

Annual Report

2024-2025

let's Celebrate **Allies in Reconciliation, 50 years of Friendship**







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The Friendship Centre



A mission at the heart of all our actions

The Val-d'Or Indigenous 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 is an agent of reconciliation.

Values »

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



Commitment



Respect



Integrity



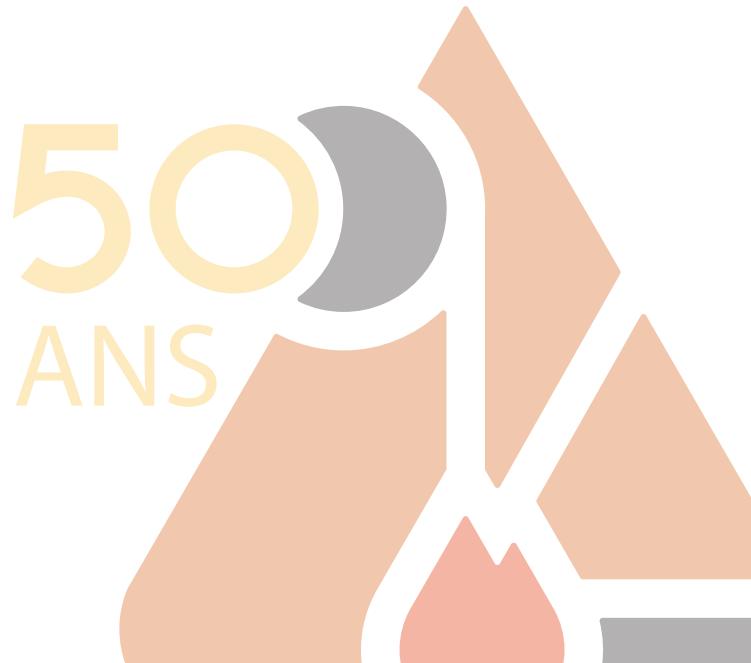
Solidarity

50 years of friendship!



A vision »

The Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre, a model of urban governance and community autonomy, works towards quality of life, cultural resurgence and reconciliation, for the affirmation of its community and the achievement of harmonious cohabitation.



Message from the President

Kwe kwe Kakina,

First of all, I would like to acknowledge the traditional and unceded territory of the Anicinabe Nation. Today, I'm completing my first year as President of our Friendship Centre, with the honour and responsibility of succeeding our elder Oscar Kistabish, who held the position for 15 consecutive years, in addition to six years as a director. So I had some big moccasins to fill!

Oscar remains for us a precious guide, a respected older brother. *Kitci Meegwetc Osezima!*

My relationship with the Friendship Centre is deeply rooted in my life. I've worked there as an employee, a director and a vice-president, but above all as a member of the large urban indigenous community that lives in or transits through Val-d'Or. I can attest to the vital importance of the Centre in our lives: a place where the urban Anicinabek, Eeyouch, Atikamekw and Inuit can anchor themselves, find comfort and come together.



Now in its 50th year, our Centre continues to grow, driven by the projects and needs of its community, while remaining true to the values and teachings of our ancestors. It is an essential landmark in the city, for the indigenous generations of yesterday, today and for the seven generations to come.

In closing, I'd like to acknowledge the resilience and commitment of the Friendship Centre's great team, who wholeheartedly pursue their mission, even during periods of construction and expansion, under sometimes demanding conditions. I would also like to acknowledge my dedicated colleagues on the Board of Directors, as well as the partners who support us in the pursuit of our mission.

Kitci Meegwetc!

Sharon Hunter
President

Message from the Director General

In June 2024, the Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre launched two long-awaited infrastructure projects: the expansion and renovation of its main building, and the construction of 24 transitional housing units downtown as part of the Anwatan-Miguam initiative. The year also saw the completion of work to modernise facilities at the Kinawit cultural site.

Altogether, these \$90 million investments represent much more than an economic contribution. They embody the roots of the urban indigenous community in the heart of the city and affirm with conviction the current and living relevance of the occupation of the traditional Anicinape territory. These projects are a manifestation of urban indigenous governance and community autonomy supported by a proud, determined and proactive community.

