



News Release

For immediate release

Tundra Turning celebrates historic \$83.7 million investment to build Aqqusariaq (formerly the Nunavut Recovery Centre) in Iqaluit

Iqaluit, Nunavut (August 14, 2023) – Colonial trauma is deep-rooted and complex, affecting many generations. By bringing treatment closer to home with a centre that is founded on Inuit traditions and practices, healing can begin amongst community, families, friends and loved ones.

On Monday, Vice President of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), Paul Irgaut; Minister of Indigenous Services, Patty Hajdu; and Nunavut Minister of Health, John Main, turned tundra on the future site of Aqqusariaq as part of a ground-breaking (“tundra turning”) ceremony. Aqqusariaq is an \$83.7 million treatment and recovery centre, with \$42.1 million in funding from the Government of Canada and \$41.6 million from the Government of Nunavut. In addition, NTI provided \$5 million towards the overall costs of the project and \$11.8 million through the Makigiaqta Inuit Training Corporation to train Inuit counsellors. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) will also provide \$9.7 million per year in annual funding towards the costs of operating the centre.

This historic investment fulfills Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Call to Action #21, which calls on the federal government to provide sustainable funding for healing centres to address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harms created by residential schools, especially in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Aqqusariaq, named by the Cultural and Lived Experience Advisory Committee, Aqqusariaq Development Team, and subject matter experts from across the territory, is an Inuktitut term describing a trail you go through to reach your destination and is symbolic of a recovery journey. The construction of Aqqusariaq represents the strengthening of in-territory mental wellness and substance abuse resources—part of an Inuit-designed addictions and trauma treatment system.

The centre will provide treatment and healing interventions to focus on substance use and will be trauma-centred in Inuit cultural practices and values. Additional resources include community-based programming offering on-the-land healing camps and other in-community supports that build on cultural strengths, and the development of an Inuit workforce to deliver treatment interventions.

Preparation at the building site is already underway, with construction scheduled to begin in fall 2023. The treatment and recovery centre will include 24 beds, as well as community-centred care, including treatment for pregnant women to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It is expected to be substantially completed in December 2025.

Quotes

“With Aqqusariaq, Inuit will have another opportunity to heal from the impact of residential schools and intergenerational trauma by reclaiming physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness. With access to the land and Elders, our healthy food and Inuktitut clinical services, Aqqusariaq will have the power to improve Inuit lives for generations to come. After years of planning, today marks a milestone in healing programs and services designed by and for Inuit.”

- Paul Irgaut, Vice President, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

“The Department of Health is committed to improving mental health and wellness for all Nunavummiut through ongoing collaboration with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., and Indigenous Services Canada. This partnership and construction of Aqqusariaq will foster culturally appropriate approaches to care and enhance treatment opportunities that are closer to home, Inuit-led, and trauma-informed.”

- The Honourable John Main, Government of Nunavut Minister of Health

“With Inuit voices and practices at the heart of their approach, Aqqusariaq will provide a safe haven close to home for people on their healing journey. The recovery centre will provide Inuit-led, community-centred resources and care for individuals across Nunavut. This investment answers TRC Call to Action #21 and reaffirms the federal government's commitment to providing sustainable funding to address the harms of residential schools. Through the leadership of NTI, and in partnership with the Government of Nunavut, I am grateful to take this important step together toward reconciliation.”

- The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services

“To improve mental wellness for Inuit, we must work together to create better access to effective care that is culturally appropriate and closer to home. The construction of Aqqusariaq is vital to support the well-being of families and communities who are

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