates a wonderful connection and trust!"*

Quote from perinatal counselor

Various activities were offered, including sharing circles, blueberry picking, a beach outing, preparation for the welcoming ceremony for newborns, teachings on parent-child healing and teachings on couple healing.

Photo sessions in nature settings featured new moms and couples. The photos were a source of pride!





# Support and Assistance

At the Friendship Centre, the community members find support and guidance in their quest for overall well-being, based on a balance between the four dimensions of life and a sense of identity. Support and assistance services are provided through a local approach, with a multidisciplinary team intervening at the Centre or directly in people's living environments.

Whether it's through individual, family, couple or group intervention, the outreach approach remains the same and can be broken down into multiple themes:

- Basic needs
- Family or marital relationships
- Substance use - addiction
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Communication

**4653** interventions

**3057** individual interventions  
with 334 different persons

**174** interventions with couples and families,  
131 different persons

**180** interventions made by self-help groups

## Talking Circles

Talking circles, whether for women or for those on the path to well-being, help create ties, foster healthy relationships, support solidarity networks and share experiences and tools for coping with everyday life in the search for an ever more secure balance. Young people are also introduced to these activities through our "teens noon sessions", after-school activities and pedagogical days.





## Homelessness and Social Inclusion

Through its multidisciplinary outreach services in homelessness and social inclusion, the Centre ensures the well-being of Indigenous community members in situations of addiction, homelessness, social exclusion or at risk of such situations

Over the past year, there has been an increase in requests for assistance with psychosocial follow-up and referrals to external services and resources, indicating a search for wellness among people experiencing homelessness or social exclusion.

### Housing Assistance

Services are offered to help people stay in or find housing, including support in using the food bank. The Centre's staff make regular home visits to meet the various needs of the most vulnerable people living in housing units.

### Support with Administrative Formalities

**156** different people received assistance with administrative formalities

### Willie's Place

The Willie's Place respite centre strengthens the safety net around people in pronounced situations of vulnerability through a culturally relevant and safe intervention.

**571** different persons frequented Willie's Place, about a third of them being non-Indigenous.

A 28% increase over last year

**10 925** attendances

# Employability

The year 2022-2023 marked a return to normal in skills enhancement activities. Gradually, participants returned to the Centre to take part in the Odabi program, resulting at the end of the year in two groups of between 7 and 10 participants. High demand led to the creation of not only a French-speaking cohort, but also a unilingual English-speaking one.

This upsurge in participation also coincides with the installation of a brand-new facility dedicated to skills enhancement. The facility enables teaching activities to be carried out in a welcoming and safe environment for participants.

Above all, participants explored their personal and professional networks, got to know each other better and improved their communication skills.

Opportunities have been many and varied for participants: support with administrative, medical, legal, housing or wellness procedures, participation in social, creative, educational or interest exploration activities, or taking part in talking circles or collective cooking activities.

Here are a few quotes from participants describing their realities and their growing awareness :

- *"I have to learn to trust again."*
- *"I was so anxious before we started, but I liked the way it was done. I can't wait for the next one."*
- *"My drawing represents an image meaning not to give up, to carry through."*

A meeting with young people from Montréal-Nord led the participants on a wonderful adventure.



# RECONCILIATION SPACE







# Kinawit

Due to infrastructure works, the Kinawit cultural site was closed for the entire year 2022-2023. We are currently working to develop the site's facilities into a genuine space for encounter and cultural expression, preservation and vitality, promoting healing and reconciliation. Further works will take place in 2023-2024 to improve the visitor experience and promote cultural transmission during the 6 seasons of the Anicinabe year.

Exceptionally, the site hosted a cultural training session for Friendship Centre employees with hereditary chief Dominique Rankin and kokom Marie-Josée Tardif.

# Food Services

We continue to offer catering services for the Abinodjic-Miguam Early Childhood Centre.



# Action Week against Racism

The 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Action Week Against Racism was held in March under the theme "Not So Different". Peggie Jérôme, an Anicinabe woman from the Lac Simon community, and Benoît Théorêt, a Québécois from Val-d'Or, form a family rich by its mixed heritage. They proudly acted as spokespersons for this year's event. A number of activities were held in schools and universities, thanks to the mobilization of several partners who are all committed to the fight against racial discrimination and to living together harmoniously.

