News Release

For immediate release

Revitalization of Indigenous laws in Québec a priority for the Government of Canada

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The Government of Canada is committed to walking the shared path of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and remains focused on renewing this relationship. This includes recognizing Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, supporting the revitalization of Indigenous legal systems and traditions, as well as acknowledging the integral role that Indigenous communities and organizations play in the development, use and understanding of Indigenous laws.

Today, the Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and Chief Thomas Neeposh, highlighted the Government of Canada's support to the Cree Nation of Mistissini for their Mistissini Governance Project, which will revitalize Cree legal principles and traditions within their community. Support for this initiative aligns with the Government of Canada's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Call to Action 50.

The Mistissini Governance Project will create a series of fundamental governance laws for the Cree Nation of Mistissini. This will include the creation of five laws: Mistissini linuuch Chisa-Wiisuuwehwun (a Mistissini Constitution), a Mistissini Governance Law, a Mistissini Hunting Law, a Mistissini Development Law and a Mistissini Lake Law. This project will support the intergration of Cree legal principles and values into a series of fundamental governance laws and be applied across the entire traditional territory.

The Cree Nation of Mistissini will work closely with elders, tallymen and other community members to gather information—stories, teachings, perspectives, practices—to inform the legal principles and processes related to the five laws to be developed. This important work will ensure the integration of Cree values, traditions and teachings in Mistissini Cree laws.

Call to Action 50 calls upon the federal government to collaborate with Indigenous organizations to fund Indigenous law institutes for the development, use and understanding of Indigenous laws and access to justice in accordance with the unique cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Supporting Call to Action 50 aligns with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which sets out the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their distinct legal institutions.

The Department of Justice is providing \$499,000 over four years for this project through its Justice Partnership and Innovation Program. This program supports activities that respond effectively to the changing conditions affecting Canadian justice policy.





Quotes

"Through this Governance Project, the Cree Nation of Mistissini is working to develop fundamental laws that will capture in written form the heart of our Cree worldview—our understanding of good governance, of accountability and of how we relate to each other and to our lands and our waters. These laws will set forth traditional Cree knowledge and authority in the form of legislation that clearly describes how our *linou lidouwun*—our laws and legal systems, values, principles and practices—apply today."

Chief Thomas Neeposh Cree Nation of Mistissini / Mistissini linuuch

"Revitalizing Indigenous legal traditions is central to reconciliation. That is why implementing CTA 50 remains a priority for our Government. I am pleased to support the Cree Nation of Mistissini with their important Governance Project. The revitalization of Indigenous laws in Québec, through partnership with Indigenous peoples, is a critical step in strengthening communities, advancing self-determination and increasing access to justice"

The Honourable David Lametti, P.C., Q.C., M.P. Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

Quick Facts

- In Budget 2019, the Government of Canada responded to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 50 by announcing \$10 million over five years in support of Indigenous law initiatives across Canada.
- To strengthen community-based justice systems and support self-determination, the 2020 Fall Economic Statement also proposed investments to support the development of Administration of Justice Agreements with Indigenous communities.
- Through the release of Budget 2021, the Government of Canada announced investments of \$18
 million over 5 years, and \$4 million ongoing to revive the Law Commission of Canada to
 support, among other things, the work to address systemic barriers in the justice system,
 including barriers to justice faced by Indigenous peoples.
- The <u>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</u> (the Act) became law on June 21, 2021. Under the Act, the Government of Canada will work in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to ensure federal laws are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration), prepare and





implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration, and develop annual reports on progress and submit them to Parliament.

Associated links

- Cree Nation of Mistissini
- Justice Partnership and Innovation Program
- Indigenous Justice, Recognition and Reconciliation
- Revitalization of Indigenous laws at centre of Government of Canada funding

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