In this memorable year, when we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Friendship Centre, every opportunity is taken to honour the community's history: one forged by the battles for social justice and the advancement of Indigenous peoples' rights. It's also an opportunity to highlight the many achievements and socially innovative initiatives that are making Val-d'Or's indigenous community shine in Quebec, Canada and internationally.

This celebration is also a meaningful moment, when the call for a rapprochement between peoples is heard with renewed intensity, inviting our allies to commit themselves fully to reconciliation. **Reconciliation is**

achieved at multiple levels: (1) **historical** - correcting past injustices; (2) **social** - taking positive action at the grassroots level; (3) **economic** - promoting equitable access to opportunities and resources; (4) **political** - recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples; and (5) **corporate** - forging respectful and lasting relationships. Every day, through its collective action, the Friendship Centre invites its allies to take part in a genuine process of healing and redeveloping relationships, in one or other of these areas, by promoting encounters, exchanges and reciprocity.

The Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre is more than a hub of urban services: it is a beating heart, a meeting place and a living cultural anchor for First Peoples. The past year has been marked by a wealth of projects that bring hope and a promising future for the entire community. In 2026, the completion of its projects will mark a historic turning point for the Centre, its members and the entire Valdorian community. Strengthened by our roots and inspired by a sense of pride, we are moving forward on the path of healing and reconciliation, to offer upcoming generations a future marked by dignity, justice and enlightenment.




Edith Cloutier
Director General



Board of Directors »

Kitci Meegwetc to the members of the 2024-2025 Board of Directors, who are rigorously and devotedly involved in the good governance of the Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre.

Members of the Board of Directors

Sharon Hunter → President

Janet Mark → Vice-President

Tina Mapachee → Secretary-Treasurer

Marco Cloutier → Director

Aylee Charette → Director

Jon-Ethan Rankin Kistabish → Director

Élya Cloutier → Director

Christine Desrochers → Director

Gina Richmond Mainville → Director

A stimulating living environment »

In 2024-2025, the Friendship Centre was able to count on a competent, qualified staff committed to ongoing training. Interdisciplinary work has been strengthened and sustained efforts have been made to recruit new employees, including a participation in five job fairs.

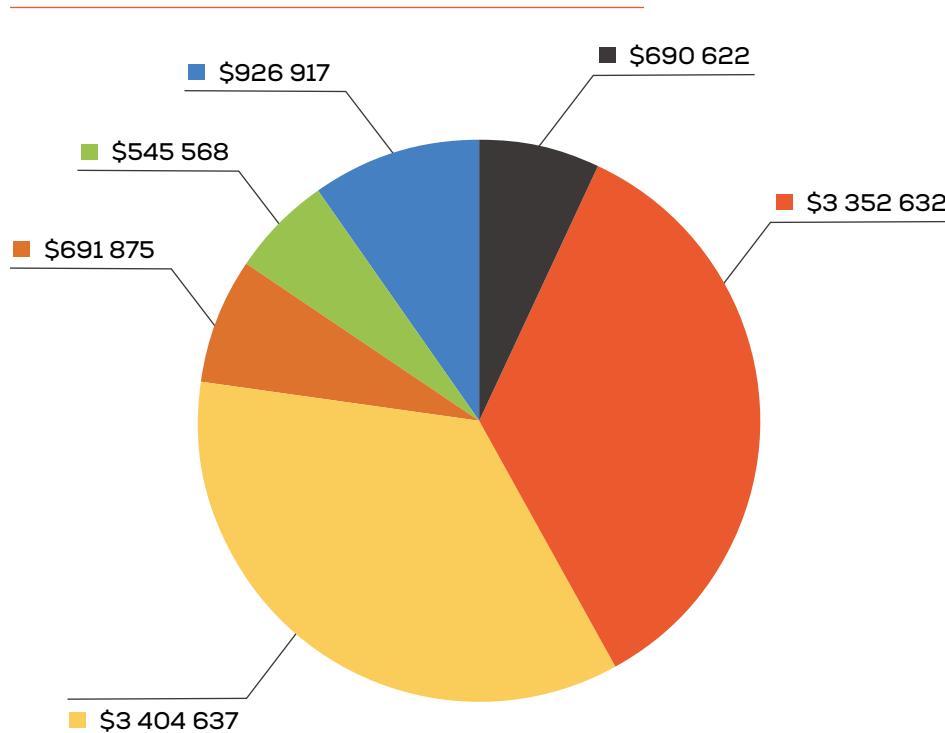
The intervention workers received 'Tracer mon chemin' (Charting my Path) training from the [Regroupement des Centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec](#) (RCAAQ), a practical tool to help members improve their well-being. The team also took part in meetings of the RCAAQ and the [National Association of Friendship Centres](#) (NAFC), to continue to build on innovative practices and enrich its cultural knowledge. And every month, the entire team gets together to share their knowledge of indigenous art, language and culture with an Elder.

