ONTARIO'S COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Off-Reserve Early Years Commitments in Windsor, Ontario

THE CITY OF WINDSOR
ONTARIO, CANADA

SKA:NA FAMILY LEARNING CENTRE

Ontario
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primarily, we would like to give thanks to the Creator for His wisdom and gifts of Kindness, Generosity, Truth, and Belief (Strength). Throughout "The Journey Together" project we experienced many renewed and newly formed relationships with children, families, and community organizations. We are grateful for the large number of contributors to the project. In short, we would like to thank the following people who have consistently moved the project to fruition.

Gertie Beaucage, Elder/Facilitator

Lucas Amormino, Research Assistant

Karen Callighan, MEDU/Facilitator

Sue Chanko, MEDU/Facilitator

Connie DaSilva, Research Assistant

Mellissa Sue Doxtator, Facilitator

Faith Hale, Facilitator

Frank King, Graphic Artist

Katka Hrncic-Lipovic, Literature Review

Mary Medcalf, Lead Project Consultant/Author

Naomi McKenzie, Research Assistant

Joshua Peltier, Research Assistant

Sophia Peltier, Administrative Support/Recorder

Naomi Wilson, Research Assistant

Meraal Yared, Design Editor

Furthermore, we would like to thank the City of Windsor and our partner, Dawn Bosco, Manager of Children's Services, for the opportunity and assistance in advancing the Indigenous early learning community with honesty and respect.

THE JOURNEY TOGETHER: ONTARIO'S COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

OFF-RESERVE EARLY YEARS COMMITMENTS IN WINDSOR, ONTARIO

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the province of Ontario released a policy document entitled, "*Renewed Early Years and Licensed child care spaces Policy Framework*". They stated their Vision for the Early Years and Licensed child care spaces as "*All children and families have access to a range of high-quality, inclusive and affordable early years and licensed child care spaces programs and services that are child- and family-centered and contribute to children's learning, development and well-being*".

As noted in that statement, the Ministry of Education indicated that they "engaged with families around four important themes: affordability, access, quality and responsiveness".

In creating OEYCFCs (Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres) the province outlined the following key goals:

OEYCFC programs and services must be designed and delivered to achieve the following key goals and objectives:

- Parents and caregivers have access to high quality services that support them in their role as children's first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development
- Children have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and experience positive developmental health and well-being
- Parents and caregivers have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children
- Francophone children and families have access to French language programs and gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition
- Indigenous children and families have access to culturally responsive programming
- Parents and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up-to-date information about community and specialized services
- Local service providers collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way

On May 30, 2016, Ontario released *The Journey Together – Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*. As part of the Ministry of Education's response

to the Truth and Reconciliation Report, the province made several commitments, including increasing the number of off-reserve licensed child care spaces and culturally relevant programming for children and families. Programs will be delivered by urban Indigenous organizations working with municipal child care. (Ontario Ministry of Education: http://www2.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/supporting.html)

In response to Ontario's call to action, the City of Windsor applied for and received funding to support Indigenous agencies, families and caregivers in planning for Indigenous early learning and care. A team of Indigenous leaders worked with a consultant to gather information to guide the transformation to culturally relevant programming for Indigenous children and families.

2. THE JOURNEY TOGETHER: ONTARIO'S COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Working with Indigenous partners Ontario is acting by:

- **Understanding the Legacy of Residential Schools:** We will ensure that Ontarians develop a shared understanding of our histories and address the overt and systemic racism that Indigenous people continue to face.
- **Closing Gaps and Removing Barriers:** We will address the social and economic challenges now faced by Indigenous communities after centuries of colonization and discrimination.
- **Creating a Culturally Relevant and Responsive Justice System:** We will improve the justice system for Indigenous people by closing service gaps and ensuring the development and availability of community-led restorative justice programs.
- **Supporting Indigenous Culture:** We will celebrate and promote Indigenous languages and cultures that were nearly lost after generations of Indigenous children were sent to residential schools.
- **Reconciling Relationships with Indigenous Peoples:** We will support the rebuilding of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through trust, understanding and respect.

Ontario plans to invest more than $250 million over the next three years on programs and actions focused on reconciliation, which will be developed and evaluated in close partnership with Indigenous partners. This is in addition to several initiatives already underway across government and at the federal level. This commitment represents an initial step on the journey of reconciliation. Together with Indigenous partners and the federal government, Ontario will continue to work to achieve real and measurable change for Indigenous communities, charting a path toward a brighter future for all.

