



Media Release

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Naming Ceremony by Mi'kmaw Elders marks new dawn for Eltuek Arts Centre
Marking reconciliation through art and community in Unama'ki

Sydney, Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island), Mi'kma'ki, October 29, 2021:

At the change in season, with the light lasting less each day, we're taking a moment to mark another beginning and give space to creativity, kinship, and reconciliation.

After a Naming Ceremony by Mi'kmaw Elders held at sunrise on Friday, October 29, 2021, the Eltuek Arts Centre has opened in Sydney, Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island). As the sun rose, Elder Lawrence Wells of Membertou led a sacred fire ceremony that included sharing of traditional teachings, songs, and stories, and ended with a morning feast among friends.

Eltuek (pronounced el-du-ehg), meaning "we are making (it) together." The (it) refers to whatever it is that we decide to make – art, ideas, a shared meal, music, community, a brighter future. The importance of the name is that it is accessible, inclusive, and continuous.

Eltuek Arts Centre was previously known as The Convent | Ta'n etl-mawita'mk, which opened in February 2020 in the former Holy Angels Convent, ca. 1895. It was purchased by New Dawn Enterprises in 2012 and the 130-year-old heritage building is the largest adaptive reuse of built heritage in Unama'ki (Cape Breton). The building stands as a symbol of hope and renewal for a community that has struggled for more than 40 years to reinvent itself after the decline of the coal and steel industries.

This naming initiative has come from a series of critical and transformative conversations held over four seasons by the Elders Advisory Group for Eltuek Arts Centre. The five Elder Advisors represent the Island's Mi'kmaw communities and provide guidance and governance to ensure that Eltuek Arts Centre is welcoming to Mi'kmaw artists and community members. With the history and lasting impacts of the Canadian Indian Residential Schools system, the abuse and trauma faced by

Indigenous people, and the direct involvement of religious organizations, it was decided that a renaming process was “Reconciliation in Action.”

Throughout these conversations, the Elders Advisory Group tried to find a name that would reflect the mission and vision of Eltuek Arts Centre but also the limitless and hopeful possibilities for the years to come. It was important to honour the traditional territory in which we work, Mi’kma’ki, and show respect for the First People of this land, the Mi’kmaq, through the support and recognition of the First Language in the new name. In conversation with the Elders, Eltuek was chosen as a new way forward, where all can “work to create something together.”

Eltuek Arts Centre is honoured to now share Eltuek and the story behind the name with everyone and invite you to join us on this journey of reconciliation in action.

Eltuek Arts Centre takes to heart the care and concern for the health and well-being of the Elders and our community. All cultural protocols and provincial public health guidelines were respected during the Naming Ceremony event.

Quotes:

“It is in the spirit of reconciliation that we gathered here today to commit to a future filled with opportunities to learn about each other in a space where it is safe to share who we are, a space where culture is supported, a space where we can think outside the box and into the circle where we all belong, a space where voices will be heard, and a space where real change can happen.”

- Robert Bernard, Indigenous Guide Consulting

“We share our deep gratitude to Pauline, Dolena, Anita, Lawrence, and Ernest for their work, their gifts of friendship, and for their tremendous care and consideration in all our gatherings. To Robert, the spark for our team, we are grateful for his guidance as this process unfolded.”

- Melissa Kearney, Eltuek Arts Centre

“Our shared work centres on community development, on creating a vibrant, self-reliant, and healthy Island for all. The path to that desired future is a path of art, love, listening, self-reflection, humility, and just action.”

- Erika Shea, President/CEO of New Dawn Enterprises

“Artists are often conduits for change and for truth - to call out the things that are wrong, to show us another path, to inspire awe and joy and wonder, to open our seeing and feeling and thinking to possible worlds. To be able to support artists and their work here in Unama’ki is a dream come true.”

- Christie MacNeil, Eltuek Arts Centre

Quick Facts:

- Eltuek Arts Centre is in Sydney, Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island). Eltuek features artist studios, Open Studio for shared artist workspaces, gallery and exhibition spaces, the Better Bite Café and Meals on Wheels, Nova Scotia Community College Music Arts Program, Celtic Colours International Festival, Nova Stream, and The Coast 89.7 FM Radio Station.
- Eltuek Arts Centre supports artists by offering affordable working studios and accessible exhibition space. We work to create an environment for artists and the community that is engaged with contemporary art, and nurtures creation in a vibrant, supportive, and relevant way. We are artist-led and artist-focused.
- Eltuek Arts Centre is a non-profit arts organization that is owned and operated by New Dawn Enterprises. New Dawn is a non-profit, volunteer-directed social enterprise dedicated to community building. It seeks to identify community needs and to establish and operate ventures that speak to those needs.
- Incorporated in 1976, New Dawn is the oldest Community Development Corporation in Canada and a founding member of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network.
- Eltuek Arts Centre believes in the benefits of the arts to communities - their ability to transform places, give people hope, give people a new way to see themselves and the world, start conversations, connect, challenge, confront, bring joy, inspire with awe.
- Eltuek Arts Centre is a welcoming place to work, gather, and share through art and culture that is accessible and inclusive.
- Eltuek Arts Centre offers beautiful, bright, and affordable gathering and event spaces for rent to the community. We offer Indigenous, non-profit, and tenant rates in addition to our regular commercial rates. Our building is a fully accessible site – with barrier-free interior spaces and grounds, an elevator, universal washrooms, and signage in Mi'kmaq, English, and Braille.
- Eltuek Arts Centre is home to *Resonance*, Ursula Johnson's first permanent public art piece that asks us to consider the histories of north end Sydney, from a place of learning for thousands of girls, one hundred years of steel production, and now, for contemporary art and social change.

Eltuek Elders Advisory Group:

Elder Anita Basque, Potlotek
 Elder Pauline Isadore, Wagmatcook
 Elder Dolena Poulette, We'koqma'q
 Elder Ernest Johnson, Eskasoni

Elder Lawrence Wells, Membertou
Robert Bernard, We'koqma'q, Indigenous Guide Consulting Services
Erika Shea, President/CEO New Dawn Enterprises
Melissa Kearney, Eltuek Arts Centre
Christie MacNeil, Eltuek Arts Centre

Unceded and Unsurrendered Land Acknowledgement:

Eymu'ti'k Unama'ki, newte'jk l'uiknek te'siki Mi'kmawe'l maqamikal mna'q iknmuetumitl. Ula maqamikew wiaqwikasik Wantaqo'tie'l aqq l'lamatultimkewe'l Ankukamkewe'l Mi'kmaq aqq Eleke'wuti kisa'matultisnik 1726ek. Ketu'-keknuite'tmek aqq kepmite'tmek ula tela'maiultimkip wjit maqamikew ta'n etekl mtmo'taqney. Ula tett, ula maqamikek, etl-lukutiek l'tunen aqq apoqntmnen apoqnmasimk aqq weliknamk Unama'ki.

Eltuek Arts Centre is in Unama'ki, one of the seven traditional and unceded ancestral districts of the people of Mi'kma'ki. This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship which the Mi'kmaq first signed with the British Crown in 1726. We wish to recognize and honour this understanding of the lands on which we reside. It is from here, on these lands, that we work to create and support a culture of self-reliance and vibrancy on Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island).

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