The Friendship Centre team consists of

87
employees
as of March 31, 2025



Revenue Breakdown



**Total
9.6M\$**

Income Statement

- **Support to the mission** - federal, provincial and Cree government subsidies
- **Programs and services** - federal subsidies
- **Programs and services** - provincial subsidies
- **Programs and services** - other subsidies
- **Service contract**
- **Self-financing**

From reconciliation to action

A promising undertaking »

Since the groundbreaking ceremony on May 31, 2024, the Friendship Centre team has proudly achieved many steps. Thanks to the commitment of our team of professionals, and despite the many challenges, the quality of the services offered has remained constant throughout the year. The team is looking forward to moving into a new, inclusive space in the fall of 2026, in keeping with the Centre's values and mission. This new facility, anchored in the heart of our culture, will feature an improved health clinic, rooms for Cree patients in partnership with the **Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay** (CBHSSJB), renovated spaces for all Friendship Centre services and an Indigenous museum exhibition.

This energy-efficient building has been made possible thanks to the financial participation of the **Canadian Government**, the **Quebec Government** and the **Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation**.

Progress of the expansion



Next Steps »

- Completion of the Centre's expansion (spring 2026)
- Layout of the outdoor courtyard (summer 2026)
- Completion of renovations to the existing building (Fall 2026).



Community Services



Indigenous Community Justice Clinic

This year, our Indigenous Community Justice Clinic has seen a great deal of collaboration. New partnerships with the [Centre communautaire juridique de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue](#) (CCJAT), the [SATAS](#) (Service d'aide et de traitement en apprentissage social) and the bailiffs have enabled us to extend our action. We increased our support for members, particularly in the areas of court assistance, family law and class actions. The active participation of the lawyers in the committees and workshops has enriched everyone's legal knowledge. A sharing circle also helped to further integrate the anicinabe vision of justice into the Friendship Center.

Our successes speak for themselves:

- 👉 Justice diversion programs
- 👉 A pardon process completed and three in progress
- 👉 Major status recognitions

Each victory reflects a collective effort that is changing lives.

365

interventions made by the justice clinic for **119** different persons.

7

members successfully completed the General Alternative Measures Program for Urban Aboriginals (PMRG-AU).

3

members successfully completed the Community Intervention and Judicial Support Program (PAJIC).



Indigenous Health Clinic

The Indigenous Health Clinic offers professional services in health, social services and traditional healing to the indigenous community. The team includes doctors, nurses, counsellors, psychologists, educators, occupational therapists, speech therapists and more.

A medical consultation service is available for members who don't have a family doctor, with follow-up or referral as required. The mother and child clinic welcomes pregnant women and young families for social perinatal services. In December 2024, a midwife joined the team. The service will soon offer a complete assistance package before, during and after childbirth, according to the parents' choice.



Finally, a day of co-construction brought together nearly 50 participants, including the [Friendship Centre](#), the [Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux \(CISSS\) de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue](#) as well as indigenous knowledge holders, to create two adapted care trajectories: one on diabetes, the other on intergenerational trauma. The event strengthened collaboration and the recognition of indigenous knowledge.



522

people used the clinic's services

2163 appointments carried out by **11** health professionals.