Within this framework, The Journey Together will focus on licensed child care spaces and family programs. To help promote healthy child development and support family

well-being, Ontario will expand five existing child and family programs on-reserve. Working with Indigenous and federal partners to identify needs, the funding will also make more child and family programs available in more communities. Ontario will also help increase the number of off-reserve licensed child care spaces and culturally relevant programming for children and families. Programs will be delivered by urban Indigenous organizations working with municipal licensed child care spaces services. These investments are a step toward a broader licensed child care spaces and early years strategy for Indigenous communities in Ontario and are connected to the government's vision where children and families are supported by a system of responsive, high-quality, accessible and increasingly integrated programs and services. (Province of Ontario. https:www.ontario.ca/page/journey-together-one-year-report. March 6, 2017)

2.1. JOURNEY TOGETHER OBJECTIVES

- Increase access to culturally relevant early years programs and services and licensed child care spaces for Indigenous children and families off-reserve
- Enhance Indigenous control of service design and delivery
- Foster greater opportunities for Indigenous children to learn about their culture and language from an early age
- Support improved outcomes for Indigenous children, including healthy child development, parent and family supports and greater participation in employment and training for parents

2.2. HOW DOES LEARNING HAPPEN? ONTARIO'S PEDAGOGY FOR THE EARLY YEARS

Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, How Does Learning Happen, is organized around four foundational conditions that are important for children to grow and flourish: Belonging; Well-Being; Engagement; and, Expression. These foundations inform goals for children and expectations for programs.

2.2.1. Belonging "refers to a sense of connectedness to other, an individual's experiences of being valued, of forming relationships with others and making contributions as part of a group, a community, and the natural world" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 7). As Dr. Jean Clinton (2013) notes, children learn best in environments that focus on both cognitive and emotional development. Dr. Clinton also states that "babies are born learning…They learn to soothe by being soothed" (Clinton, 2013, p. 2). As a 'social organ', the human brain is wired to reach out and help others, to seek connection and relationships. The brain reflects our environment (Clinton, PowerPoint, n.d.), and Dr. Clinton emphasizes that when there is "more connection, there is less need for correction and directing".

For Indigenous people, this is where family and community make a significant contribution. Early childhood learning programs should find ways to incorporate parents, family members, and community (Elders) to help children foster a sense of belonging and to facilitate the development of their cultural identity.

2.2.2. Well-Being "addresses the importance of physical and mental health and wellness. It incorporates capacities such as self-care, sense of self, and regulation skills" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 7). Self-regulation plays an important role in a child's ability to self-manage their emotions. Per Dr. Shanker (2013), babies begin to learn to self-regulate from the moment of birth. The prefrontal cortex is one of the areas of the brain that grows the most following birth. Systems that support the development of self-regulation are in this part of the brain. Responding in a calm voice, presenting a smiling face, or gently rocking or bouncing the baby when they are fussy is a strong foundation for good self-regulation. Social engagement is a developmental stage of self-regulation that begins before a child begins to talk. Again, it is about responding appropriately, whereby a parent, relative, or guardian goes about 'arousing' a baby (up-regulate) or calming a baby (down-regulate) when needed. When a child begins to talk, it is important to respond to their attempts at communication, even if we say that we need a moment before we can attend to them. Shanker also states, "When children are calmly focused and alert, they are best able to modulate their emotions, pay attention, ignore distractions, inhibit their

impulses, assess the consequences of an action, understand what others are thinking and feeling, and the effects of their own behaviours, or feel empathy for others" (Shanker, 2013, p. 3).

Shanker (2013) outlines that there are five sources of stress in children's lives today: biological, emotional, cognitive, social and prosocial. When children are stressed, they may have difficulty paying attention, responding when their name is called, experience trouble doing the simplest things, feel crabby in the morning or feel unhappy throughout the day. Furthermore, they may argue, get angry, be impulsive or easily distracted, have difficulty tolerating frustration and have difficulty sitting, going to bed, or getting along with other children. Parents, caregivers and educators can help children learn how to self-regulate by 1) reducing the child's overall stress level, 2) helping a child develop self-awareness- what is it like to be calmly focused and alert and what does it feel like to be hypo- or hyper-aroused, and 3) teaching a child ways to return to a calm state and how to manage or avoid experiences that cause stress. Early years programs should offer opportunities for children to be engaged in physical play, have nutritious food and beverages, and to find ways to support each child's varied needs for active play, rest and quiet time (Ministry of Education, 2014).

2.2.3. Engagement "suggests a state of being involved and focused. When children are able to explore the world around them with their natural curiosity and exuberance, they are fully engaged. Through this type of play and inquiry, they develop skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, and innovating, which are essential for learning and success in school and beyond" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 7). Dr. Clinton emphasizes that often, adult-led emphasis on literacy and numeracy does not leave much time for learning through play. Per the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), "Experts recognize that play and academic work are not distinct categories for young children: creating, doing, and learning are inextricably linked. When children are engaged in purposeful play, they are discovering, creating, improvising, and expanding their learning" (CMEC, 2012). Play based learning is a great way for caregivers to foster closer connections with children and to focus their interactions on building relationships with children in their care.

2.2.4. Expression "or communication (to be heard, as well as to listen) may take many different forms. Through their bodies, words, and the use of materials, children develop capacities for increasing communication. Children are provided with opportunities to explore materials that support creativity, problem solving, and mathematical behaviours are provided. Language-rich environments support growing communication skills, which are foundational for literacy" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 8).

