



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK

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REINTRODUCING THE NETWORK

BACKGROUND

Originally founded in 2008 as the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, the organization has since undergone an enormous transformation. Since its incorporation in 2019 as the **Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK** (“the NETWORK”), the organization has been a key actor in supporting the ecosystem of individuals and groups committed to improving the quality of life of the Inuit, First Nations, and Metis communities living in the Greater Montreal. With over 300 members and under the guidance and governance of an all-Indigenous Board of Directors, we:



Share information and transfer knowledge



Prioritize needs ripe for action



Develop joint projects to address gaps and reduce duplications



Create and strengthen partnerships



Coordinate and distribute funds to community organizations

As coordinator, facilitator and a holder of space, the NETWORK works with organizations and groups who directly service the urban Indigenous communities by establishing key information channels, developing sector-wide strategic plans, supporting organizational capacity development, and by coordinating a shared pool of resources. Particularly, the NETWORK works with organizations and groups who directly service the urban Indigenous communities by establishing key information channels, developing sector-wide strategic plans, supporting organizational capacity development, and by coordinating a shared pool of resources. The NETWORK also works closely with both the public and private sectors to vocalize priorities identified by the urban Indigenous communities, as well as transfers knowledge about Indigenous realities during key consulting spaces. Our additional mandate includes the development and collaboration on a variety of high-impact projects, including targeted research, awareness-building tools, strategy-creation, workshops and much more!

Recently, the NETWORK moved into the management, facilitation and coordination of public funds to key organizations. We are humbled by the acceptance and confidence entrusted to us by Indigenous and Indigenous-serving organizations in our newest role

OUR MISSION

Since 2008, our mission has evolved at an exponential pace. We currently play a central role in the coordination and distribution of public funds to community organizations working directly with the urban Indigenous communities. As a key actor at the center of the ecosystem, the NETWORK facilitates co-creation spaces and develops solutions with other community organizations and groups who service the urban Indigenous communities. The NETWORK also transfers knowledge through advocacy, developing educational tools and providing workshops.

OUR VISION

The NETWORK is working toward systemic change, decolonization and the liberation of Indigenous peoples. We envision a diverse society that recognizes and respects Indigenous sovereignty, ownership of knowledge, and celebrates cultural visibility and diversity.

OUR VALUES

- Indigenous knowledge and expertise
- Solutions rooted in decolonization
- Foster strong alliances
- Strengthen connections
- Co-creation and partnership
- Knowledge sharing and coordination of efforts

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

The NETWORK is devoted to caring, sustaining, and developing practices mindful of the well-being of our team members.

In the last year, the NETWORK has had to adapt to the many unpredictable changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We successfully transitioned to working 100% online and responded to the difficult nature of our work and impact of the pandemic by providing our staff with:

- Bonus wellness days
- Financial compensation
- Reimbursement on wellness expenses
- One-time employer contribution to RRSP

In celebration of the NETWORK's growth from 4 team members to 15 team members, and in the spirit of team building and encouraging social connections, we organized several wellness activities, including a team social, a virtual holiday party, as well as a wellness party.

Additionally, the NETWORK implemented permanent and sustainable changes to reinforce healthy working environments and conditions by:

- Reworking internal human resource policies to improve overall wellness, including both individual and community needs
- Offering a group benefits plan
- Offering a group RRSP plan
- Providing knowledge growth opportunities through external cross-training

NEXT STEPS FOR 2021-2022



Internal development and growth

- Rebranding the NETWORK
- Recruiting new staff
- Charitable status
- Finding a permanent home
- Secure long-term funding



| MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, ACCESS TO INFORMATION & EDUCATIONAL TOOLS



SMART CITIES PROJECT

The Smart Cities project, otherwise adopted by the NETWORK as the Data Sovereignty project, is a collaborative initiative with the City of Montreal, funded by Infrastructure Canada, in order to improve food, transportation and information systems.

As the sole Indigenous contributor, the NETWORK's role is to focus on improving information systems. The project development has been finalized and is ready to launch with objectives to ensure Indigenous ownership of data and knowledge, as well as the management and accessibility of this information.



DECOLONIAL TOOLBOX

The Decolonial Toolbox is a collaborative initiative between the NETWORK, Mikana and Concordia University to support community-led knowledge production and information sharing by collecting existing data to prevent duplication efforts, co-create educational tools for non-Indigenous folks as well as host a roundtable gathering of organizations and groups mandated to educate the public.

