



## Round Prairie Elders’ Lodge wins international award

ORLANDO, FL. — A new residential building for Métis Elders in Saskatoon has won an international award honouring projects that have made a distinct contribution to the local culture, use innovative products that make a positive difference in the home building industry, and have protocols for sustainability, health and wellness.

On Tuesday, Feb. 8, the Central Urban Métis Federation, Inc. (CUMFI) Round Prairie Elders’ Lodge building was awarded with the 2021 Global Innovation Award for Home of the Year at the National Association of Home Builders’ International Builders’ Show. The NAHB is the American national home builders’ association.

“The Round Prairie Elders' Lodge is a great accomplishment for CUMFI and Big Block,” says Shirley Isbister, President of CUMFI. “It is a vibrant home that focuses on culture, the health and wellness of Metis Elders, and provides a Metis Community environment. We are honored to be recognized for this achievement.”

Big Block Construction provided project development, financing and construction services for the Round Prairie Elders’ Lodge development. Big Block CEO Alex Miller says he is thrilled this groundbreaking project was recognized internationally.

“This is the first time a project from Saskatchewan has won an NAHB award and we can’t think of a better project to deserve the honour,” he said. “It’s a very prestigious award and we are deeply grateful for all of the partners who made this project a success.”

Partners on the project include modular builder Grandeur Housing, based out of Winkler, Man., and David T Fortin Architect, based out of Sudbury, Ont. Five different funding bodies helped make the project a reality: Indigenous Services Canada – Indigenous Homes Innovation Initiative, Métis Nation–Saskatchewan, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation National Housing Co-Investment Fund, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation – Saskatchewan Co-Investment Program, and City of Saskatoon Affordable Housing Capital Grant Program.

The affordable housing development features 26 units, and is the first time CUMFI has built a culturally-appropriate building for their people. The building was designed by Métis architect David T. Fortin, and Elders played an integral role in conceptualizing the Lodge, informing key decisions like including a spiritual room and gathering spaces, and making all of the suites universally accessible. The Lodge is an infill development in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood in Saskatoon, and CUMFI sees it as part of the revitalization of the area.

The building is built to Net Zero Ready standards, and was created using factory-based modular techniques, a building system that reduces waste and has improved quality, schedule certainty, cost predictability, and safety performance compared to stick built construction. Modular construction has the capability to solve Canada's affordable housing challenges in a sustainable manner.

Throughout this project, the Big Block team has learned about Métis culture and practices, and how to work with Indigenous groups. In addition to learning from CUMFI, some of the funding requirements included hiring Indigenous contractors whenever possible. The Round Prairie Elders' Lodge is an example of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities can bridge the divide that's been created between them and work together towards a common goal to better the lives of Indigenous people.

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#### **About Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.**

CUMFI is a community-based, Métis owned and operated non-profit, charitable organization located in Saskatoon. CUMFI is a local and national leader in the area of urban Indigenous issues and challenges.

#### **About Big Block Construction**

Headquartered in Saskatoon, Big Block Construction offers project development consulting services, financial services, and modular-focused construction services to community-minded organizations.

**Alex Miller, CEO**  
**Big Block Construction**

**Shirley Isbister, President**  
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