

For Immediate Release



MEDIA RELEASE: LAND GIFT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT CEREMONY

Wednesday May 21, 10-10:30 a.m.

River Family Haven Site: 2752 West Elliott Court, Spokane, WA

Confirm your participation in advance with Dave Meany, CCEW at 509.724.6525 or dave.meany@cceasternwa.org

MOMENTOUS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLIC CHARITIES AND SALISH SCHOOL WILL BENEFIT FUTURE GENERATIONS

SPOKANE. WASH. -- Organizational leaders, school children, dignitaries and well-wishers gathered on the banks of the Spokane River May 21 to acknowledge and celebrate the land gift agreement between Salish School of Spokane (SSOS) and Catholic Charities Eastern Washington (CCEW). The agreement gives the school permanent ownership of the land along the Spokane River where their new facilities and recreational center will be built.

It's a ground-breaking, first-of-its-kind agreement, which Catholic Charities sees as a very small first step towards acknowledging and reconciling the history of the Federal Government and organized religion's complicity in the atrocities committed against Indigenous Peoples in North America.

"This land gift ensures that Salish School of Spokane will own the 2+ acres where the school and cultural center are located, which originally belonged to their ancestors," explains Rob McCann, CEO and President of CCEW. "In addition to the land for the Salish School and recreational facility, CCEW is committed to gifting the River Family Haven apartments to the school after it has met its 15-year tax credit obligations. At that time, we hope that this housing community can become an asset in support of the Salish School's mission."

Following several years of working together on a variety of projects, SSOS and CCEW agreed to move forward together on a \$32 million development that's slated to begin construction within a year.

"Re-building trust after generations of harm is an important step for our school community," says LaRae Wiley, Executive Director of Salish School of Spokane. "We are excited to see our children live and learn here in a natural setting by the river. We look forward to our language and culture being a regular, recognized part of civic and cultural life in Spokane."

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The new facilities will include expanded classroom spaces, and create a new cultural and recreational center with gym, cafeteria and sports fields for SSOS and the broader Native community, as well as the West Hills neighborhood. Development costs are estimated at \$10.7 million, with \$7.7 million in place, including a \$2.5 million grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce.

Salish School of Spokane is working hard to preserve its critically endangered language and culture, building a new community of Salish language speakers and cultural practitioners. It operates a Salish immersion preschool and childcare center, a private K-8 Salish immersion school, a Salish Language Educator Development program, an evening Salish Community Education program, an enrichment program for Native youth in grades 9-12, a Salish curriculum development program, and a program of technical support and training for other Indigenous language communities – all from crowded facilities along the Maple-Ash corridor in Spokane.

CCEW also plans to construct the River Family Haven, featuring 72 units of permanent affordable housing. Reserved for low-income households struggling with skyrocketing household, health, childcare and transportation expenses, the operation will help families thrive by connecting residents to counseling, employment and educational opportunities, medical care, recovery support and other services needed to help families live stable, independent lives.

Families served at Salish School of Spokane will also be eligible for all the social and family support programs offered on site by CCEW.

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