

## Background

In January 2017, the Ministry of Education (Ministry) provided one-time funding to support the Ministry's early years initiative under The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous People.

Through a Request for Quotes (RFQ), the Social Planning Council was selected to provide leadership engaging the Indigenous community in developing a proposal for consideration by the province. An Indigenous Early Years Planning Group (Planning Group) was created including representation from: Better Beginnings Better Futures, Jubilee Heritage Family Resources, Metis Nation of Ontario, Sudbury Children's Aid Society, Child & Family Centre, Social Planning Council and the City of Greater Sudbury, Children Services Section.

Indigenous community early years priorities were established by the Planning Group. The priorities were developed to increase Indigenous child care spaces, to improve evaluation capacity and advocacy in Indigenous early years organizations, as well as to develop Indigenous pedagogy, guidelines and policy.

From the priorities established, four initiatives were developed and the following proposals were submitted to the province for funding consideration in October 2017:

1. Expansion of licensed Indigenous child care
2. EarlyON Child and Family Centre cultural outreach program
3. Family cultural camp
4. On-going strategic Indigenous service planning for early years programs.

The Ministry of Education subsequently approved the EarlyON Child and Family Centre cultural outreach initiative and granted funding in the amount of \$117,260 annually, for 2018 and 2019.

This initiative will be delivered by Better Beginnings Better Futures and will ensure an enhancement of cultural programming in licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This programming will include traditional language, arts, dance, food and storytelling, to provide a clear vision of Indigenous services to families, facilitate better communication and cultural awareness with non-Indigenous children and families.

## **Early Years Indigenous Cultural Outreach Initiative**

The initiative will include both program development and delivery to Indigenous children and families across the City of Greater Sudbury as well as information-sharing gatherings for partners and families.

Better Beginnings Better Futures will be responsible for the program development and delivery through a team approach with existing Aboriginal EarlyON Child and Family Centre in addition to two new outreach positions. This team will engage with Elders to coordinate program content, themes, promotions schedules, and develop resources for use in the community.

There will be two gatherings related to this initiative. The first will be for all EarlyON Child and Family Centre employees and professionals in the early years sector, while the second gathering will be for families of young children. Both will focus on connecting mainstream and Indigenous services, while ensuring an expanded service network and increasing promotion and communication.

### **Next Steps**

Over the two year term of this initiative, the utilization data will be presented back to the Planning Network for Sudbury Families through the Children Services Section on a regular basis. This will assist with program planning, to increase awareness and referrals to Indigenous services and ensure programming is flexible and responsive to the needs of Indigenous children and families.