25%

of whom were under 18

50%

between 18 and 49

25%

over 50

Community Housing

Kijaté »

For 7 years now, the Friendship Centre has been developing its expertise in social housing building management through the **24 units** at Kijaté, which, as of March 31, 2025, housed **more than 60 people**, including **33 children**.

This living environment enables indigenous families from different backgrounds and nations to benefit from psychosocial support, in addition to participating in a community life led by the tenants themselves, volunteers and Friendship Centre employees.

459

social events were held for 25 Kijaté tenant members.

84%

of households living in Kijaté benefited from social events.

17

different activities were organised at Kijaté.



Anwatan-Miguam

A building with **23 transitional housing units**, designed to accommodate vulnerable indigenous people, is due to **open its doors in fall 2026**. Work began on this promising project on July 2, 2024. However, it was hit hard by an arson attack on February 7, 2025, causing a considerable delay in its commissioning, which was scheduled for October 2025.

Despite this setback, the Friendship Centre team and its partners demonstrated remarkable resilience. Together, they mobilized quickly to find concrete solutions, demonstrating great adaptability. This model aims to provide a stable, supportive and affordable environment, essential to fostering inclusion and participation while ensuring the integrity of these people.



Community Life

The Val-d'Or Indigenous Friendship Centre continues to play an essential role as a welcoming and caring urban refuge for indigenous people. In a city in constant effervescence, the Centre represents a warm place where bonds are forged, identities affirmed and cultures flourish.

Children »

Throughout the year, a variety of activities were offered to children aged 6 to 12, encouraging socialization, learning through play and the development of indigenous identity. Parent-child moments were also integrated, strengthening family bonds through shared experiences in a natural environment at the Kinawit cultural site. These precious moments, where children find an attentive ear and a space for sharing, are supervised by a committed and caring team.

53

youngsters take part in cultural, sports and musical workshops after school.

More than 30

children take part in activities and outings as part of pedagogical days.

More than 60

children experienced an exploratory adventure during the summer 2024 day camp.

"We came back burnt out, but happy and with our heads full of memories. When asked what they enjoyed most, the youngsters replied: "The time spent together and being out in nature". The campers talked about it for the rest of the summer!"

- After the young people had returned from a camping trip in the wilderness, one intervention worker said



Teenagers »

The Centre supports the well-being of Val-d'Or's indigenous youth and families through a local approach and relevant social and community services. A mobile motorised unit goes out to meet them in their living environments, while wellness plans are drawn up with young people aged 12 to 17 to encourage sustainable safe behaviours. Over the course of the school year, 38 teenagers attended the Centre's "lunchtime space", a safe place where they could talk to a lawyer and a psychosocial counsellor. The teenage evenings, led by a team of attentive listeners, also offer a space where they can feel at home.

Last but not least, our collaboration with the [Western Quebec School Board](#) has enabled many young people to experience activities that reconnect them with their culture.

Over 350

activities organized for more than
100 teenagers



Elders »

As they do every year, the Elders are very active and have continued their weekly get-togethers to share 33 precious moments of all kinds, in a calm and secure atmosphere. They were able to speak the Anicinabe language, sew, do crafts, take walks, garden, line-dance, visit the library and enjoy a virtual experience.

Some of the Elders represented the Centre at the NAFC Annual General Assembly in Quebec City. And an inter-community meeting was held between kokom and mocom at the [Senneterre Indigenous Friendship Centre](#).

Parents »

Parents play an important role at the Friendship Centre. Several family activities are offered, including parent-child activities. There are also spaces reserved exclusively for parents. The parenting enrichment group led by our specialized educators for parents of children aged 0 to 12 is very popular. It is designed to meet the needs and interests of parents from all backgrounds.

Parents can enhance their parenting skills, share their parenting experience and expand their support network with other parents.



58
group sessions
with parents for
172 different persons.

Activities for all »

With its diversified programming, the Center offered the community spaces for expression and sharing. Art workshops, collective kitchens, bingo and intergenerational activities made everyone feel heard, valued and safe. The Spring Break wilderness camp offered young people an unforgettable cultural immersion, focusing on reconnecting with themselves, their culture and the land. The Christmas party at Kinawit was a outstanding event of the year, full of warmth and tradition. Finally, the Centre took part in a number of Val-d'Or community events, such as the sidewalk sale and the community supper.

