

## JOINT NEWS RELEASE



Edmonton

### Ground blessing ushers in construction at kihciy askiy site

*September 22, 2021*

The City of Edmonton, in partnership with the Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (IKWC) hosted a ground blessing event today at kihciy askiy, or “Sacred Earth” in Cree, to signify and celebrate the beginning of construction at this one-of-a-kind site.

“In partnership with the Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre, we are proud and thankful to begin construction at kihciy askiy,” said Jason Meliefste, Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, City of Edmonton. “More than a decade in the making, we’re thrilled to see the vision of this site moving forward and are grateful to our partners at IKWC for their hard work in championing the project and our partners at Delnor Construction and Reimagine Architects for their part in bringing the space to life.”

kihciy askiy will be the first permanent, urban Indigenous ceremonial site in Canada and will provide a natural setting for Indigenous peoples and communities in the capital region to host spiritual ceremonies, sweat lodges, cultural camps and talking circles; grow medicinal herbs, and facilitate intergenerational learning in an appropriately designed outdoor learning space.

A ground blessing was held instead of a traditional ground breaking to thank and honour the relationship between all stakeholders on this project as well as to seek blessing from Mother Earth in allowing construction to take place at kihciy askiy. As part of the ground blessing, City officials, Indigenous elders, and representatives from IKWC, Reimagine Architects and Delnor Construction participated in a ceremony that included a drummer, gift giving, prayer and a sharing circle. Representatives also tied ribbons to a tree, signifying connections and respect for the earth.

“IKWC is honoured to work in partnership with the City of Edmonton on this important project. Under the guidance of our Counsel of Elders, we look forward to the creation of a permanent space where Indigenous community groups can participate in cultural and spiritual ceremonies,” said Clayton Kootenay, CEO, IKWC. “At kihciy askiy we are building a gathering place for future generations, a place to promote our languages, cultures, and facilitate intergenerational learning, as well as a place to engage in reconciliation. As part of this ground blessing we are asking Mother Earth for permission to build on the land site so it can serve all of her children.”

The City of Edmonton is dedicated to enhancing cultural inclusion to create a city that is inspiring and alive with culture and enriches the quality of life for all Edmontonians. Construction at kihciy askiy is set to begin in late 2021, and will take approximately 18 - 24 months to be complete and in-service.

“We are humbled to be able to participate in this very important project as the Construction Manager,” said Glenn Cyrankiewicz, Chief Executive Officer, Delnor Construction. “We welcome the journey and the learning that comes as we work with the City, IKWC and Indigenous partners to build this special place, and we applaud the tremendous effort of all those who have worked for years to make this project a reality. We are looking forward to bringing this project to completion together.”

For more details about the kihciy askiy site, including construction details, renderings and more, visit [edmonton.ca/kihciyaskiy](https://edmonton.ca/kihciyaskiy). Photos from the event are [available here](#).

---

**Media contact:**

[Zak Fairbrother](#)

Communications Advisor

City of Edmonton

780-868-2090

[Rose Mueller](#)

Communications Manager

Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre

780-243-8724