



MEDIA RELEASE

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SIIT launches Saskatoon home for Indigenous Innovation

SASKATOON – Today, in a ribbon cutting event joined by many of its partners, supporters, and recipients, SIIT launched the new home of Indigenous Innovation in Saskatoon – the **pawâcikêwikamik: Nutrien MakerLodge**. The **pawâcikêwikamik** (*‘a lodge supporting those who dream’*) **Innovation Collective** is about supporting, educating and mentoring Indigenous peoples through a variety of community-based initiatives, while providing access to cutting-edge technologies and training in a space that emphasizes culture, language, kinship, and connection.

“This space has been two years in the making”, explains President Riel Bellegarde. “From this newly renovated Main Floor at our Downtown Saskatoon Campus, SIIT is supporting community-based Innovation and Technology programming and services across the province.”

From L3Harris Indigenous Dreamers and Doers Youth Innovation Camps, to the Mobile MakerLodge generously supported by Crown Investment Corp., SaskTel, SaskPower, SaskEnergy and Prairies Canada, the **pawâcikêwikamik: the Innovation Collective** is bringing tech training and empowerment into communities that might not otherwise have access to these resources. 3D Printing farms, drone technology, hydroponics and access to the 20 ft. LED video wall for video production are just some of the resources available for community members and budding entrepreneurs.

More than just an accelerator or incubator, **pawâcikêwikamik: the Innovation Collective** is building an ecosystem of Innovation grounded in Indigenous worldview with key performance indicators directly linked to the 7 Grandfather teachings.

Over the past two years, the collective has awarded 21 Indigenous entrepreneurs non-repayable micro grants to support their small businesses, graduated two cohorts from the Miyoskamin Innovation & Entrepreneurship Applied Certificate program and offered over 300 free workshops in topics as diverse as 3D modelling to VR Asset Creation and Networking. With this new 8,000 sq/ft home, Indigenous entrepreneurs can be supported from idea to market and beyond, all within the culturally enriched environment so unique to SIIT.

The creation of this collective could not have been possible without the generous support of Sustainable Development Technologies Canada which provided \$3M in matching resources for the overall program in May 2021, but this space also would not have been possible without the early support of Nutrien - donating \$900,000 to support the physical build.

“Safety and innovation are at the forefront of everything we do as a business,” notes Chris Reynolds, EVP & President, Potash at Nutrien. “Nutrien has a longstanding and admirable relationship with SIIT and the meaningful work they do, and supporting the MakerLodge allows for innovation and technology to continue to shine bright, right here in Saskatchewan.”

Nutrien’s generous gift supports the MakerLodge where entrepreneurs, youth and community members can tinker and experiment with all the latest technology available. Technology was generously supported by the Oyateki Partnership and Prairies Canada. Once the entrepreneur’s idea is formed and the prototype created, clients can move into the available collaboration space to receive coaching on their business plan and pitch their plan to investors.

With over 800 training hours already logged and over 60 First Nations supported, **pawâcikêwikamik: The Innovation Collective** is making meaningful change to support First Nation inclusion and leadership in the tech economy. SIIT welcomes any Indigenous person who wants to learn more to come on down or visit siit.ca

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Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT)

SIIT was established in 1976 by Saskatchewan First Nations leaders representing all Treaty areas. Today, SIIT remains a First Nation-governed educational institution, one of only four credit granting post-secondary institutions in the province and the only accredited Indigenous institution. SIIT provides adult learners with academic, vocational and technical training as well as services and supports for employment and career growth. Indigenous learners are at the core of SIIT, representing over 95% of the student body.

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