Throughout the year,
64
members took part in
19 collective kitchens.







Birth and infancy

Social perinatology supports pregnant women, young parents, children aged 0-2 and the extended family in this important period of their lives that is pregnancy, birth and early childhood.

Awejish parent-baby group 0-2 years »

The Awejish group, which meets weekly, is a space for parents, babies and pregnant women to enjoy a range of fun and learning activities: sensory awareness, child development activities, traditional birth teachings, ceremonies, feeding workshops, breastfeeding support and outdoor and sports activities.

43

families are assisted through health services and group activities.

“You've changed our lives.”

– Mother of 4 children



Early-learning and stimulation groups for ages 2-5 »

Based on exploration and discovery, the awakening, stimulation and global development of children (ages 2-5) groups prepare children for school. It's a stimulating place where children learn to socialize while having fun. The educators work closely with the parents, and together they see to the overall development of each child, enabling the pursuit of a strong identity.

375

group workshops reached **43** different children.

Support and assistance

Psychosocial intervention »

Inspired by the holistic family-centered approach, family intervention is culturally based and recognizes the central role of the family. This type of intervention, which focuses on strengths, offers members support at different stages of their lives, whatever the challenges they face. In addition, a psychosocial space is available every day at the Center, aimed at improving wellness and supporting each member's capacity for autonomy.

"Thank you so much for helping me, my heart is too full"

- A man who used the psychosocial service

2330

individual interventions for 490 different people

362

couple and family interventions, including 116 legal interventions

126

couples or families used family intervention services

363

people benefited from medical transportation



Social inclusion »

Many services are offered to members in vulnerable situations and facing difficult realities such as dependency, social exclusion and homelessness. They receive personalised assistance to help them adopt healthy lifestyles, reduce harm, assert themselves and remain in their housing unit. A respite centre called Willie's Place is also available. This welcoming space allows people to rest, drop in on a safe place and regain their strength in a warm and welcoming environment.

In addition to their involvement with the CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue Day Centre, the intervention workers have actively participated in various joint committees. Our team is proud to contribute to these inter-agency collaborations, which are bringing about concrete and lasting change.

The [Clinical Homelessness Committee](#) is distinguished by the diversity of its partnerships, which include local intervention workers from the [CISSS de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue](#), the [Poste de police communautaire mixte autochtone \(PPCMA\)](#), the [Sûreté du Québec](#), [La Piaule](#) and [Pikatemps](#). This committee was honoured at the « En avant les collabos » Gala, organised by the [Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel \(CALACS\)](#), in recognition of its remarkable work with the most vulnerable persons.

Willie's Place

13 967 attendances

472 different persons.

Non-indigenous people represent

31% or a third of the users.

Indigenous people represent

69% of users

+13%

Attendance up 13% on the previous year.

+176

Number of new users, compared with 2023-2024

10 members

were able to keep their apartment thanks to the constant support of the Centre's team.





Employability »

The Center provides a mobilization space for Indigenous people who wish to engage in action, personal or collective development, whether through citizen mobilisation or active participation in society and the labour market.

Over the course of the year, several young people distinguished themselves through their involvement: volunteering at events organised by the Centre and the Val-d'Or community, work placement at [Uniboard](#), traditional canoe-making apprenticeships with artist and craftsman Karl Chevrier, visits to over a dozen companies, and artistic creation workshops.

These experiences have helped to boost their confidence and self-esteem and open up new horizons.

In 2024-2025:

33

young adults sought one-off assistance with job search or returning to school

27

young adults participated on a regular basis in a skills development program

16

are pursuing their studies and 11 have completed them, including:

6

who are in employment (50%)

3

who are returning to school (25%)



Reconciliation Space



Kinawit »

The Kinawit cultural site has once again asserted itself this year as a vibrant place of transmission, healing and gathering. A true crossroads of knowledge and experience, Kinawit has hosted a variety of activities that have nourished the soul and strengthened community ties. Immersive workshops provided opportunities to learn about indigenous knowledge, while educational walks offered the chance to explore the territory and enrich knowledge about wildlife, flora and the teachings of Elders.

