

In This Issue:

- Prince Albert Photocopier Ltd. Acquired by Majority Indigenous-Owned Investment Company, Optek Solutions LP
- Richie Robillard – Athabasca Summer Student Takes on Full-Time Role With Rise Air as Aircraft Maintenance Engineer Apprentice
- New Investment
- Message from the CEO and Board Chair
- Wollaston Lake Road Update
- Virtual Career Fair
- Scholarships
- Athabasca Summer Student Program's Second Year
- Tru-North's New Location Now Open!

Prince Albert Photocopier Ltd. Acquired by Majority Indigenous-Owned Investment Company, Optek Solutions LP



Left to right: Geoff Gay, CEO Athabasca Basin Development; Gary Merasty, CEO Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies; Dan Fenton, founder of Prince Albert Photocopier; Kevin Aebig, CEO of Optek Solutions; Ron Hyggen, CEO of Kistaki Management

Optek Solutions LP (Optek), an IT Services company owned by Athabasca Basin Development, Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies, Kitsaki Management, and Aebig Investments, is pleased to announce the acquisition of Prince Albert Photocopier Ltd (PAP).

PAP is a full-service IT solutions business and long-standing Ricoh Canada dealer that serves the central and northern Saskatchewan market. Considered the market share leader in the area, PAP collaborates with customers of all sizes to help determine their physical and digital infrastructure requirements, optimizing their operations and simplifying the management of their IT systems.

Optek was started by Athabasca Basin Development, Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies and Kevin Aebig, the company's CEO, in 2021. Kitsaki joined ownership of Optek in June 2022 as part of the deal to acquire PAP. "As a group, we are very excited to work together and about the opportunity to acquire PAP and build on the excellent foundation established nearly 30 years ago by Dan and Carolyn Fenton," says Geoff Gay, CEO of Athabasca Basin Development and a representative of the ownership group. "As investors, when we looked at PAP, we all saw a successful, established business and we

look forward to supporting the company as it continues to provide excellent service to their customers."

Dan Fenton will stay on during the company's transition. "Athabasca Basin Development, Kitsaki Management, and Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies are three very successful Indigenous-owned investment groups based here in Saskatchewan that collectively own over 35 businesses, including an IT Services company whose leader has decades of experience in IT," says Fenton. "Carolyn and I felt this was the right group to take good care of the company and help take it to the next level."

PAP has 16 employees and will be headed by Optek CEO Kevin Aebig once the transition is complete. "This is a very exciting opportunity for everyone," says Aebig. "PAP is a solid, established business with a strong track record of providing service to a huge geographical area. PAP is a growing company in a growing sector and the focus for all of us is on taking care of customers and employees and continuing the spirit of the legacy that was established. I look forward to working with Dan and the employees to ensure the transition is as seamless as possible."

Athabasca Basin Development is continuing to look for new opportunities for investments – both to strengthen its existing investments as well as outside of its existing industries. "There are lots of opportunities out there and we are continuing to seek solid investment opportunities. I would encourage business owners who are looking at succession planning to consider us as a potential fit and to contact us to discuss opportunities – there may be a fit either with Athabasca Basin Development or with one of our investments."

Athabasca Summer Student Program's Second Year

By Allison Strong

Athabasca Basin Development organized the Athabasca Summer Student Program for the second year in partnership with Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC), and five of our investment companies, including Athabasca Basin Security, Points Athabasca, Arctic Beverages, Team Drilling, Flyer Electric, and Rise Air.

The program opened to applicants in February and employed 18 post-secondary students from the Athabasca Basin Region. Positions include IT, labour, yard, mechanics, admin, HR, accounting, marketing, and communications and this year, also welcomed students employed by the economic development entities in the Athabasca communities. Students applied to a range of positions based on the needs of the organization, which provided opportunities that best matched the student's past experiences, areas of interest, and levels of study.

2nd Year Program Experience: Organizing A Summer Student Event

This year, the Athabasca Summer Student program included a celebration event that allowed the students working in the program to connect with each other, as the friendships made in the program's first year had helped the students during their studies and with future employment. The Summer Student Event was organized by one of the summer students in the Program, Allison Strong, who works in the Marketing and Communications summer student position at Athabasca Basin Development.