3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION: LITERATURE REVIEW AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The information contained in this report was obtained from the following sources:

1. Literature/research on Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Learning and Care
2. Community gatherings of providers and parents/caregivers
    a. Leadership Gathering (March 29, 2017)
    b. Parent/Caregiver Gathering (April 18, 2017)
    c. Early Learning Leadership Gathering (May 9, 2017)
    d. Urban Indigenous Leadership Table (June 7, 2017)
    e. Munro Consulting meeting with the Aboriginal Child Resource Centre, a program of the N'Amerind Friendship Centre, London, Ontario
3. In addition, individual meetings took place with Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, Munro Consulting, and the City of Windsor

4. LITERATURE REVIEW: INDIGENOUS EARLY LEARNING AND CARE

This literature review is organized into two sections:

1) INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING
    a. Aboriginal Pedagogy
    b. The Role of Child, Family, Community and Environment in Early Learning and Care
    c. Language and Culture
    d. The Role of Tradition and Spirituality

2) INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING IN EARLY LEARNING AND CARE
    a. New Zealand's Approach to Early Childhood Learning

4.1. INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING IN EARLY LEARNING AND CARE

> *"Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are holistic and based on local conditions which reflect the inter-relationships between people, animals, plants, and everything that exists in the ecosystem – including those things seen and unseen" (Chiefs of Ontario, 2012).*

4.1.1. Aboriginal Pedagogy

Preston (2014) notes that experiential learning, service learning and out-of-school learning are important components of Aboriginal pedagogy. Storytelling, group discussions, cooperative learning, demonstrations, role modeling, personal reflections, peer tutoring, learning circles, and talking circles are culturally appropriate classroom experiences for Aboriginal students. Integrating educational activities that connect school and home environments is also very important. For example, traditional crafts and design (art), songs and dances (music), contours of the land (social studies/geography) and legends and oral history (language arts) allows for congruence in learning. In addition, allowing time to pause between a teacher's question and a student's response is another way to incorporate the Aboriginal pedagogy into early learning programs. Per Archibald (1995), "Aboriginal education often encompasses the enculturation of independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, and respect for nature" (as cited in Preston, 2014).

4.1.2. The Role of Child, Family, Community, and Environment

In Indigenous cultures, parents, family and community play an important role in raising children. Children are sacred gifts from the Creator (Gerlach, Gray Smith, & Schneider, 2008). While children are born as gifts to the parents, parents are given the primary role to be their first teachers. However, children are also raised and taught by extended families and community members.

Grandparents are teachers who pass on their knowledge, experience and wisdom to the next generation. Spending time together as a family often "involves participating in activities that reflect a vital link to a community's identity and history – whether it be fishing, berry picking, hunting etc." (Gerlach, 2008a, as cited in Gerlach et al., 2008).

Community plays an important role in Indigenous culture. Community is "a place of connectedness, and ideally where one feels supported, nurtured and a sense of belonging. Strengthening and building capacity for communities to create supportive, resilient and healthy environments for children and their families is essential. A healthy community focuses on the social, cultural and physical places in which children live, learn and play" (Gerlach et al., 2008).

Environment and nature make significant contribution to Indigenous life. Traditional Indigenous knowledge includes spirituality, culture, language, local environments and history, medicines and medical knowledge. "Knowledge about family, community, and national and political relations were intertwined with knowledge about our relations with the earth, water, sun, moon, sky, birds, animals, fish and plants (Chiefs of Ontario, 2012).

4.1.3. Language and Culture

"Language is culture and culture is language, without one the other may not exist and most definitely cannot exist in its fullest sense. Language is often seen as the essence of culture. The ability to speak an ancestral language is one way of passing knowledge from one generation to the next" (Gerlach et al., 2008, p. 14).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples stated that the revitalization of traditional languages is a key component in the creation of healthy individuals and communities. Language is "a link which connects people with their past and grounds their social, emotional and spiritual vitality" (Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, 2005).

Each of the thirteen sovereign Indigenous Nations in Ontario (the Algonquin, Mississauga, Ojibway, Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Tuscarora, Cree, Odawa, Pottowatomi and Delaware) had their own language and knowledge systems, with which they governed and made laws, and rules. Each Nation "used their languages, cultures and traditions to provide a sound context for which to raise their children so that they grew up happy, healthy, and knowledgeable, with strong Indigenous identities." (Chiefs of Ontario, 2012).

4.1.4. Role of Elders

In Indigenous culture, Elders are highly respected community members who provide teachings and wisdom not only to their immediate community but in many cases to surrounding communities as well. "Elders are traditionally highly regarded as teachers, philosophers, linguists, historians, healers, judges and counselors (Gerlach, 2008, as cited in Gerlach et al., 2008). The importance of Elders in early childhood cannot be overemphasized. Elders should be given opportunities to share their cultural knowledge and wisdom and to provide opportunities for educators to teach children about what protocols to be followed when Elders are present.