As part of the NETWORK's mission, we aim to strengthen the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks, while also reducing the burden of reconciliation and decolonization on Indigenous communities.



RESOURCE GUIDES

The pandemic highlighted issues of community access to information. In order to relieve this dilemma, the NETWORK created several resource guides to be shared with the community:

- Montreal shelters inventory 2021
- Support & Connection resource list
 - COVID resources inventory
- Indigenous-owned businesses in the Greater Montreal inventory



THE ROLODEX (phase 1)

The NETWORK developed a project aimed directly at centralizing services, reducing duplication of resources, as well as improving service accessibility and visibility within the Indigenous and Indigenous-serving community. The Rolodex is a centralized community database that aims to make services, programming, and resources more accessible to the community through a user-friendly search engine that clearly indicates the resources that exist and which they are eligible for.



NEXT STEPS: 2021-2022

Publications, workshops and access to information

- Allyship workshops
- Data sovereignty project
- Decolonial Toolbox
- Lateral Violence (publication)
- Community research protocol (publication)
- Rolodex (Phase 2: interactive platform)

| YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

YOUTH ADVISORS AND GATHERINGS

16 youth gatherings
60+ participants
\$7K in funding

Between October 2020 to March 2021, the NETWORK's Youth Advisor virtual youth gatherings emerged as a need to tend to pandemic-related stressors and to promote social and cultural connection among youth. Gatherings included games and movie nights, holiday-themed get-togethers, embroidery workshops, a photo scavenger hunt, and more!

The NETWORK also encouraged and financed youth advisors to take weekly Inuktitut classes.

EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

Despite the chaos of the pandemic and the NETWORK's transforming role throughout the last year, we remained active participants in several external committees, most notably:

- MIHAC
- Defund the Police
- Project Labyrinthes
- Cohabitation
- Comité Vigilance Autochtones
- "No One Left Behind" Collective

NEXT STEPS FOR 2021-2022



Reinforcing
Indigenous expertise

- The STRATEGY
- Youth advisors and gatherings
- Land As Our Teacher: NETWORK Edition



| PANDEMIC RESPONSE

C-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE WORKING GROUP

The NETWORK was able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through the C-19 Community Response Working Group, by:

- Developing joint projects that address gaps in services under COVID-19
- Sharing of COVID-19 related updates and information
- Responding to COVID-19 outbreaks in the community

The C-19 Community Response Working Group was created for the purpose of providing a gathering space for Indigenous front-line organizations who shared information and highlighted priorities and needs concerning the community members they served. Not only was information shared between organizations, but the NETWORK was able to communicate these urgent needs directly to the municipal, provincial and federal authorities. The C-19 Group provided a space to form community-led solutions, which were implemented in real time. Throughout the year, the NETWORK held over 25 meetings and distributed \$3.5 million through a community and consensus-based decision-making process.

Our C-19 group participants and partners included:

- Projet Autochtones du Québec
- Southern Quebec Inuit Association
- Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
- Indigenous Support Worker Project
- Native Women Shelter of Montreal
- Makivik Corporation
- Native Montreal
- First Peoples Justice Centre of Montreal
- The Open Door Montreal
- Chez Doris

PURCHASES, DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIAL & BUSY BOXES

100+ Deliveries | \$350K in funding

Throughout the pandemic, the NETWORK procured and distributed an enormous amount of equipment, supplies and PPE to the community sector. A total of \$350,000 was spent on essential materials and deliveries for community organizations to better serve their members. Moreover, the NETWORK is currently providing storage space for a large amount of materials purchased, which are made available to community organizations upon request. In order to facilitate isolation and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the NETWORK created busy boxes with various materials for multiple Indigenous community member demographics. This initiative allowed community members to have access to cultural materials during their time in isolation and alleviated the stress of being alone. Busy boxes were distributed to community members at the Old Royal Victoria, at the warming station, as well as to individuals throughout the city.

FRONTLINE TRAINING

150+ participants
132 courses offered
\$460K in funding

One of the priorities identified by the C-19 Community Response Group was the need to provide culturally adapted training for existing and future frontline workers.

The Ilinniapaa Skills Development Centre was given the mandate to provide culturally adapted and trauma-informed training.

The training is nationally accredited, adapted to Montreal realities with a special focus on Inuit social, cultural and political experiences.

The NETWORK coordinated the adaptation of the training and financed the required seat cost for all staff of organizations offering frontline services to urban Indigenous community members.

