



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 25, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Journey Together Early Years Initiative (CES17039) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Grace Mater Director, Children's & Home Management Services Division Community and Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

Not applicable

Information:

Background

In 2008, the Government of Canada established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. In 2015, the TRC released 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of the residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. The Calls to Action provide recommendations across a wide variety of sectors, such as child welfare, education, health, language and culture, and justice.

In response to the TRC's Calls to Action, the Ministry of Education announced the Journey Together initiative in May 2016. The purpose of this initiative is to increase the number of culturally relevant child care spaces and expand access to child and family programs for Indigenous children and families. In November 2016, the City of Hamilton, in partnership with Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg, applied and received one-time capacity funding from the Ministry of Education in the amount of \$50,000, to engage in collaborative discussions and local planning to develop a subsequent proposal to expand access to Indigenous-led early years programs. The Journey Together proposal is due to the ministry by September 29, 2017.

Over the past decade Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg has been committed to helping Indigenous children and families in Hamilton access culturally relevant programs that

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embrace their culture and values. As the lead provider of Indigenous-led early years programs in Hamilton, Niwasa currently provides the following programs and services:

- Two part-time Ontario Early Years Centre locations
- A child care centre which is licensed for 24 preschool spaces
- An Aboriginal Head Start Preschool program for 24 children

Project Overview

A project team comprised of Niwasa's Executive Director, project consultants and Children's & Home Management Services staff, was developed to conduct an analysis of the current needs and develop a proposal to the Ministry of Education. The project team conducted consultations with 47 Indigenous service providers, families, and Elders/community leaders to identify local needs and opportunities. The proposal was also informed by the child and family consultations that were undertaken as part of the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre planning process, which included parent and caregiver surveys, as well as children's input which was captured through mixed method creative activities. Based on the consultations, the following desired enhancements to the existing early years services were identified:

- Integrated services under one roof with the goal of building trust and making connections to available early years programs and supports.
- Expanded early years services including subsidized child care spaces, full-day Head Start Preschool, after school programs for school-age children, and an on-site Full-Day Kindergarten program
- Increased availability of language and culture learning opportunities for children and parents so that families can learn together in their own languages from qualified Indigenous teachers
- Creation of a welcoming, family-centred space where children and families can gather and learn together, cultural beliefs and traditions can be practiced and honoured, and Indigenous languages can be learned and spoken
- Strengthened outreach mechanisms to build awareness, trust, and connections with existing early years services and beyond
- Improved transportation supports to increase access to programs and supports.

The Journey Together Proposal Package, attached as Appendix A to Report CES17039 includes more detail on these consultations.

In addition to enhancing existing early years programs, the proposal also seeks to do so within the context of a larger Indigenous community hub. Currently Niwasa is working in partnership with the Aboriginal Health Centre, De dwa da dehs nye>s, to develop an Indigenous-led community hub named Biindigen (Anishinaabemowin for "Come In! Welcome!"). The vision is that the Niwasa early years programs will be co-located with

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Indigenous community health services in a facility designed to reflect and respect Indigenous culture and practices. The opportunity to co-locate with the Aboriginal Health Centre supports the broader vision as it:

- Responds to feedback from Indigenous families and leaders to integrate services under one roof
- Facilitates access to health and community services which is reflective of an Indigenous world view
- Provides an unique opportunities to align government priorities and leverage available resources to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Aligns with the provincial and municipal commitment to the development of community hubs.

Proposal Overview

The City of Hamilton, in partnership with Niwasa will be submitting a proposal to the Ministry of Education to request capital, operating and start-up costs in order to better integrate and enhance early years services for Indigenous families. The total funding proposal is as follows:

	Preferred/ Full Scale Model	Conservative/ Smaller Scale Model
Minor Capital and Retrofit Costs	\$12,550,000	\$ 8,530,000
One-time Operating Costs	\$ 1,810,000	\$ 1,370,000
Ongoing Operating Costs	\$ 3,165,000	\$ 1,884,000
Ongoing Administration Costs	\$ 316,500	\$ 188,400
Total	\$17,841,500	\$11,972,400

The Journey Together Early Years Initiative will be 100% funded by provincial dollars with no net levy impact.

This above proposal supports an integrated and enhanced early years service model that would include the following components:

- An enhanced licensed child care program (additional 33-64 subsidized spaces)
- An Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre program (increased to a full-service and full-time location)
- Targeted outreach
- Transportation

- Aboriginal Head Start Preschool (24 additional spaces to be submitted through a separate application to the Public Health Agency of Canada)
- Full Day Kindergarten program in partnership with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
- After school recreation program for children aged 6-12 years and school break care for children aged 4-12 years, in partnership with a local recreation provider
- System-wide training to improve cultural awareness and safety across the early years system
- Infrastructure supports to build Niwasa's capacity to expand existing services

Next Steps

The Journey Together proposal will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by September 29, 2017.

Over the coming months, City staff and Niwasa will continue to plan for the Biindigen Community Hub in partnership with the Aboriginal Health Centre. The planning process will include:

- Identifying a temporary location for enhanced early years services until the new community hub is developed
- Hiring and training qualified staff
- Developing communications plans
- Building the organizational capacity of Niwasa
- Developing a governance model for all partners

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES17039: Journey Together Proposal Package