Inclusion of Elders in Early Childhood Learning*:* BC Aboriginal Licensed child care spaces Society (2014) developed a handbook that summarizes what service providers need to know about the inclusion of Elders in Early Childhood Development settings. The emphasis is on teaching young children how to respectfully interact with Elders, including greetings, behaviour expectations, showing appreciation, and farewells. The handbook also outlines various ways that Elders could be included in programming: as occasional visitors teaching culture and language, as volunteer cultural consultants, as hired cultural consultants, or as employees with early childhood qualifications.

Benefits of Elder participation:

- Traditional intergenerational relationships are re-established
- Children learn language, culture, and Elder protocols
- Children learn the community value of respecting Elders
- Family and community wellbeing are enhanced
- Cultural continuity is supported
- Elders feel valued and their contributions are recognized
- Satisfy requirements of funders that children be taught culture and language
- Program quality is enhanced
- In urban contexts, families living away from their home territories particularly appreciate connections with and the support of Elders

4.1.5. The Role of Tradition and Spirituality

Newborn (0-12 months)
When a baby is born, a new spirit is brought into the world, and the community celebrates the birth of a spirit as a sacred time. The whole community will celebrate the birth, and they understand that it is their collective responsibility to nurture and raise the new child. This communal support usually lasts for one year. As the child grows older, the clan mother watches, and decides what role the child will play in the community. This stage is also about the development of trust and personal boundaries. The newborn must fully trust its caregivers, since it cannot do anything without them. Parents must nurture the child's body, mind, emotions, and spirit.

Traditional Tools to Promote Baby Wellness

Moss Bag: Creation of a moss bag deepens the connection between mother and child. The moss bag simulates the security felt in the womb. Once the baby is born, it is placed in the moss bag, which is made of animal skins and stuffed with moss. When a baby is inside the bag, they feel calm and comforted.

Cradle Board (Tikanagan): After a baby has been placed in a moss bag, they are placed on a cradle board. The board secures the baby and mimics the womb. The board keeps babies close to their mothers, and lets the babies explore the world with their eyes. The board is supposed to make the newborn cautious when approaching decisions or new situations.

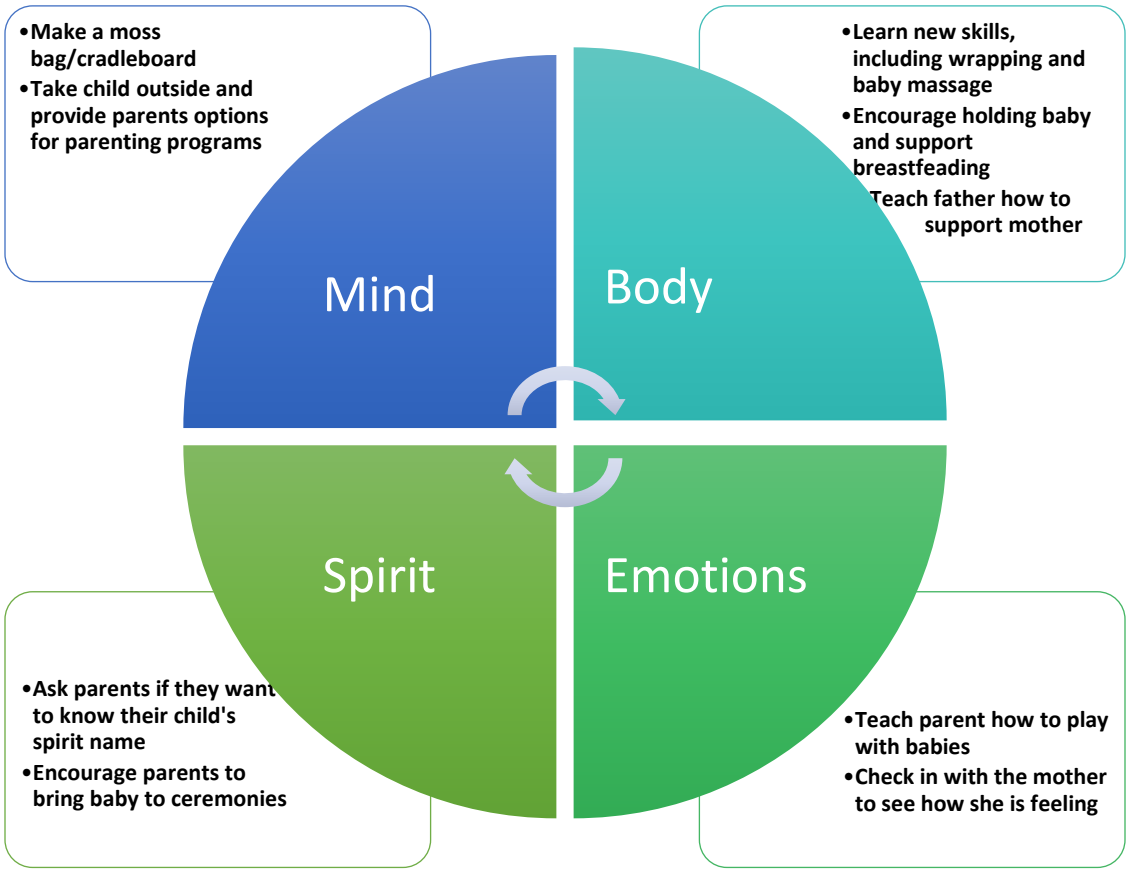
Rattle/Shaker: The rattle/shaker promotes the bond between baby and caregiver, and encourages development of spirit and body.

