



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Woodland Cree Chiefs Welcome Federal Funding, Advance Shared-Ownership Vision for Kistahpinanihk

(Treaty 5, 6, 8 & 10) PRINCE ALBERT, Sask. – The leadership of Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB), Montreal Lake Cree Nation (MLCN) and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (PBCN), together with Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC), welcomed today’s announcement of \$15 million in federal funding for the proposed Prince Albert Convention and Cultural Event Centre.

The federal government announced the funding through the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings program, with the announcement delivered by Honourable Buckley Belanger, Secretary of State (Rural Development) and his Worship Bill Powalinsky, Mayor of Prince Albert. Leaders called the investment an important step in a historic Indigenous–municipal partnership.

The centre’s name Kistahpinanihk — meaning “the meeting place” — reflects Prince Albert’s long-standing role as a gathering place for northern First Nations and Métis communities, many of whom already consider the city their southern home and regional hub.

“This announcement puts real momentum behind a partnership that has been built carefully over time,” said Chief Joyce McLeod of MLCN. “Prince Albert has always been our meeting place — where our people come for business, education, health care and community events. Today’s funding helps turn that shared understanding into a place our people can see, use and take pride in.”

In 2024, the City of Prince Albert entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Woodland Cree First Nations — MLCN, PBCN, and LLRIB — establishing a cooperative framework to jointly explore funding opportunities and pursue shared ownership of the Convention and Cultural Event Centre.

Under the agreement, the Woodland Cree First Nations would own up to 45 per cent of the completed facility, with the City of Prince Albert retaining the remaining ownership. Leaders said the shared-ownership model reflects the intent of Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 92, which calls for meaningful Indigenous participation in economic development initiatives.



“Reconciliation has to live in the structure of a project, not just in the language around it,” said Chief Tammy Cook-Searson of LLRIB. “Ownership gives our Nations a real voice, real accountability and a real stake in what’s being built.”

The project will be located in the City of Prince Albert and is envisioned as a tourism, cultural, business, recreational and entertainment centre. Leaders said the facility will serve as a cultural nexus for Prince Albert and northern First Nations that already rely on the city as a hub for shopping, business, recreation and education.

The centre is intended to serve Prince Albert and a regional population of more than 210,000 people across central and northern Saskatchewan, in a city where nearly half the population is Indigenous.

“For our Nations, this project opens real doors,” said Chief Peter Beatty of PBCN. “From the start, we are talking about apprenticeship, training, skills development and long-term employment. This project has the potential to create up to 600 jobs, and our expectation is that Indigenous people will be helping build it, operate it and benefit from it.”

Leaders described the centre as a cultural partnership that will provide a permanent platform to showcase Indigenous cultures while contributing to healing, mental wellness and community cohesion. As an event and entertainment centre, the facility is envisioned to host gatherings ranging from small community meetings to major conferences, concerts and sporting events.

“Sport has a way of breaking down barriers when words fall short,” said Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte of PAGC. “Our communities understand the power of sport to heal, inspire and lift young people up. This centre has the potential to strengthen youth, families and the entire region.”

The Woodland Cree Chiefs said the federal funding marks a key milestone and reaffirmed their commitment to advancing Kistahpinanihk as a shared-ownership project rooted in reconciliation, partnership and long-term regional benefit.

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