Children's revitalization camps, family celebrations, and commemorative ceremonies also punctuated the year, creating spaces for remembrance, joy, and sharing. Kinawit thus continues to play an essential role in cultural preservation and vitality, while promoting reconciliation and collective well-being.



At the 2024 Memegwashi Gala, the Honourable Mention was awarded to Desery Penosway, a 17-year-old Anicinabe student with an inspiring background.

Memegwashi Gala »

For more than twenty years, the Memegwashi Gala – which means 'butterfly' in the anicinape language – has celebrated academic perseverance.

This iconic event aims to encourage the next generation to pursue their dreams. The Gala paid tribute to **240 students** and **10 graduates**, honouring their achievements with pride and recognition. This highlight of the year once again demonstrated the rich potential of our young people and the importance of encouraging them to reach their full potential.



National Indigenous Peoples Day »

The Friendship Centre celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day at Agnico Eagle Square for the first time.

The event featured a performance by Ontario-based female trio *Lady Mav*, one of whose members is an Anicinape woman from the region. The public enjoyed traditional songs and dances, including a large Round Dance bringing together all participants – a powerful moment of solidarity and cultural sharing.

The atmosphere was enhanced by the presence of a dozen artisans who showcased their skills and offered workshops, including one on smudging, held in a teepee. This festive and unifying day was a resounding success, offering a varied and family-friendly program that delighted everyone.



Open house »

The Centre organises an open house day for the general public, the Indigenous community and partners to showcase its programming and all the services it offers. It is a special opportunity to welcome new families and encourage them to get involved in the services we offer. Featuring demonstration booths facilitated by our team members, the open house takes place in a friendly atmosphere that fosters conversation, discovery... and even includes games!

163

members of the urban Indigenous community

37

Friendship Centre partners participated in the open house.



Action Week Against Racism: 25th edition »

This Action Week aims to raise awareness in the community about the importance of diversity, inclusion and the fight against racism. The flagship event, the Gabriel Commanda Walk, brings people together every year around the values of solidarity and respect.

In 2025, more than **500 people** took part in the walk, despite the cancellation of school buses due to uncertain weather conditions. The absence of schools did not dampen the public's enthusiasm, as they turned out in large numbers. Artists **Samian** and **Biz** served as co-spokespersons for this 25th edition, while hoop dancer **Theland Kicknosway** gave a striking performance.

The success of this week also relies on the commitment of numerous partners: the **City of Val-d'Or**, the **Centre de services scolaire de l'Or-et-des-Bois**, the **Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue**, the **Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue**, the **Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce** and the **Golden Valley School**, who organised various activities in their respective milieus, including inviting spokespersons to address students.

'Many of the young adults walking today were children when they first took part in the Gabriel Commanda walk. Now they are coming back with their own children.'

-Édith Cloutier

Gabriel-Commanda Walk



Outstanding Event



Comfort activity in Kinawit

Truth and Reconciliation Day

In the peaceful surroundings of the Kinawit cultural site, human warmth illuminated **Truth and Reconciliation Day**. On that day, time stood still to offer a moment of comfort to former Indian residential school students. A day to care, to listen, to honor.



“I love that there is a team spirit and that belief in ancestors has returned.”

- One of the participants expressed with emotion

Organized in collaboration with the 14 young people from the Odabi employability group, the activity was marked by meticulous preparation: a good meal, a sacred fire watched over by a fire keeper, and an atmosphere conducive to intergenerational exchange. The young people took good care of the 14 Elders present, offering them attention and company.

This moment allowed deep bonds to be forged between generations. Laughter, tears, silence, healing words, and sincere testimonies punctuated the day, revealing the power of dialogue and shared memory.

This activity was a true heartfelt one for our Center over the past year. It embodies the values of respect, solidarity, and healing, and reminds us that reconciliation is developed through simple gestures and meaningful encounters.





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