Interview with Allison Strong

What was it like working in the program this year?

I enjoyed my summer position with Athabasca Basin Development as the Marketing and Communications summer student. The job offered opportunities to further develop community relations skills. One of my most fulfilling moments this summer was organizing the Athabasca Summer Student Event. Creating a memorable and fun day for the students ignited my enjoyment of planning events that promoted connection.

Can you tell us the importance of the summer student event?

Organizing the summer student event allowed the Athabasca students in the program to meet other students that shared similar backgrounds, interests, and cultures. Throughout the summer, students from the northern Athabasca region continue living in the south during their studies, sometimes feeling alone in their journey to success. In last year's Athabasca Summer Student program, students from the program provided support for each other throughout the school year, making these friendships valuable to student success.

How was the process of organizing the summer student event?

Planning the summer student event was new for me. I had to work with a budget, book a venue, plan for food and student transportation, create a day agenda, and send out invitations. At first, I was nervous to plan an event because these responsibilities were new to me, but by the end of it, I had learned more than I imagined I could in a summer student program.

What did you learn from your experience in the Summer Student program this year?

Throughout my summer, I have learned to be open to new opportunities. Last year, the program gave me the work experience within businesses and helped with building a work ethic. This year, Athabasca's Summer Student program helped me see the deeper values that incorporate community and working together. As the program is built from a collaborative perspective, these businesses work together to provide a great working and mentorship experience. I am happy to have been able to absorb and share the respect for cultural protocols, and the community-based thinking that benefits all of those in the Athabasca Region.



Athabasca Summer Students participated in a student event. Left to right: Terri-Anne Randhile, Fond du Lac, HR Admin at Points Athabasca; Ryea Daniels, Wollaston Lake, Admin at Athabasca Basin Security; Brianda Robillard, Black Lake, Safety at Points Athabasca; Richie Robillard, Black Lake, Aircraft Maintenance Engineer at Rise Air; Rochelle Robillard, Hatchet Lake, Operations/Admin at Points Athabasca; Dean Davidson, Stony Rapids, Warehouse at Arctic Beverages; Allison Strong, Stony Rapids, Marketing & Communications, Athabasca Basin Development; Cole Mercredi, Fond du Lac, Labourer Team Drilling

Richie Robillard – Athabasca Summer Student Takes on Full-Time Role

With Rise Air as Aircraft Maintenance Engineer Apprentice

By Ryea Daniels

In August, Richie Robillard signed a contract to become a permanent employee of Rise Air after working for three months as a summer student with the Athabasca Basin Summer Student Program.

The summer student program aligned perfectly with Robillard's career goals. "This three-month summer position with Rise Air had led to me getting a permanent position with the company," said Robillard. "They offered me the [Aircraft Maintenance Engineer Apprentice] position and I started August 22."

Robillard is from Black Lake First Nation which is located on Treaty 8 territory, homelands of the Athabasca Denesuline. He currently resides in Saskatoon.

Robillard graduated from his 2-year program in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering with SIIT in May 2022. His educational background includes 3rd and 4th class of power engineering.

"That was the best timing to get employment with Rise Air," said Robillard, as the summer student program began in May 2022. "Rise Air fits in with my career goals."

Working in a community that makes you happy is important and according to Robillard, Rise Air is that community. "Great environment, great people, and they're very informative - so far, I'm loving my job. This is the perfect job for me," Robillard said.

Robillard finds that every year he has accomplished something unique and different. Eventually, Robillard wants to get into the aerospace engineering program in



Richie Robillard, Black Lake Saskatchewan Canada Treaty 8

Toronto. "Finishing this course is a big accomplishment for me. I was very close to dropping out due to financial issues. But I only had four months left, so I sold everything to get this course."

Robillard prides himself on paying close attention to detail and being a hard worker. His goal with Rise Air is to keep his northern relatives safe. "Aircraft is the safest transportation... I wanted to be a part of the team to keep the communities in safe hands."

New Investment

On June 28, Athabasca Basin Development formed A7 Investments. The first investment of this entity was in the East Hill Esso & Car Wash located on 15th Ave E in Prince Albert.

