

June 17, 2025



Groundbreaking of Sâde Solar Initiative Marks Historic Step Toward Energy Sovereignty for Liard First Nation

Watson Lake, Yukon, Canada

Today marks a significant step toward energy sovereignty and environmental stewardship as the Liard First Nation and First Kaska Utilities Ltd., an Indigenous-owned company, celebrate the official groundbreaking of the Sâde Solar Initiative in Watson Lake, Yukon.

The solar farm, located on the traditional territory of the Liard First Nation, will be a 2.85 megawatt / 5.3 megawatt hour Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) fixed-tilt photovoltaic array system, representing one of the most ambitious Indigenous-led clean energy projects in the North. Once completed, it will generate clean, renewable electricity that will replace more than 24 per cent of the diesel-generated power in the community. This shift is expected to reduce diesel consumption by approximately 1,020,300 litres annually and cut CO₂ emissions by 3,509 tonnes each year.

The project received \$28.6 million in federal funding.

Once constructed, the solar farm will be brought online in two stages. In the first stage, it will operate at limited capacity to maintain grid stability in Watson Lake. Full commissioning will follow the installation of a battery energy storage system (BESS) and microgrid controller, with the project expected to reach full capacity by summer 2027.

The Sâde Solar Initiative reflects a new era of collaboration and respect between Indigenous governments and utility partners. Reducing the community's reliance on diesel generation as an Independent Power Producer, the Sâde solar initiative will also become an important revenue source for the First Nation. An Electricity Purchase Agreement (EPA) between the Liard First Nation and ATCO Electric Yukon establishes a contractual agreement whereby ATCO will purchase the electricity generated at the solar PV facility. The project is expected to generate nearly \$40 million for the Liard First Nation over 25 years, which may be invested into other clean energy projects like biomass and wind energy. This EPA reflects ATCO's collaborative approach to working alongside First Nations in the North to enable the development of new and innovative renewable energy infrastructure, assisting indigenous communities achieve greater energy autonomy and lowering environmental impacts on the land.

"As a government, our sovereignty comes from the land, and the land is a conduit that projects our relations. This project allows us to pay respect to the land and our traditions while creating opportunities for future generations. The Sâde Solar initiative presents an opportunity for our First Nation to take advantage of these technologies that embody our values of living in balance with our land in perpetuity." – **Chief Stephen Charlie, Liard First Nation**

"The federal government is proud to celebrate the groundbreaking for this important Indigenous-led energy project in Watson Lake alongside our partners. The Sâde Solar Initiative marks a major step toward energy independence in the North. By reducing the community's reliance on diesel, the project will deliver cleaner air, lower energy costs and a more resilient power supply. This investment supports our northern communities in becoming more sustainable, while ensuring

reliable, renewable energy for years to come.” – **Dr. Brendan Hanley, Member of Parliament for the Yukon**



“The Sâde’ Renewable Energy solar farm project provides meaningful economic development potential for the Liard First Nation and is a great step in reducing pollution and advancing economic reconciliation. The project is to be the largest solar Indigenous-led energy project in the Canadian North and is another example of how successful partnership with Indigenous Nations ensures Canada can become a clean, affordable, reliable energy superpower.” - **The Honourable Tim Hodgson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources**

“Congratulations to Kaska Utilities and Liard First Nation on breaking ground for the Sâde Solar Initiative today. This project is a significant step forward in reducing diesel-dependence for the community of Watson Lake, supporting climate change mitigation and energy security goals for the territory. I look forward to continued collaboration on Indigenous-led energy solutions throughout the Yukon.” – **John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation, Government of Yukon**

“This is not just an investment in infrastructure, but an investment in our people and our future. Through First Kaska Utilities Ltd., we are demonstrating what Indigenous leadership in the clean energy sector can look like—visionary, self-determined, and grounded in our traditional values.” – **Jasper Lamouelle, CEO of First Kaska Utilities Ltd.**

“Helping customers, especially in our remote indigenous communities, develop sustainable and renewable energy solutions is incredibly important to us. We’re proud of our steadfast and long-running partnership with the Liard First Nation and serving the community in Watson Lake, and we’re excited to break ground on this transformative solar project. This is more than just a power project—it’s about reconciliation through action and supporting Indigenous communities as they lead the way toward cleaner, more resilient energy systems.” – **Jay Massie, Vice President, Northern Development & Indigenous Relations, ATCO**

About First Kaska Utilities Limited Partnership

First Kaska Utilities Limited Partnership (FK Utilities) is the utilities development arm of First Kaska GP Ltd., the economic development corporation for the Liard First Nation (LFN). As a First Nation-owned enterprise, we are deeply committed to ensuring that our economic activities generate social and environmental benefits. Our mandate is to generate profits for future generations of LFN and Watson Lake citizens by developing projects that are profitable in the long term and create sustainable outcomes for our community and the planet. Solar energy provides economic returns, builds generational resiliency for our citizens, and contributes to a greener future. In line with our Nation’s economic and sustainability goals, FK Utilities is developing a 2.85MWAC (4.7MWDC) Solar Farm, which will operate in conjunction with an Energy Storage System.

Media Inquiries:

Erin Newell-Lupien
Manager, Communication
ATCO
780-264-7627
erin.newell-lupien@atco.com