Medicine Pouch: The Medicine Pouch is also called a sacred bundle, and can be made by caregivers, mothers, or fathers. Special things are placed in the pouch. These include special rocks, feathers, sacred medicines, and the stump from the umbilical cord.

Cedar Bath: The Cedar Bath is prepared and stored in a jar before the baby is born. Elders state that a baby's first bath should be a cedar bath. Cedar is a good medicine because it stays all year and does not fade in the winter.

Figure 1 illustrates traditional ways to promote baby wellness.

Figure 1: Traditional Tools to Promote Baby Wellness



Toddlers (13 months to 2 years)

This stage of life is about safety. Toddlers need a safe environment to test and explore their environment. The child at needs a stable and nurturing home free from harm or abuse. Therefore, toddlers should be around positive-influencing adults. By knowing a child's weaknesses and strengths, parents can help develop the child's self-esteem. Teaching by

role modeling is extremely important as well. This is the time where the child grows stronger and starts to walk. Children need to be exposed to healthy habits at this stage so they follow them throughout their whole lives. This is also a time to assess how the child is developing.

Traditional Tools to Promote Toddler Wellness

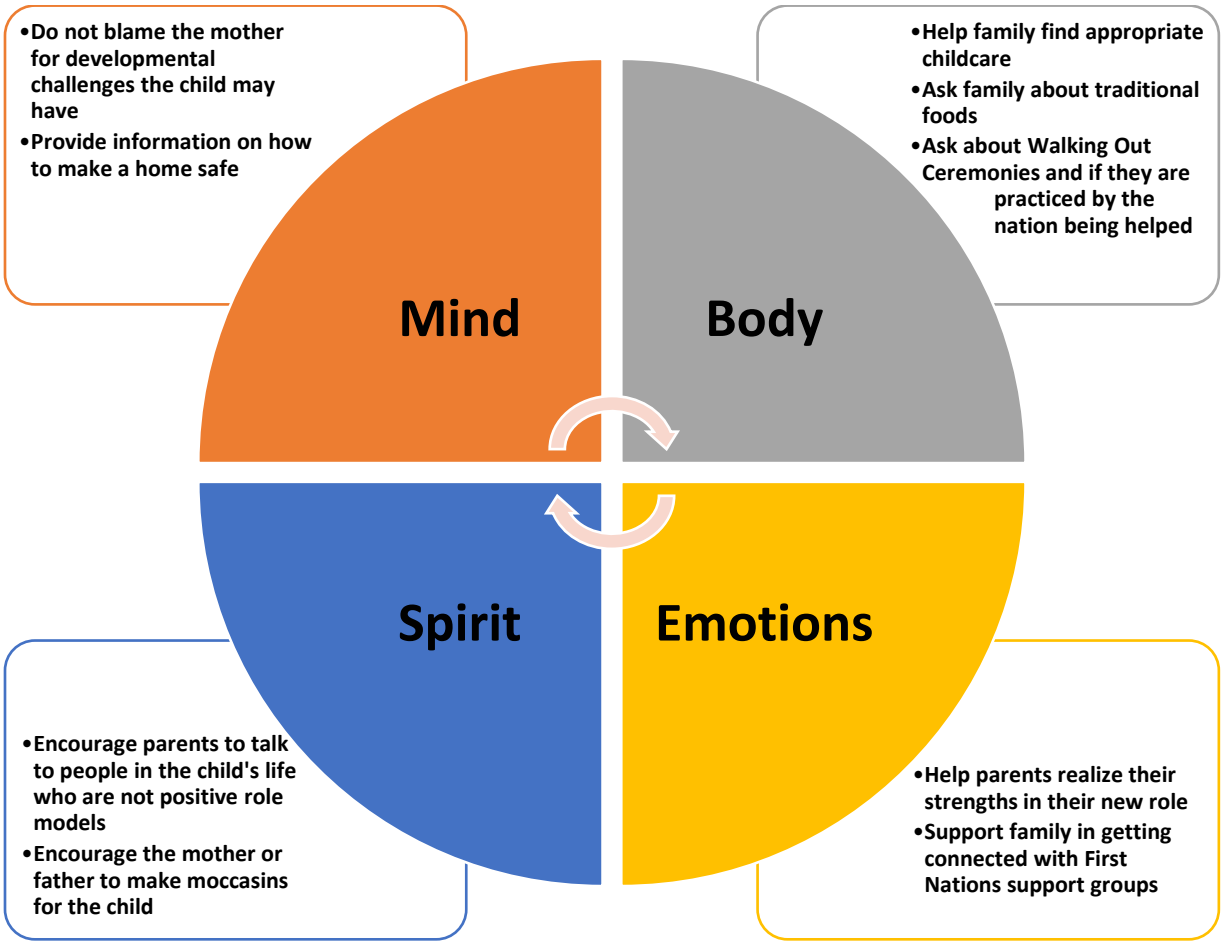
Moccasins: The first pair of moccasins is symbolic of the first connection to the earth. When parents or family members make the moccasins, this strengthens the bond between caregiver and child.

