

# Media Statement



FILE HILLS QU'APPELLE TRIBAL COUNCIL

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## FHQTC Supports Pine Lodge Development in Fort San

**(Treaty 4 Territory, SK)** – The leadership of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) and Leading Thunderbird Lodge (LTL) support the use of the Calling Lakes Centre as a temporary facility in the relocation of services for Pine Lodge Treatment Centre due to the recent fire they have experienced.

The Leading Thunderbird Lodge began its operations January 15, 2007. Consultations were held with the community of Fort San prior to opening its doors as a culturally based, residential treatment program for First Nations and Inuit male youth from across Canada who are between 12-17 years old. The consultations were held to address similar community anxieties that are being voiced yet still today. In the end, LTL was able to foster positive relationships with the Resort Village of Fort San and the community membership by hosting Open Houses, Pancake Breakfasts, and through volunteerism like Community Clean-up Days and helping with sandbagging experienced during flood.

The site and facility itself began as the former New Dawn Valley Centre Adult Treatment Centre in 1985, which has since maintained the zoning permits to operate as a treatment facility to this day. Since the opening of Leading Thunderbird Lodge, upwards of \$35 million dollars have been injected into the local economy, which, more-over, has helped hundreds of youth deal with their addictions and mental health challenges. Furthermore, Leading Thunderbird Lodge is a nationally accredited facility through the Canadian Accreditation Council, and is viewed by Health Canada's NNADAP/YSAP program as a facility of excellence, innovation, and is considered a model of excellence for facilities across Canada.

"We are very proud of the work Leading Thunderbird Lodge has done, and the achievements our facility has attained over the years. We have proven time and again that a Treatment facility cannot only co-exist, but thrive in the community of Fort San with absolute minimal negative impact, and much greater positive contributions. We support the endeavours of Pine Lodge in providing relevant addiction treatment for individuals who are reaching out for assistance in addressing their misuse of substances and encourage the community to welcome Pine Lodge with the same acceptance LTL has grown to enjoy." States FHQTC Tribal Chief & CEO, and Leading Thunderbird Lodge Board Chair Edmund Bellegarde.

Karen Main, whom has served as Leading Thunderbird Lodges Executive Director since the consultation process, through opening, and current operations, stated "We understand the anxieties of some community members, as well as the common stigma often placed around people with addictions and treatment facilities. It is important to remember that it is easier to provide prevention, and treatment services when individuals, whether youth or adult, are willingly undertaking residential treatment as they are aware of what they want and are starting their journey to recovery. It is also important to remember that addiction is not with just one group or population. Addictions are experienced by all races of society, no matter how much money you have or don't have and whether you are well educated or not. We support the Pine Lodge project because we know and experience the overwhelmingly positive impact a facility can have for a person, their family, and in the end, their community when operating under the high standards required by regulators."

Building on the success Leading Thunderbird Lodge has had over the years, LTL had recently expanded their service to include Pēkiwēwin House, a peer supported, supervised home that provides exemplary graduates of the 16-week treatment program a home in which to continue their healing journey, pursue their education, gain work experience and enhance their life skills to thrive in society. The successes of both Leading Thunderbird Lodge and Pēkiwēwin House are grounded in Indigenous culture and identity, which is rich in this Treaty 4 area. These innovative approaches are what lays at the foundation of Leading Thunderbird Lodges' success.

We encourage the community of Fort San to support The Calling Lakes Centre in providing a temporary home for Pine Lodge Treatment Centre with the understanding that Leading Thunderbird Lodge has operated successfully for over 14 years with absolute minimal negative impact on the community, and has injected major funding into the local economy. Hundreds of clients have overcome addictions through our programs and services, while enjoying the healing powers of this beautiful valley. This is not only a highlight of the achievements of Leading Thunderbird Lodge, it is also a highlight of the community and people of Fort San. We appreciate the special relationship we share with Fort San and look forward to welcoming Pine Lodge with positivity into the community.