

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

22nd Action Week Against Racism under the theme: IN SPORTS AS IN LIFE, RACISM HAS NO PLACE!

Val-d'Or, March 15, 2022 - From March 21 to 25, the 22nd Action Week Against Racism will be held in Val-d'Or under the theme "*In sports as in life, racism has no place!*"

The Montreal Canadiens, spokespersons for the 22nd edition of the Action Week Against Racism, invite citizens to fight against all forms of discrimination in sports and in society and to make it everyone's business! The world of sports, like any other social sphere, is not exempt from the challenges of living together, including the various manifestations of racism. Nevertheless, despite stereotypes, discriminatory behaviours and attitudes, sport is also a means of affirmation, struggle and advocacy. By using its prestige and notoriety to fight racism, the Montreal Canadiens pursue their commitment to inclusion and respect for all in sports and, as evidenced by its territorial recognition statement before each home game, which is intended to honour and respect Indigenous people.

Georges Laraque, a former Montreal Canadiens player, will be the voice of the tricolore for this campaign in Val-d'Or. Through his contribution, he will give visibility to the cause, but more importantly, he will initiate the conversation around racism.

Partners of the 22nd Action Week Against Racism

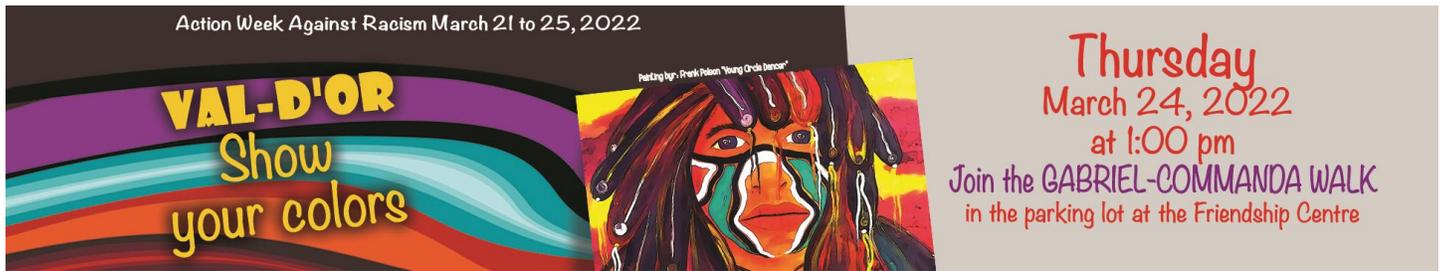
This year, the organizing committee includes the City of Val-d'Or, the Centre de service scolaire de l'Or-et-des-Bois (CSSOB), the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), the Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the DIALOG Network (Research and Knowledge on Indigenous Issues) and the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre. During this 22nd Action Week Against Racism, a number of activities will be held in schools and the UQAT university. Meeting and exchange initiatives have been planned by the City of Val-d'Or, the Local Service Access Table and the Carrefour jeunesse emploi. On March 23, the DIALOG Network is organising a symposium under the theme "From Reconciliation to Action" and will bring together key stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds, including public services, the mining industry, the business community, academia and Indigenous people.

Gabriel-Commanda Walk: a flagship event that brings the community together

The Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre invites all citizens to its major public event of solidarity between peoples, the *Gabriel-Commanda Walk*. The event will start at **1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 24**, in the Friendship Centre parking lot and will be preceded by a few stage performances. Young and old are invited to wear their sports team jerseys.

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Source : Nathalie Fiset, coordonnatrice des services administratifs, CAAVD / 819 825- 8299, poste 251,
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Quotes from our partners

The Montreal Canadiens

"As we team up with the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre for the Action Week Against Racism activities, we reiterate that any behaviour directed at a player, coach, official or fan because of his race, religion, gender or sexual orientation has no place in hockey and in our society. We remain committed to making hockey a sport that is experienced and played in an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for all, free from any form of racism or discrimination."

Geneviève Paquette, Vice President, Community Engagement and Executive Director of the Foundation and Georges Laraque, Habs Old Timer.

Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre

"Taking an interest in the history of Indigenous people, the history of residential schools and the fate of those children who never returned is the beginning of a real dialogue and a first step towards reconciliation. Racism still has a significant impact on Indigenous people's lives and it is encouraging to see the mobilisation around this societal issue."

Oscar Kistabish, President of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre.