Drums: This symbolizes the heartbeat of Mother Earth, and helps the toddler feel comfortable with the sounds of their native language. It also helps toddlers understand their place in the community.

Dancing: Dancing uses both culture and physical activity to help the toddler.

Figure 2 illustrates traditional ways to promote toddler wellness.

Figure 2: Traditional Tools to Promote Toddler Wellness



Children (2 to 7 years)

In this stage the child learns about truth. They need individual time with caregivers or parents, and they also need to work through behavioural problems. Children need structure and routine. Acknowledgement of the child is also very important, as children need attention. Readiness is also important; children should not be forced to do something before they are ready. Children at this stage are school-aged, and so they must learn from their parents and caregivers, thereby learning their place in the family and community. This stage is important for developing self-esteem and affirming truth for the child.

Traditional Tools to Promote Child Wellness

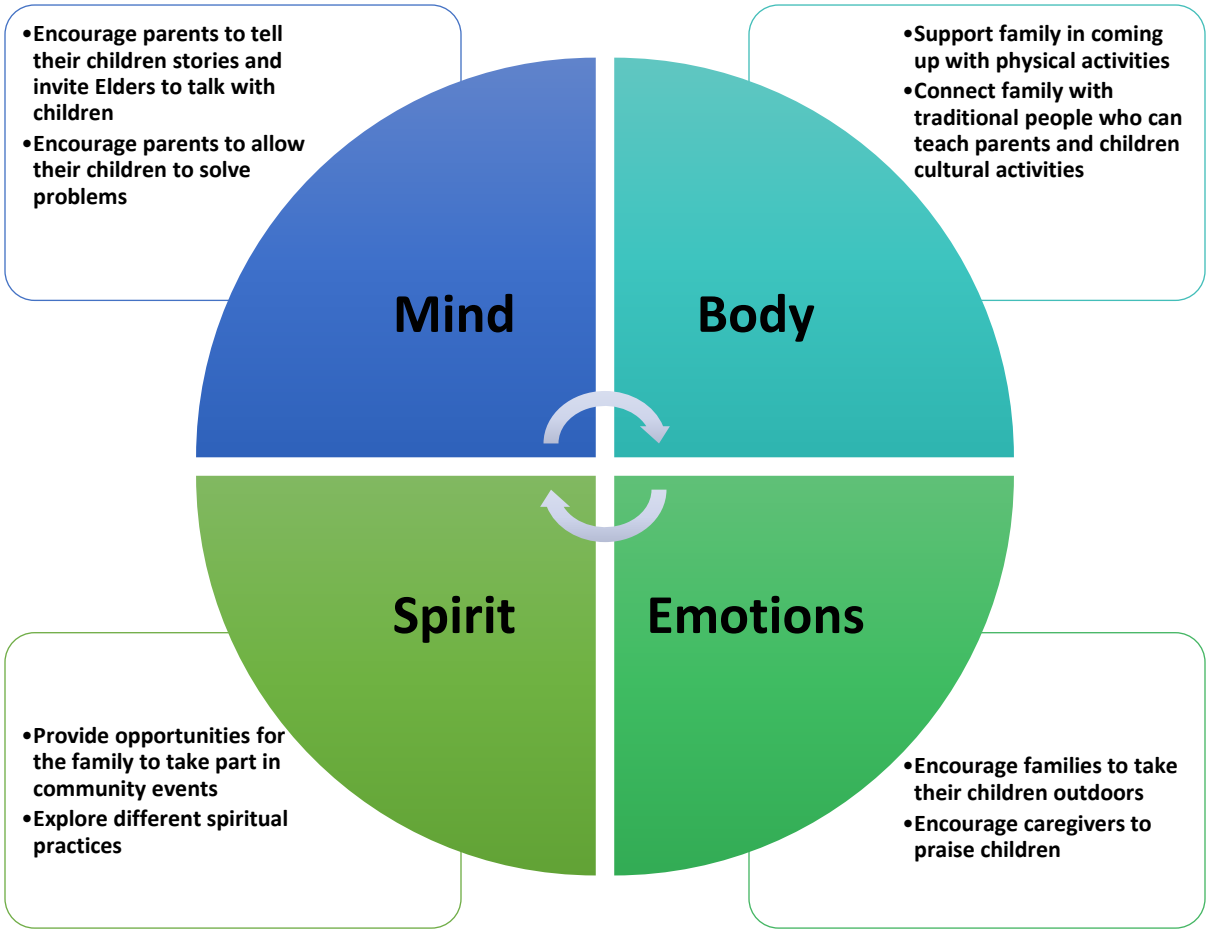
Storytelling: Stories are important in First Nations culture, and they are used to teach. Storytelling brings generations together, and it is essential for the proper growth and development of balanced children. Children need learning experiences that are fun, engaging, and challenging.

