



## NEWS RELEASE

### Four governments commit to working together in Fort Smith

*Elected leaders sign a historic agreement committing to “building a strong, prosperous, equitable, and sustainable community, region, and territory for all with an unrivalled quality of life.”*

**Fort Smith, NWT, June 21, 2024:** The elected leaders of four governments entered a new era of collaboration with the signing of a historic Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in Fort Smith today. The governments – Salt River First Nation, Smith’s Landing First Nation, Fort Smith Métis Council, and the Town of Fort Smith, as well as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Thebacha – signed the agreement after finding common ground in a series of gatherings over the past year and a half. The MOA highlights the leaders’ common priorities, including taking care of shared lands and waters, celebrating and preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of the Fort Smith community. The MOA commits the leaders to their shared vision of “building a strong, prosperous, equitable, and sustainable community, region, and territory for all with an unrivalled quality of life.”

The leaders had previously worked together for decades but they decided to officially formalize their relationships to the next level in order to meet their goals. To support their collaboration, the leaders invited the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER). Using its Collaborative Leadership Initiative (CLI) model, a proven process for advancing reconciliation and building collaboration between governments, CIER helped coordinate and facilitate the leaders’ gatherings and took action to implement the direction set by the leaders. CIER’s involvement was made possible through funding from the BHP Foundation.

Over four gatherings, they strengthened their relationships, learned together, identified areas of common concern, and began taking action to advance their common priorities. The signing of the MOA creates a commitment to continue working together by providing and establishing a long-term framework for collaboration and establishing working tables between leaders and their administrations.

The signing of the MOA is only the beginning of this collaboration. Moving forward, the leaders will implement joint actions that benefit the peoples, lands, and waters of Fort Smith and the surrounding region.

#### Leaders Quotes:

*“The dedication and enthusiasm shown by our leaders have truly brought this initiative to life. With their passion and commitment, we’ve turned possibilities into realities. Now, there are endless opportunities ahead of us.”*

- Mayor Fred Daniels, Town of Fort Smith

*“The Memorandum of Agreement is one step towards Unity and Reconciliation between the NWT Territorial Government, our three Aboriginal Governments, and the Town of Fort Smith. This MOA will be our guide to ensure the community and people of Fort Smith are supported in a collaborative effort to support issues that pertain to the well being of our community and members.”*

- Chief Toni Heron, Salt River First Nation

*“This historic signing reflects our unwavering commitment to our community's prosperity. Together, we are building a legacy of collaboration and innovation that will benefit future generations.”*

-President Allan Heron, Fort Smith Métis Council

*“This agreement is a testament to the power of collaboration. Our shared commitment has not only strengthened our bonds but also created a foundation for a future filled with opportunity.”*

- Chief Thaidene Paulette, Smith's Landing First Nation

*“Our journey towards this agreement has been marked by mutual respect and cooperation. I look forward to a continued partnership as we work together for the betterment of all our people. This milestone reflects our dedication to achieving a brighter future together.”*

- MLA Jay MacDonald, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Thebacha

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