City of Val-d'Or

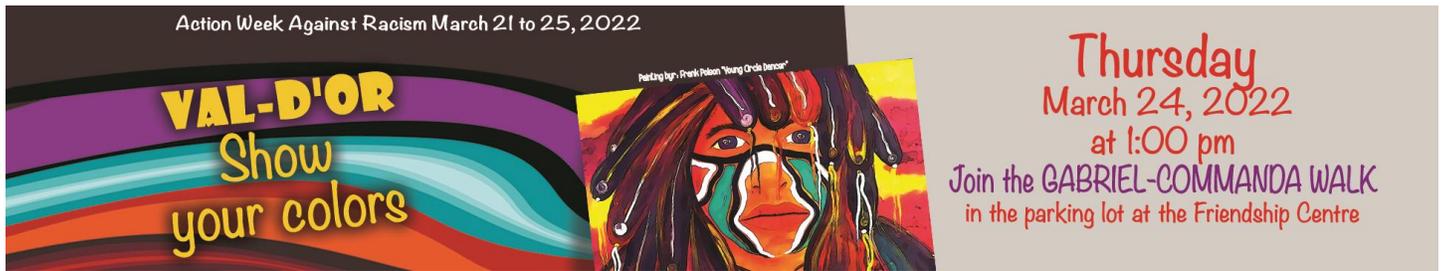
"The City of Val-d'Or is pleased to note that year after year, the mobilization is maintained and grows around the fight against racism and discrimination. The Action Week Against Racism is an important moment of the year, an opportunity for the entire population and organizations to say loud and clear that racism has no place in Val-d'Or."

Céline Brindamour, Mayor of Val-d'Or

DIALOG Network

"For several decades, the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre has pursued with conviction and pride its remarkable contribution to a society that denounces racism in all areas and at the same time traces the path to reconciliation. This 22nd edition lives up to this commitment to justice and civic responsibility. The DIALOG Network participates fully, alongside the Friendship Centre, in these cultural reconstruction and social recognition efforts."

Carole Lévesque, Professor, INRS, Director of the DIALOG Network.



UQAT

In partnership with the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) is pleased to take part in the 22nd Action Week Against Racism. This awareness campaign is of great importance and is essential in the eyes of UQAT in order to mobilise the community stakeholders and to move forward together towards a society that values differences.

“As strategic advisor for reconciliation and Indigenous education at UQAT, it is essential for me, for us, to create forums to exchange with others and to take the time to engage in a real dialogue. This week is a call for unity, acceptance and valuing of differences.”

Janet Mark, *Strategic Advisor for Reconciliation and Indigenous Education, UQAT.*

Cégep de l’Abitibi-Témiscamingue

“Whether in sports or in everyday life, racism obviously has no place at the Cégep de l’Abitibi-Témiscamingue. It is therefore with pride that the 3 region's campuses are committed to fighting racism once again this year by offering awareness activities to its students and staff.”

Kathy McGuire, Director, Val-d’Or campus.

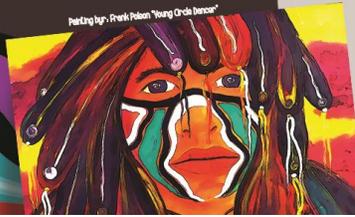
Centre de services scolaire de l’Or-et-des-Bois

“It is through education and mobilisation that we can fight against prejudice and racism and educate citizens who are supportive and open to difference. As a faithful partner of this Action Week against Racism, various awareness, bridge-building and discovery activities are organised in our schools to learn more about the different cultures that make up the richness of our community”.

Jean-François Pressé, Director General, CSSOB

Action Week Against Racism March 21 to 25, 2022

VAL-D'OR
Show
your colors



Thursday
March 24, 2022
at 1:00 pm
Join the **GABRIEL-COMMANDA WALK**
in the parking lot at the Friendship Centre

Highlights

- “At last, we've got rid of the Indians”. This sentence heard in a Val-d'Or store in March 2001 initiated the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre's campaign against racism.
- The campaign is part of the March 21 event, **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** proclaimed by the United Nations in 1966 to mark the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa.
- In 2001, a first march brought together a hundred people in the streets of Val-d'Or under the theme “Racism, if you don't stop it, who will?”.
- From the 2nd edition, the Walk is named in honour of the great Anicinabe Gabriel Commanda, symbol of harmonious relations between peoples and a great famous pioneer who laid out the city's main artery.
- In 2012, the crowd of marchers was estimated to be a record 1500 people, a record that will be repeated only once thereafter.
- Over the years, a total of nearly 18,000 people have joined the Gabriel-Commanda Walk.
- The 20th anniversary of the campaign is abruptly interrupted in March 2020 by the pandemic and the great containment falls on Quebec and the world, a few days before the event.
- From the outset, the campaign has enjoyed popular support, but since 2019, a range of partners have been mobilising to develop various types of activities and to spread the message of solidarity between peoples more widely in all sectors.