The Gabriel-Commanda Walk brought together **650 people**, thanks to the participation of local schools, partners and organizations. DIALOG's research has shown that the Gabriel-Commanda Walk is unique in the world for its Indigenous origins, its humanist vision, its consistency over the years, its educational focus and its capacity to mobilize citizens.

Young Indigenous people from Val-d'Or attended the Montreal Canadiens' First Peoples Celebration hockey night at the Bell Centre, with proceeds going to the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec.



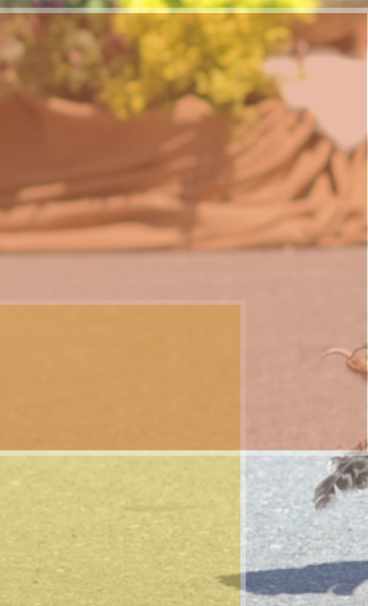
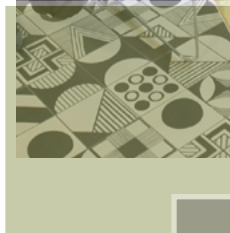


# National Indigenous Peoples' Day

The 2022 celebration was held on Sunday, June 19 in the Friendship Centre parking lot. Festivities included:

- a sunrise ceremony
- a Father's Day brunch
- musical performances by Indigenous artist Kevin Boudrias
- the Grand Entry ceremony and traditional dancing and drumming with the Screaming Eagles and dancers from Lac Simon and Pikogan
- the launch of ANICINABE stories on the theme of Aboriginal birth and pregnancy by author Stéphanie Déziel with illustrations by Michi Thusky-Cloutier
- activities for children (inflatable games, wellness farm, face painting)
- Indigenous arts & crafts kiosks and traditional food tasting.

Everything was in place to make this a culturally enriching and colorful family





event.

# Mëmëgwashi Gala

The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the Mëmëgwashi Gala was attended by **268 people and honored 103 Indigenous laureates** for educational success and perseverance, from kindergarten to university. This evening of recognition and pride was also a cultural and artistic event for the whole family, with artists from Cirque Collini, traditional dancers and the Screaming Eagles.