Humour: Laughter is important for healing, releasing stress, and alleviating grief. Laughter must not be confused with teasing.

Discipline: Self-control is just as important as social control. Indigenous children should never be belittled.

Figure 3 illustrates traditional ways to promote child wellness.

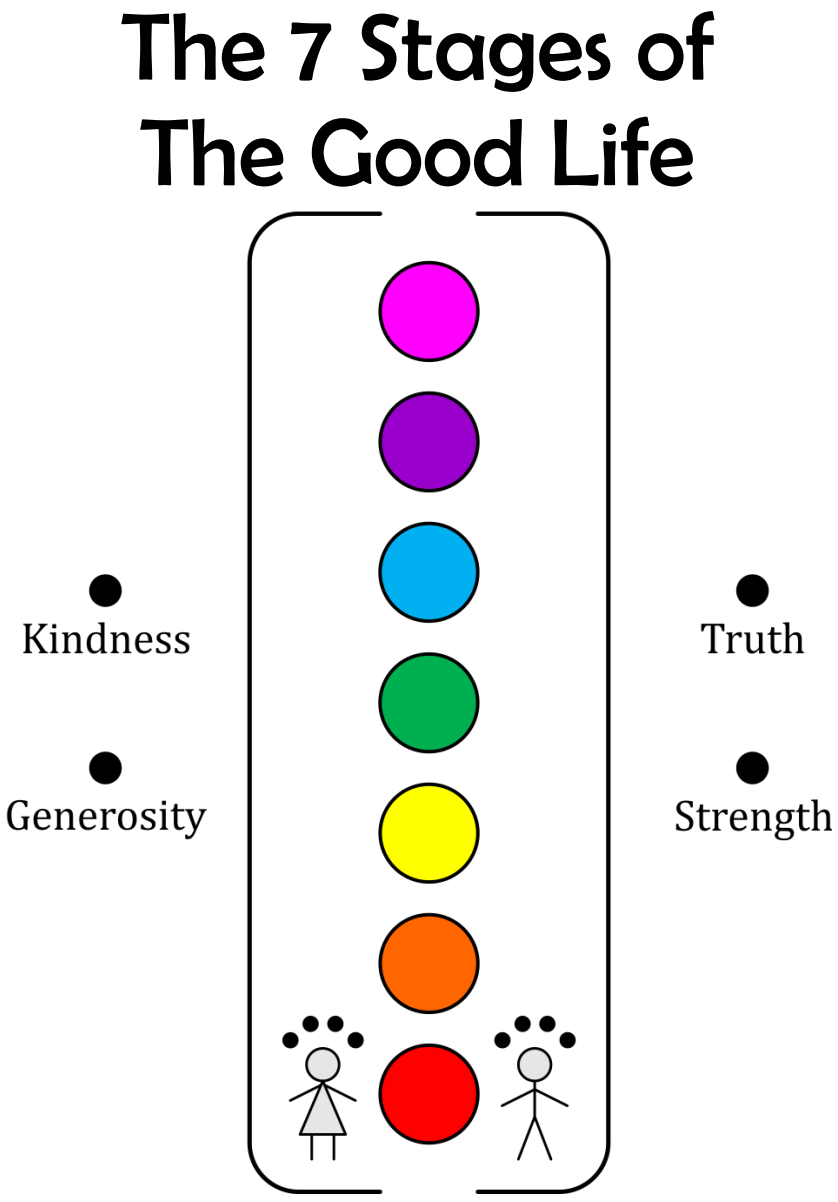
Figure 3: Traditional Tools to Promote Child Wellness



4.1.6. The Good Life – "Anishinaabe Mino Bimaadziwin"

This teaching was given by Gertie Beaucage "Zhawanobinaisseekwe" an Elder and Knowledge Keeper from the Ojibwe Anishinabe, Nipissing First Nation. Zhawanobinaisseekwe is a member of the Mukwa dodem - Bear clan. She is a Niswe Midewiwin - 3rd degree Midewiwin Traditional Knowledge Keeper. Gertie shared that everyone receives four gifts before they are born: strength (belief/faith), kindness, honesty, and generosity/sharing. Parents receive the gift of a child and everyone in the community also receives the child as a gift. There is a sacred bond between children and parents and if a child cannot stay with their parents, others have full responsibility to teach The Good Life regardless of their relationship to the child.

Figure 4: The Good Life - "Anishinaabe Mino Bimaadziwin"



The Good Life (Birth to age seven)

After birth, the first seven years is the Good Life. During these first seven years, there usually are Elders, grandmothers, and grandfathers around who support parents in providing for all the needs of the child. This marks a very important time in child development. Because this stage is so important, the family is often supported by the extended family with mothers and fathers being supported by their mothers and their fathers. Through their unconditional love and discipline, the child comes to know what life is all about. They become strong and confident. These teachings begin very early in life.