Rick Wasukyk, Store Manager, has ownership in the company. All existing employees remain in place as well. "We're excited to bring on Athabasca Basin Development as a partner," says Rick. "Athabasca Basin Development has ownership in over a dozen companies in different industries, and they understand the value of a family-owned business who knows their customers. We look forward to continuing to provide our customers with our signature range of unique products and fantastic service 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Shauna Loewen, Business Analyst at Athabasca Basin Development, took a lead role in the purchase process. "The East Hill Esso is a great example of what we're looking for in an investment," says Shauna. "They have a strong management team. Rick has decades of experience in the industry and has been managing the company since 2005. It's a solid, consistent performer for customer service and is known for its product offering to residents in the area."



East Hill Esso & Car Wash is a 24-hour gas station, car wash, and convenience store in Prince Albert

There are no plans to make changes to management, staff, or operations. "We want to continue giving customers the level of service they are used to getting and with the same courteous, professional staff," says Geoff. "This store has a formula that works. We feel that our best bet as an investor continue operating as they have been for many years."

East Hill Esso & Car Wash is a 24-hour full-service gas station that includes a convenience store and 6-bay carwash, motorcycle bay and dog wash.

Message from the CEO and Board Chair

It's hard to believe we're celebrating 20 years this year!

Along with board member Terri Daniels from Wollaston Lake and Dean Classen from Uranium City, we have been with this company since its inception in 2002. Actually, we were there a bit before that, when the company was still just an idea being discussed around small school desks in Camsell Portage or at the ribbon-cutting ceremony in Black Lake in 2000. We have spent 20 years building a strong financial foundation, guided by the communities' vision to create wealth for future generations and build capacity in the Athabasca communities. We have stayed true to our roots, continuing to follow the basic principles that were told to us by leadership in the region back in the late 90's.

Looking back, we're thankful for so many things. For example, the unity of the seven communities for two decades and the support provided early on from Saskatchewan Highways, the uranium industry, and so many partners throughout Saskatchewan and Western Canada. We've had community leaders and a board of directors remain committed for the past 20 years. And we've had a management team that's been able to look at the vision of where the communities want to go and see what works for a business model so we can work to get there.

We've now grown to include ownership in 14 companies, both in and outside of the mining industry, with operations in nine provinces and territories in Canada. Two of these companies are featured in this edition of the newsletter, as we try to include stories from a variety of our investments in each edition.

We're currently at the highest level of Athabasca resident employment in our company's history, with about 200 residents employed at our organizations. This is remarkable considering the mining industry is still in the early phases of rebuilding after a long and difficult seven years. We're also proud of our Athabasca summer student program, now completing its second year and employing 18 summer students from the Athabasca region. Two of our students made contributions to this newsletter.

We've certainly had ups and downs over the years, but we're proud of our company's history, our ability to weather the storms, and our track record of giving back to the communities. We still have work to do – and lots of it. We aren't there yet. But we're getting closer to building a strong foundation needed to provide all the benefits that we heard from the Athabasca community leaders so long ago: employment, unity, donations, and building wealth for future generations.

Giving Back

"Building a future through investment" is accomplished by building wealth for the Athabasca communities, donations, community distributions, building a reputation, and building capacity. The key to making all the benefits possible is in building wealth for the communities – without this foundation, the other benefits would not be possible. Here are a few recent examples of ways Athabasca Basin Development and its investments give back:



Thanadelthur Square Gathering

A gathering took place in Churchill, Manitoba on August 1–5, 2022 that included cultural events for youth and participation in a ceremony for Hudson Square to be renamed Thanadelthur Square, after a young Dene woman who lived over 300 years ago who helped initiate a peace treaty between the Dene and the Cree. Youth and Elders attended cultural events to inspire the youth to recognize the importance of their culture and how important it is to absorb cultural knowledge to sustain it in the future. Students participated in a round dance inside Fort Prince of Wales, where their ancestors of over 300 years walked and saw beluga whales and polar bears in its natural habitat. Prince Albert Grand Council and Hatched Lake First Nation organized the event, and Athabasca Basin Development sponsored the event for \$5,000.

Covid Supplies

This spring, Hatched Lake requested a replenishment for Covid supplies, including bleach, paper towels, soap, Lysol wipes, and hand sanitizer wipes. ABD worked with the Hatched Lake Store who was able to supply the items directly to the community. ABD's contribution was \$11,890.