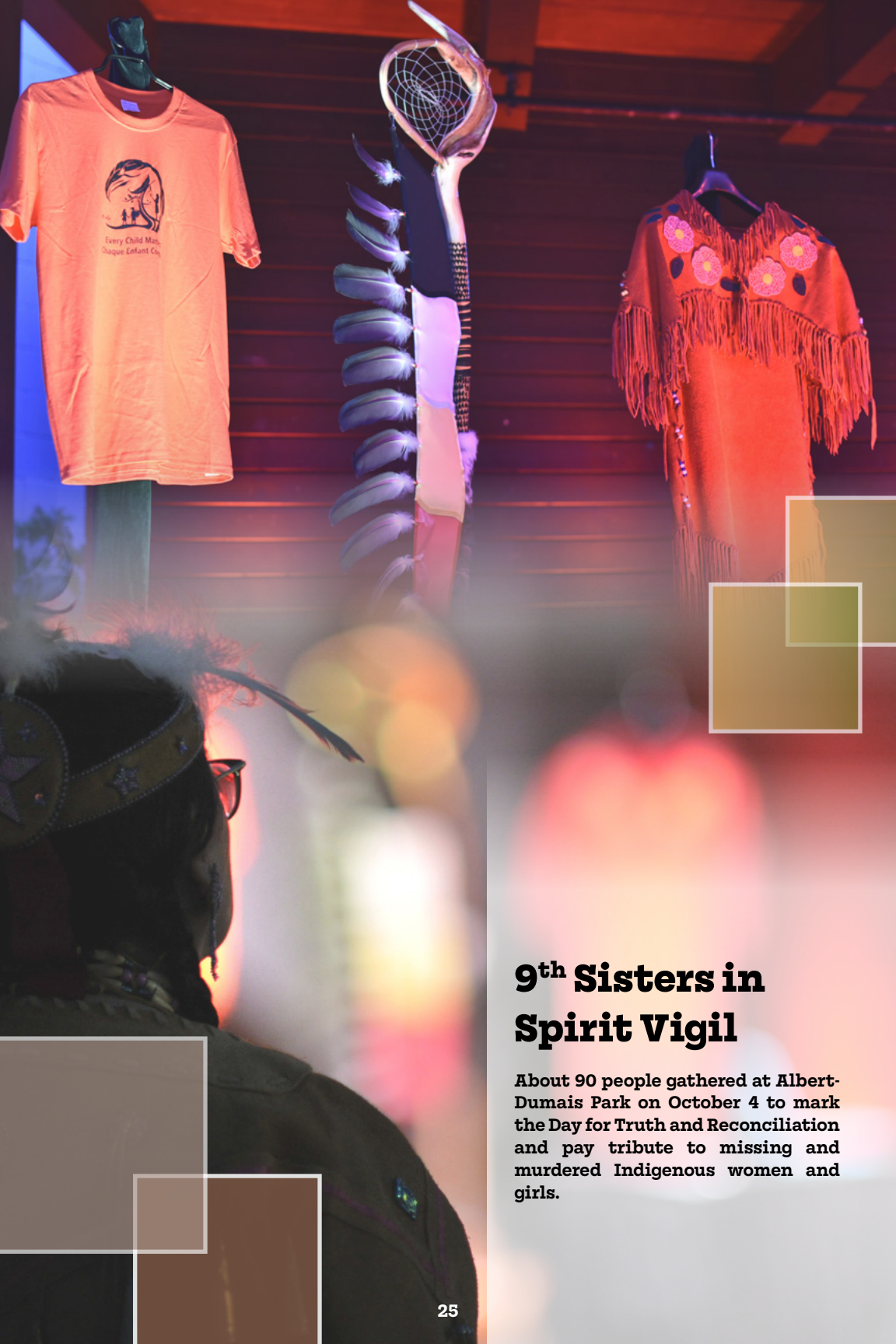
**Nancy Wiscutie-Crépeau and Connie Kudjick** were particularly outstanding, winning the 2022 honourable mentions.



# National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

On September 29, as a prelude to the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Centre invited Tom Mapachee, an Elder from Abitibiwinni, to meet staff members and share his life story and teachings. Employees wore their orange shirts to demonstrate our solidarity with Indigenous residential school survivors and their families.





## **9<sup>th</sup> Sisters in Spirit Vigil**

About 90 people gathered at Albert-Dumais Park on October 4 to mark the Day for Truth and Reconciliation and pay tribute to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

# Our Favorites

## Community re-mobilization after 2 years of pandemic

The year 2022-2023 was marked by the return of community members to the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. After two years of isolation and distancing from one another, the Centre's team doubled its efforts and invested in a remobilization plan to bring back a strong and dynamic community life.

By the end of the summer, members were gradually returning to the Centre, and by the end of the year had achieved record participation in a number of groups and regular activities. This was notably the case in skills development in the Odabi group, in the seniors' group and at the Thursday bingo activity, where participation skyrocketed. In addition to delighting Centre employees, this surge in participation was also beneficial in that a greater number of members gained access to complementary services in health and justice, to name but a couple.

## Congratulations to Friendship Centre friends who distinguished themselves in 2022-2023:



Richard Ejinagosi Kistabish, a founding member of the Friendship Centre, for being appointed as President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and as recipient of the Tribute Award for his contribution to Anicinabe language and culture at the City of Val-d'Or's Rayon C Gala.



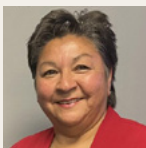
Oscar Kistabish for being awarded the Lieutenant-Governor's First Peoples Medal.



Nancy Wiscutie-Crépeau for her doctorate in education from the University of Ottawa.



Édith Cloutier for an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Law of the University of Ottawa for her outstanding contribution to social advancement.



Janet Mark for the Order of Val-d'Or in recognition of her outstanding contribution to community development, especially education and reconciliation.







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