

Algonquin family centre coming to Maynooth Public School



Algonquin Nation Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin Negotiation Representative Stephen Hunter celebrates the announcement of the Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Child and Family Centre to be based at Maynooth Public School. / SUBMITTED

By Sarah Sobanski

Hastings County has announced more than \$680,000 will go to the Anishinaabe Baptiste Community Organization to develop a family centre supporting North Hastings's unique Indigenous heritage.

Part of the Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous People, the funding will be put to operating, start-up and capital costs of the Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Child and Family Centre ? \$386,910 in 2018 and \$297,598 in 2019. It will be based at Maynooth Public School.

?In the Hastings County Early Years needs assessment, culturally sensitive programs and services were identified as a need from parents,? said North Hastings Children's Services executive director Jessica Anderson. The children's services are also partners in the centre's establishment.

Anderson said ?incorporating and embracing a child's/family's ethnicity was also important, particularly for Indigenous families.? This could be done through ?Indigenous approaches, resources and cultural practices as a necessary part of renewing identity and cultural understanding, pride and spirit.?

School principal Lisa Resmer said she was looking forward to the centre as a next step in the school's partnership with local Algonquin Nation Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini. She said they've been working closely together over the last four years.

?Community connectivity is of utmost importance to us at Maynooth Public School,? said Resmer. ?Having the centre here? will enrich our school community and create the opportunity for a smooth transition into kindergarten. I believe that our school will be enhanced and the community that we serve will be well supported by a high quality of culturally sensitive resources and programming. ?

According an announcement by the county, ??Inòdewiziwin' is the Algonquin word for 'family.' Members of the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini chose this name for the centre as family is central in the Algonquin culture.?

On their Facebook page, the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini called the news exciting and important. ?Congratulations to everyone involved for their hard work and dedication to this project,? read their post.

?Children, families and caregivers will have access to cultural responsive programming, healthy food preparation and cooking. The centre will also include healthy child development, parent and family supports, and supportive early learning programming,? stated

the county announcement. ?Outreach services will be provided to families throughout North Hastings for children ages zero to six.?
?We are very pleased to receive funding to support the creation of this worthwhile project,? Warden Rodney Cooney said in the announcement. ?It is imperative that the Algonquin language, history and culture be taught and preserved to children and parents within the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population of North Hastings.?

Algonquin elder Ada Tinney has been hired as the planner for the centre, Anderson told *Bancroft This Week*.

?Algonquin elder teachings, and eventually language circles, will rebuild intergenerational cultural continuity that is being lost in the area. In the broadest sense, culture is the customs and values we use to express ourselves and engage in the world around us,? she said.

On how the family centre will be unique, Anderson said, ?Many Indigenous peoples view children not from the perspective of what they cannot do, but rather, from the perspective of what they potentially can do, and what they bring to the whole community. There is the belief that child development does not fit with the age-based stages defined by Western-based child development in the same ways. Instead child development is strongly grounded in the community's responsibility of helping children strengthen their cultural identity and place within the community as they move well into adulthood.?

The announcement stated ?key goals of this program include:

? Parents and caregivers will have access to high quality Indigenous services that will support them in their role as their children's first teachers, enhance their well-being and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development. In particular, children and parents will both learn the Algonquin language, history and culture.

? Children will have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and experience positive developmental health and well-being, in part using natural and traditional materials.

? Access and education to better nutrition and healthy foods by teaching about plants and the abundance of food that can be gathered.?

The centre will not be a registered child care centre, meaning it will not be a day care. Parents will be required to attend with their children.