Food Security Program

175 households | 7K meals | 30 volunteers | 500+ deliveries

The NETWORK collaborated with Native Montreal, the Southern Quebec Inuit Association, the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, the Welcoming Fire Outreach Program, and other partners including Santropol Roulant, Benedict Labre House and others, to provide a food security initiative. A centralized community food phone line was created where community members with food security concerns could request gift cards for groceries, frozen meals, or food baskets. Initially, the NETWORK, along with several volunteers, coordinated deliveries directly to community members. In later months, community members were directed to community organizations who were mandated to mobilize food security efforts.

The program has bridged the gap between community members experiencing food insecurity and resources available in and around the city, including access to traditional and country food. It has also brought community organizations to a centralized space, reduced duplication of services, and encouraged many partnerships. The food security initiative was successfully transferred to the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal in December, 2021!

CLEANING SERVICES

17K+ hours of cleaning
500+ benefiting participants
\$460K in funding)

Throughout the pandemic, the NETWORK coordinated and financed professional cleaning and disinfection services for Indigenous and Indigenous-serving centres and shelters. The company ensured spaces were properly disinfected as per public health standards. Moreover, the cleaning helped reduce the spread of COVID-19 and alleviated staff of increased cleaning tasks as public health regulations were evolving. Organizations that were able to benefit from cleaning services:

- Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
- Projet Autochtones du Québec
- First Peoples Justice Centre of Montreal
- Native Women's Shelter of Montreal
- Chez Doris
- The Open Door Montreal



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

5+ therapy sessions per participant

52 participants | \$25K in funding

As a result of the on-going pandemic, mental health concerns emerged throughout the Indigenous community sector. The NETWORK coordinated and financed a mental health support program in order to sustain the mental health of frontline workers and alleviate the extra burden caused by pandemic stressors. Grief counsellors and support systems surrounding COVID-19, loss/bereavement, burnout and pandemic stress were provided. Frontline workers, staff members of community organizations and community members were able to access mental health support services of their choice ranging from elders, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers, creative arts therapists and more, that the NETWORK was able to pay for directly



Joint Projects Addressing Gaps in Services

The pandemic not only highlighted existing gaps and inequities in services, but also forced the NETWORK (and our partners) to constantly adapt to changing circumstances and evolving needs of the urban Indigenous community.



STATUS UPDATES & PRESS RELEASES

The NETWORK acted as a central source of information between Public Health directives guided by circumstances brought about by the pandemic and constantly changing needs of the community.

Through status updates and press releases, we were able to communicate clearly to municipal, provincial and federal authorities, as well as the media when necessary, concerning urgent needs, priorities and challenges faced by the community sector.



COMMUNITY OUTBREAK PROTOCOLE

The novelty and uncertainty of the pandemic meant that Public Health measures were not always clear or uniform. Inevitably throughout the pandemic, community organizations faced outbreaks while trying to manage the foot traffic of the community members they serve. As a response, the NETWORK created a community outbreak protocol, inspired by Public Health directives, with clear steps to follow in the event of a community or staff member testing positive for COVID-19. The protocol was consulted on various occasions and was able to alleviate some of the uncertainty and stress from community outbreaks.



OLD ROYAL VICTORIA & NAVIGATION

In the midst of the pandemic, the NETWORK, in collaboration with public authorities as well as other community organizations such as Mission Bon Accueil and the Red Cross, quickly mobilized to create isolation spaces for the urban Indigenous street community at the Old Royal Victoria site. Various zones were created, including supervised “wet” zones. Indigenous community members living in homelessness who were affected by COVID-19 were able to safely isolate themselves.

Additionally, the NETWORK and the First Peoples Justice Centre of Montreal mobilized health navigators who routinely checked in with Indigenous community members in isolation at the Old Royal Victoria to ensure their needs were met, including material and emotional support.



WARMING STATION

Many places where community members typically seek food, shelter and respite from the cold were either closed or had limited access due to the pandemic. To alleviate some of these difficulties faced by the Indigenous street community during winterwe mobilized and coordinated a warming station on Mount-Royal and Saint Denis, open 7 days per week between 8am and 7pm. In collaboration with Exeko, The Indigenous Support Worker Project, the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, and Projets Autochtone du Quebec, the hired ad trained individuals who remained on site while the warming tent was open and were able to provide continuous support. As a result, Indigenous street community members were able to find shelter from the cold weather, receive meals and drinks, get additional winter gear and PPE, socialize while respecting public health directives and have access to many resources.



MOBILE TESTING & VACCINATIONS

The NETWORK and its many partners advocated continuously for mobile COVID-19 testing sites to be made available at the locations of community organizations as well as throughout the city. Whilst initially met with resistance from public authorities, mobile testing was eventually provided at several community organization locations and a large number of community members were able to have access to testing.