Flag raising at the Treaty 10 gathering

The Treaty 10 La Plonge Gathering

took place on July 4th and 5th. The purpose of this gathering was for youth and Elders to listen and participate in Treaty information, cultural events, and connect with other youth and Elders in Treaty 10 Territory. Youth and Elders from remote communities from the Eastside communities Barren Lands, Hatched Lake Denesuline FN, and Northlands Denesuline FN attended. Athabasca Basin Development sponsored this event for \$10,000.



Dene youth group at the Athabasca Sand dunes

The Dené Youth Land-Based Healing Camp Pilot Project

was the first Dené youth-led experiential project at a university, community, and regional health authority. Creating the project and underpinning this community-driven land-based health intervention program, Michelle Zinck – originally from Fond du Lac – engaged community members, community health leaders, elders, knowledge holders, volunteers, and AHA staff members, including the Youth Worker, Dustin Augier, who is a Fond du Lac band member.

Twenty-nine Dené youth from Fond du Lac participated in the land-based intervention that took place on the sacred Denésuliné land known as the Athabasca Sand Dunes. As part of multi-disciplinary experiential learning, youth were able to gain awareness of their

own health practices through peer support, self-help tools, and community communication. Numerous organizations worked together to make this happen, and ABD contributed \$5,000 towards this initiative.



Fond du Lac 2022 Grade 12 graduates

Graduation Activities ABD continued our tradition of supporting graduation activities in the Athabasca communities this year. ABD provided a total of \$15,000 for graduation events for Father Megret High School in Wollaston, Father Gamache Memorial School in Fond du Lac, and Father Porte Memorial Dene School in Black Lake whose activities will take place in the fall. Congratulations graduates!



Alumarine Wins New Venture Award

In April, Alumarine was the recipient of the New Venture award at the Samuel McLeod Business Awards. The Samuel McLeod Business Awards are named after one of Prince Albert's early settlers and entrepreneurs. Congratulations to Ron Bonneau, General Manager, and the staff at Alumarine!

Virtual Career Fair

By Allison Strong

The 2022 Northern Saskatchewan Virtual Career Fair invited all grade 10 – 12 students, adult learners, and unemployed and underemployed Northern SK Residents to attend online on May 11th. Attendees included QM Points, Points Athabasca, Flyer Electric, and Athabasca Basin Security as well as 21 other representative speakers. Speakers highlight a variety of careers in technical institutes, colleges, universities, community service and government agencies, and the business community. The Virtual Career Fair attracts those seeking helpful advice and connections to further their studies or career.



Terry Tessier, CEO of Flyer Electric, gives a presentation at the 2022 virtual career fair

The second annual online career fair was successful with over 200 residents registered to attend. Representatives answered essential questions and shared valuable information for those in the job market, helping those looking for guidance on where and how to apply for careers and schooling.



The speakers shared their insights and experiences since they first began in post-secondary training institutes and their careers. Representatives talked about the level of training and the amount of work it takes to start at entry-level jobs and work their way up to high-paying careers. The online access to the Virtual Career Fair helps make these connections and better assist those looking to find success in various industries – especially for residents who live far distances in the northern region. The Northern Career Fair provides information on where exactly residents can apply for these educational and training institutes and employment opportunities located in and out of these northern communities.

Scholarships

By Allison Strong

Supporting youth is a strong focus of our donations program. In addition to our annual Athabasca Student Dinner, support for community-led graduation activities, and our summer student program, we also provide funding each year for scholarships. In fact, there are over \$100,000 in scholarships available exclusively for students from the Athabasca region! Providing these amazing opportunities is all possible due to the contributions from our partners and the dedication from the scholarship committees.

