



**WILLIAMS LAKE INDIAN BAND
MEDIA RELEASE
April 6, 2020**

WILLIAMS LAKE, BRITISH COLUMBIA – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Williams Lake Indian Band (WLIB) broke ground today on its new Government Building, to be constructed in the commercial portion of the Coyote Rock subdivision on WLIB's IR#1.

The building, which has been in the planning phases for more than three years, will consist of 18,000 square feet of new construction adjacent to the Coyote Rock Golf Course. To celebrate the ground breaking a small group of staff and invitees gathered at the building site to observe a blessing of the land and listen to an address by WLIB Chief Willie Sellars. The group strictly adhered to social distancing requirements, and Chief Sellars spoke to the challenges of getting the project underway in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis

“There’s a certain irony and sadness that this important moment occurs in the midst of a global pandemic that forces us to remain physically distanced from others,” stated Chief Sellars. “And so we’ve had to take special precautions in order to hold this ceremony and proceed with this project. The health and safety of our community and of people around the world is of paramount importance and we wouldn’t be moving forward with this construction unless we had the utmost confidence that we could do so in a safe and orderly fashion.”



ARCHITECT’S RENDERING OF THE WLIB GOVERNMENT BUILDING

Construction of the building is expected to take 14 months and will represent an investment of more than \$8 million. Chief Sellars spoke to the economic benefits to the region that will be created by the project:

“All of the work will be delivered by local contractors. We are privileged to be working with Lauren Brothers as our general contractor, and Dale Lauren is here today to participate in this ceremony. The site work will be done by our long-standing partner, Lake Excavating. All the subcontracting elements will be sourced locally. A priority will be attached to securing as much employment and other opportunity for our membership in the delivery of this project as we possibly can... This project will create dozens of jobs over the approximately 14 months it takes to complete construction. This project, and projects like it, will be a critical part of our community’s recovery from what has been an incredibly challenging stretch – with the Mount Polley TSF failure of 2014, then the wildfires in 2017 and now the COVID-19 pandemic which has forced thousands in our region out of their jobs.”

The new WLIB Government Building is being generously supported by the governments of British Columbia and Canada through the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program*, which contributed more than \$1.4 million to the estimated \$8-million-dollar project.

“This building will have some truly beautiful elements that will be enjoyed by all residents of, and visitors to, the Cariboo,” added Chief Sellars. “It will have a public display and gathering area that will feature a combination of art, artifacts and cultural items that will showcase the history and beauty of our people and our region. There will be some truly spectacular art items that we are incredibly excited to reveal to everyone closer to the time this building is to be occupied. This building will also feature an archaeology lab and repository that will be the first of its kind in the region. This will allow Williams Lake Indian Band to continue with the work it has been aggressively pursuing over the least three or more years – protecting cultural heritage in our territory, showcasing our history and traditions and repatriating items which have been lost to our community.”



RENDERING OF THE CULTURAL SPACE WITHIN THE NEW WLIB GOVERNMENT BUILDING



CHIEF WILLIE SELLARS AND COUNCILLORS LENNARD SUPERNAULT, JOANNE MOIESE AND SHAWNA PHILBRICK AT THE APRIL 6 GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY

The WLIB Government Building is anticipated to be complete by July Of 2021. It will complement the downtown facility at 315 Yorston Street, which will continue to serve as the centre for WLIB’s Natural Resource Management, Economic Development and corporate offices.

For more information, please contact Kirk Dressler at (778) 417-0193 or kirk.dressler@williamslakeband.ca.

FULL TEXT OF CHIEF SELLARS’ GROUND BREAKING SPEECH FOLLOWS BELOW.

<http://www.williamslakeband.ca>

SPEECH DELIVERED BY CHIEF WILLIE SELLARS AT THE GROUND BREAKING OF WLIB'S NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING ON APRIL 6, 2020

I'd like to thank the small group gathered here today and the people watching online for joining us in the ground breaking of the Williams Lake Indian Band's new Government building. This project is a decade in the making, and this is truly a historic moment for our community.

This building was the vision of my predecessor and mentor, former Chief Ann Louie, who dreamed of bringing our organization together under one roof in an environment that would inspire our staff and create pride in our community.

There's a certain irony and sadness that this important moment occurs in the midst of a global pandemic that forces us to remain physically distanced from others. And so we've had to take special precautions in order to hold this ceremony and proceed with this project. The health and safety of our community and of people around the world is of paramount importance and we wouldn't be moving forward with this construction unless we had the utmost confidence that we could do so in a safe and orderly fashion.

I do note that suffering is not new to our people. In the 1860's, smallpox decimated indigenous populations in British Columbia and killed a third or more of our Secwepemc people. Our people have, over the centuries, experienced starvation, disease, the legacy of colonialism and residential schools and numerous other challenges. And yet our people have *survived*, and we have continued on with the same fierce determination that has fueled generation after generation.

And we will make it through this terrible time of the COVID-19 virus, too. And when we do, this new building will serve as a reminder of the resilience of the Williams Lake Indian Band, of the people of the Cariboo generally. It will be a warm, beautiful inviting facility where people can gather and truly appreciate and celebrate the privilege of uniting with others.

Let's talk a little bit about this facility and what it means to Williams Lake Indian Band and to the Cariboo. The new building will be more than 18,000 square feet and represents an investment of more than \$8 million in this region. All of the work will be delivered by local contractors. We are privileged to be working with Lauren Brothers as our general contractor, and Dale Lauren is here today to participate in this ceremony. The site work will be done by our long-standing partner, Lake Excavating. All the subcontracting elements will be sourced locally. A priority will be attached to securing as much employment and other opportunity for our membership in the delivery of this project as we possibly can.

Generously supported by the governments of British Columbia and Canada through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, this building will have some truly beautiful elements that will be enjoyed by all residents of, and visitors to, the Cariboo. It will have a public display and gathering area that will feature a combination of art, artifacts and cultural items that will showcase the history and beauty of our people and our region. There will be some truly spectacular art items that we are incredibly excited to reveal to everyone closer to the time this building is to be occupied. This building will also feature an archaeology lab and repository that will be the first of its kind in the region. This will allow Williams Lake Indian Band to continue with the work it has been aggressively pursuing over the last three or more years – protecting cultural heritage in our territory, showcasing our history and traditions and repatriating items which have been lost to our community.

This project will create dozens of jobs over the approximately 14 months it takes to complete construction. This project, and projects like it, will be a critical part of allowing our community to recover from what has been an incredibly challenging stretch – with the Mount Polley TSF failure of 2014, then the wildfires in 2017 and now the COVID-19 pandemic which has forced thousands in our region out of their jobs.

Williams Lake Indian Band will be a leader in the social and economic recovery that will occur once we make it through this challenging time. We commit to our members, and to the people of this region, that we will work tirelessly to make our community healthier – to develop programs and services, to create jobs and generate revenues that will make our community the best place in the world to live and work.

And the heart of this work will take place at this beautiful new building that begins construction today. Let every piece of steel and wood and concrete that goes up over the next fourteen months serve as a symbol of WLIB's determination to rebuild and grow stronger. Let it serve as a symbol of the resilience of our Secwepemc people.

And this is not the end of what we have planned for this year. We have much more to show the people of Williams Lake and beyond. We will not quit. We will not stop working.

I want to thank the small group that is here today and the people who are watching this online. You are all in my thoughts and prayers, and I wish for you all to stay safe and healthy in this time of crisis. Remember, that we will make it through this, and we will make it through this together.

Kukstemc – thank you everyone.