

Ministry of Education
Early Years Division

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MEMORANDUM TO: Consolidated Municipal Service Managers
District Social Services Administration Boards

FROM: Shannon Fuller
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years Division

DATE: November 3, 2016

SUBJECT: *The Journey Together* – Next Steps on Ontario's Early Years Initiatives

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the status and next steps regarding the Ministry of Education's (EDU's) early years commitments in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

As part of the government-wide action plan announced on May 30, 2016 in *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, the Province has committed to working with our partners to increase the number of culturally relevant child care spaces and expand access to child and family programs for Indigenous children and families off reserve. The commitment is that these programs will be delivered by Indigenous-led organizations, working with service system managers.

Throughout the summer, we have been engaging in conversations with each of the following key provincial Indigenous partners: Métis Nation of Ontario; Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association; Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres; Ontario Native Women's Association; Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre; and Tungasuvvingat Inuit. The focus of these preliminary meetings has been on building relationships, sharing information and developing a process for assessing early years service needs and opportunities.

Several of these provincial Indigenous organizations have been conducting preliminary needs assessments in collaboration with, and on behalf of, their local communities and affiliated local service providers. The ministry anticipates receiving needs assessments by this fall. The needs assessments will help the ministry to gain a better understanding of the current provincial landscape of culturally relevant early years services, identify gaps and opportunities, and inform next steps.

Local Planning and Proposal Development

As service system managers, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) are integral in supporting the expansion of child care and child and family programs delivered by Indigenous service providers, as part of their responsibility for integrated local service planning. We are exploring avenues to facilitate meaningful connections at the local level to support Indigenous service providers (e.g. friendship centres; Aboriginal Head Start providers) and CMSMs/DSSABs to collaboratively build on opportunities identified through the preliminary needs assessments. Through this local planning, we will be looking to local Indigenous service providers and service system managers to work together to bring forward proposals to the ministry for expanding access to culturally-relevant child care and child and family programs at the local level. These proposals will support the prioritization of immediate and longer-term opportunities, and inform decisions about new programs and allocations.

In reviewing local proposals, the ministry will consider factors such as:

- The responsiveness of the proposed program to an identified need, opportunity, or service gap;
- The implementation readiness of the proposed program/provider;
- Whether the proposed program would result in a net increase in access to service;
- The extent to which the proposed program would support a balanced distribution of services/resources across groups and communities; and
- The extent to which the proposed program reflects potential opportunities to leverage existing programs, infrastructure and/or partnerships.

Further guidance on the development of local proposals will be provided at a later date.

We recognize that relationships and processes across the regions vary and local planning processes will need to be adapted to local circumstances. This work could occur through existing mechanisms (e.g. Indigenous-specific planning tables) or through new mechanisms, as appropriate in each local context. Regional Child Care Advisors will be available to support relationships at the community level, as appropriate.

One-Time Capacity Funding

We also recognize that engaging in meaningful, collaborative discussions and local planning will require investments of time and resources. To support the implementation of Ontario's *Journey Together* early years initiatives, one-time capacity funding is available to both provincial Indigenous organizations (including for distribution among affiliated local Indigenous service providers) as well as service system managers. Service system managers and Indigenous organizations will apply directly to EDU for this funding. The ministry will establish a service agreement with successful applicants and standard reporting requirements will apply. Please see the attached template for further details.

Cultural Competency Supports

Finally, the success of this initiative rests on understanding and supporting Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives and reconciling relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. If you are interested in receiving cultural competency supports, please let us know and we will work with our partners to identify and/or organize professional development opportunities.

Key Milestones*:

- Preliminary needs assessments received by EDU from Indigenous partners: **Fall 2016**
- Capacity funding applications due: **November 30, 2016**
- Capacity funds spent by: **March 31, 2017**
- Local proposals due: **March 31, 2017**

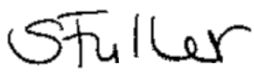
*Timelines are projected and subject to change, pending further discussions with partners.

In the coming weeks, ministry staff will engage with service system managers at the regional level to provide an opportunity for local discussion on the information presented above. Details will follow shortly.

If you have any questions or comments in the meantime, please feel free to contact your regional Child Care Advisor.

We look forward to the continued partnership with service system managers as we work to support Indigenous children and families.

Sincerely,



Shannon Fuller
A/Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years Division
Ministry of Education

cc:

Clarise Henrickson, President, Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association
Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette, Executive Director, Ontario Native Women's Association
Jason LeBlanc, Executive Director, Tungasuvvingat Inuit
Karen Baker-Anderson, Executive Director, Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre
Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
Wenda Watteyne, A/Chief Operating Officer, Métis Nation of Ontario