Ya'thi Néné Land and Resource Office has offered scholarships for Athabasca students since 2017. Applications are due on July 31 each year. Qualifying students must be enrolled as full-time students and can be in any post-secondary program. \$65,000 in scholarships were awarded in 2022 to recipients. Providing contributions are Cameco/Orano, Ya'thi Néné, and Athabasca Basin Development, along with Flyer Electric supporting \$5,000 towards the Denise Bougie scholarship for trades students. The Ya'thi Néné Scholarship Committee determined scholarship winners. Athabasca Basin Development is proud to support this initiative in the amount of \$10,000 in 2022 and has been a sponsor for the past five years. Congratulations to this year's recipients:

Shenelle Echodh	Keesha Martin	Cherilyn Joseyounen
Jacqueline Hale	Jacqueline Valois	Darian Joseyounen (Gazandlare)
Cassidy Renie	Terri-Anne Randhile	Naomi Duff
Samantha Adam	Ryea Daniels	Hannah Preikschat
Raylen Adam	Shawna Sha'ouille	Veronica Kkailther
Charles Dettaniba	Antonia Sha'ouille	Loretta Randhile
Brianda Robillard	Lorine Randhile	Gabrielle Giroux
Pacey Disain	Timothy Fern Jr	Darlene Sandypoint

Congratulations to this year's Denise Bougie Trades Scholarship recipients:

Mitchell Throassie	Sammy Pacquette	Jennita Pacquette (Hugarth)
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QM Points made \$42,000 in student scholarships available to students from the Athabasca region. This is the third year of the program. Congratulations to this year's recipients:

Brianda Robillard	Keesha Martin	Cherilyn Joseyounen
Darlene Sandypoint	Vanessa Renie	Timothy Fern Jr.
Christen Renie	Cassidy Renie	Terri-Anne Randhile
Darian Gazandlare	Raylen Adam	



Brianda Robillard from Black Lake is one of this year's scholarship recipients as well as a summer student in the 2021 program who currently works at Points Athabasca. She has a Business Administration diploma from Saskatchewan Polytechnic and will be studying accounting in the fall at the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan.

Wollaston Lake Road Update

Construction of the Wollaston Lake Road will resume again this fall. The federal government has indicated that they will contribute an additional \$2M toward the construction of an all-season road to Wollaston Lake for the 2022 construction season. This construction phase, which will kick off phase 2A, will begin September 1, 2022 and run until the end of November. "At this point, we are optimistic that funding will continue and that we will be able to complete the entire project in due course, once funding is confirmed," says Lyle Bouvier, CEO of Points Athabasca. "This is excellent news for the Athabasca residents who have been working on this project, as well as for the community."

The Wollaston Lake Road project began in 2020 after a twelve-year hiatus, supported by \$17M in federal and provincial construction funding to date. The project was awarded to Points Athabasca who has employed 34 workers on the project with 29 of them from the Athabasca region. The road, once completed, will be 104km long, connecting the Northern Settlement of Wollaston Lake and Hatchet Lake First Nation and its 1500 residents to highway 905 around kilometer 149 and add two more much-needed months of overland travelling.



Tru-North's new location is now open!

By Allison Strong

Tru-North Yamaha, RV & Marine is pleased to announce that they have moved into a new facility.

The new location can be found just down the highway from their old site, in the building that was once Peavey Mart. The new building is a 20,000 sq. ft facility, one of the largest indoor recreation shopping facilities in the province and a perfect spot for those looking for a comfortable indoor shopping experience.

Tru-North has a refreshed look with a paved parking lot and a fully renovated showroom with an expanded department for parts and services. Inviting all customers to check out their new location and inventory, Tru North's General Manager Terry Skulmoski says, "We have something for everyone. From luxury pontoon boats, heavy duty welded boats, speedy watercraft, to RVs and homes. Our knowledgeable sales representatives are happy to help with any questions, investigate financing options, and even schedule a test drive."

Along with Tru-North's new indoor location, they also have an online showroom with the latest lines from Sylvan, Yamaha, KingFisher, Alumarine, Argo and

more, allowing you to enjoy indoor shopping for your outdoor Powersports even when you are out of town.

Tru-North will be hosting a grand opening later this year. Stay tuned to their website trunorthprincealbert.ca for more information.



Tru-North's new location is a 20,000 square foot facility offering one of the largest indoor recreation shopping facilities in the province



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About Athabasca Basin Development

Athabasca Basin Development is an investment company committed to building and investing in successful businesses. Investments include partial or complete ownership in construction, industrial security, electrical, diamond drilling, logistics, road maintenance, aviation and more. The company is owned by the seven communities in Northern Saskatchewan's Athabasca region.

Watch for our next newsletter Spring 2023.

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