In collaboration with Native Montreal, the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, and other Indigenous and Indigenous-serving organizations, the NETWORK advocated and supported a successful vaccination campaign from Le Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS), making sure Indigenous community members over the age of 18 were a priority to receive their first dose of the vaccine. Native Montreal, NFCM and the CIUSSS hosted vaccination sites for community members and their family bubble living with them. Vaccinations amongst the Indigenous community was an overall success!



INDIGENOUS HEALTHLINE

The NETWORK and the FPJCM collaborated to create a centralized Indigenous Healthline with the objective of increasing the safety of the urban Indigenous community as well as providing quicker access to resources and services. The Indigenous Healthline operated 12 hours per day, 7 days per week during the height of the pandemic. It created links between marginalized community members and isolation sites, acted as a key resource for community members who felt unsafe isolating at the Old Royal Victoria site, and avoided increased use of police intervention.



ISWP OFFICE

In Dec. 2020, Wapikoni Mobile lent its 40-foot long mobile studio to the Indigenous Street Worker Project (ISWP). The objective was to support the delivery of intervention services for the Indigenous street community by offering an accessible space to meet and to provide ISWP with an office space conveniently located in the Plateau-Mont Royal area. With a physical space, ISWP was able to distribute outreach supplies and have a closer, permanent link to the urban Indigenous community members they serve. The NETWORK provided material and financial support for this initiative.



NEXT STEPS: 2021-2022

Identifying priorities, developing joint projects directed at systems change and strengthening partnerships

- Homelessness
- Health and social services
- Food and cultural revitalization
- Supporting the community sector
- Mental health support program
- Ilinniapaa training
- Strong communication channels

FINANCIALS

1. FUNDING RECEIVED

\$4 447 000

Operations: ISC/SAC (100k), VdeM (60k), CSJ/EEC (79k), FNHRDCQ/ CDRHPNQ (15k)

COVID: ISC/SAC (299k), ESDC /EDSC (3.5M), Centraide (27k), BCC/CPD (4.5k)

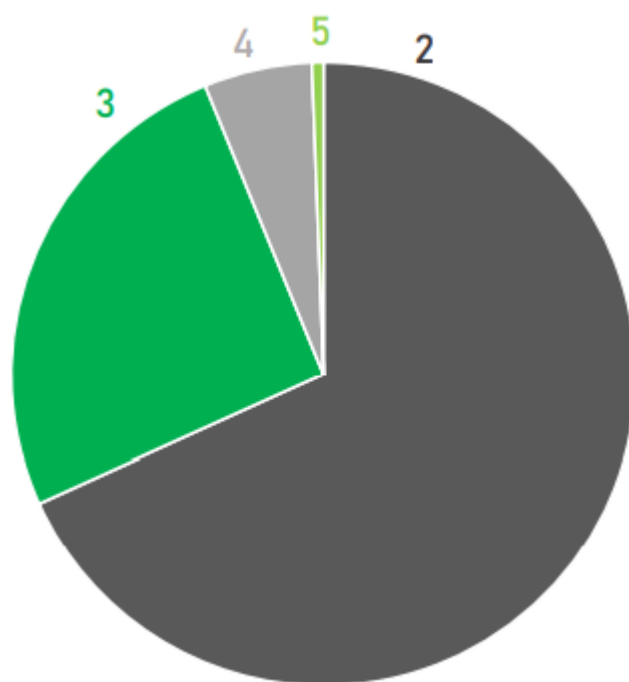
Regular Projects: CAM (18k), PSC/SPC (200k), Concordia: (17k), VdeM (31k)

2. FUNDS DISTRIBUTED FOR SECTOR WIDE / COVID RELIEF ACTIVITIES

*incl. \$750k expended in April 2021

\$3 040 000

- Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
- Projets Autochtones du Québec
- Native Montreal
- Southern Quebec Inuit Association
- First Peoples Justice Centre of Montreal
- Indigenous Support Worker Project
- Chez Doris
- Resilience Montreal
- Native Women's Shelter of Montreal
- The Open Door Montreal



3. Expended on operations and regular projects

* incl. 100k expended in April 2021, ESDC

\$1 122 000

4. Deferred revenue - restricted:

CAM, VdeM, Concordia, ISC

**in addition to 859k (ESDC) spent in April 2021*

\$248 000

5. Deferred revenue: Unrestricted

\$21 000



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