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Municipality celebrates grand opening of Archie Simpson Arena

(Fort McMurray, AB – September 24, 2009) – The Archie Simpson Arena and Syncrude Youth Centre in Fort Chipewyan are now open, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo announced today.

The grand opening and ribbon cutting celebrations for the reconstructed facility were held in Fort Chipewyan this afternoon with hundreds of residents and special guests in attendance.

“This is an exciting day for the people of Fort Chipewyan. The redeveloped Archie Simpson Arena is much enhanced over the previous one,” said Melissa Blake, Mayor of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. “It will bring many wonderful recreational and social opportunities for the elders, youth, families and individuals of this historic community.”

The reconstructed arena is 48,000 square feet and cost \$16,385,000 to rebuild. In the winter of 2005, the original Archie Simpson Arena was subject to structural failure and was decommissioned immediately. Since that time, the renovation of the facility has been a top priority for Fort Chipewyan residents and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The new facility will play host to a variety of ice sports, recreational activities, community meetings and programming, and youth activities.

Syncrude Canada Ltd. has been a strong supporter of the reconstruction project, and donated \$500,000 to enhance the youth multi-purpose room in December 2008. The Syncrude Youth Centre will include an indoor playground structure and will be an outlet for Fort Chipewyan youth to use throughout all seasons.

“All of us at Syncrude are pleased that we were able to contribute to the re-building effort through a donation from our community investment fund,” said Tom Katinas, President and CEO of Syncrude. “Having the ability to help improve health, wellness and recreational opportunities within Fort Chipewyan is an important initiative.”

To coincide with the grand opening of the Archie Simpson Arena, the Municipality is running a pilot program to test the use of synthetic ice in Fort Chipewyan, courtesy of IcePro Synthetic Ice. Residents will have the opportunity to skate on the state-of-the-art material during the pilot program. Feedback will be collected throughout the process. The Municipality will make a decision on whether or not to proceed permanently with synthetic ice in Fort Chipewyan in the near future.