The Fast Life (Ages 7 to 14)

This is when the child starts preparing for their 4-day vision quest at the time of puberty. It is a time of celebrating the transition into adulthood. The men look after the boys during their vision quest and the women look after the girls during their berry fast. These rites of passage ceremonies help to nurture confidence and build healthy self-esteem. As young people learn about the changes that are happening within, they also learn about their roles and responsibilities as men and women. After each of their respective rites of passage, boys are re-introduced to the circle as young men and girls as young women.

The Wandering/Wondering Life (Ages 15 to 21)

This is a time when young people begin to ask questions and challenge ideals and concepts put before them. As they strive to find themselves, this is also known as the Wandering Years. In their travels young people begin to find their teachers and to gain new experiences. Youth begin to question their life's purpose. The Wandering phase is also called the Wondering phase, as that is what happens when they make decisions and consider consequences. For example, they may consider, "I wonder if I did this, what would happen?" It is a time for testing limits and discovering the consequences to behaviours and choices that shape your character.

The Truth Life (Ages 21 to 28)

After the Wandering/Wondering life, Elders, teachers, and mentors guide young people to the next phase. During this time, they find their true self, gifts, and strengths. They develop their own concepts of life, beliefs, and value systems. Young people question

what their parents taught them and seek information from other sources to verify what they learned to be true. They become the teacher to their children.

The Planting/Planning Life (28 to 35 years)
Next is the Planting or Planning stage. During this time in life they begin to nurture the seeds planted throughout their life thus far.

The Doing Life (35 to 42 years)
The Doing stage is where they practice all those things that they have learned on this life's journey. This is the time to do their work, a time to follow through with the Creator's plans for them and fulfill the purpose they were given before they came to the world.

The Teaching/Elder/Power Life (Age 49 and onwards)
The Elder stage begins at 49. This is the giving back stage where they gain family, clan, and community responsibilities. When they become an Elder, they come back and teach the young ones and continue the circle of teaching by passing on the knowledge to younger generations. (Health Nexus. A CHILD BECOMES STRONG: Journeying Through Each Stage of the Life Cycle. Best Start. (nd.)

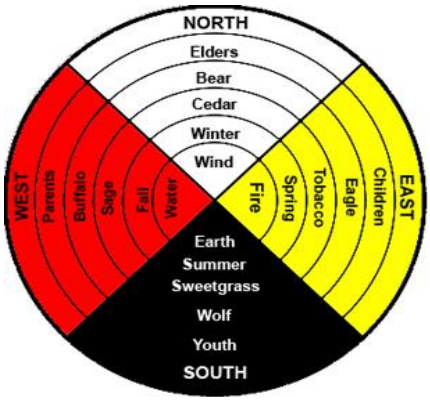
4.1.7. The 7 Grandfathers' Teachings

The first Elder was given these gifts of knowledge by the Seven Grandfathers. These gifts were to help the people live a good life and to respect the Creator, the earth and each other. The Seven Grandfathers told the First Elder that, "Each of these teachings must be used with the rest; you cannot have wisdom without love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth…to leave one out is to embrace the opposite of that teaching. If one of these gifts is not used with the others, we will not be in balance. We must remember these teachings, practice them, and teach them to our children".

4.1.8. The 4 Sacred Medicines

The four sacred medicines: 1) semaa (tobacco); 2) giizhganadak (cedar); 3)mshkodewashk (sage); and, 4) wiingashk (sweetgrass).

4.1.9. The Medicine Wheel



The Medicine Wheel represents all of creation, harmony and connections. It is considered a major symbol of peaceful interaction on Earth (all races of people, the directions, all the cycles of nature, day and night, seasons, moons, life cycles, and orbits of the moon and planets).

4.1.10. The Seven Generations

The Seven Generations is based on an ancient Iroquois philosophy that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future. This principle states that we should make decisions about how we live today based on how our decisions will impact the future seven generations.

4.2. INDIGENOUS EARLY LEARNING AND CARE

4.2.1. Suggested Criteria for High Quality Early Learning Programs

Preston (2014) states that "quality Aboriginal early childhood education a) privileges Aboriginal pedagogy, b) promotes Indigenous languages and culture, c) is adequately staffed by qualified Aboriginal educators, d) empowers Aboriginal parents and communities, and e) in the case of kindergarten services, provides a full-day timetable" (p. 2). Similarly, BC Aboriginal Licensed child care spaces Society [BCACCS], based on a series of community consultations defined that high-quality programs for "Aboriginal children must be culturally appropriate, reinforce pride in identity, be grounded in an Aboriginal worldview and spirituality, and include Aboriginal knowledge, values, ways of being and ways of caring for young children" (BCACCS, 2014, p. ii).

Per Gerlach et al., (2008, p. 34), the following are examples of an Indigenous and more holistic perspective towards raising healthy children:

- Focus on wellness and strength-based models
- Interconnect health with education, social services, and housing
- Integrate wellness and spirituality
- Engage the whole family and community, not just 'mother and baby'
- Design programs and centres that bring together members of the community across the lifespan (infants, youths, adults and Elders)
- Promote intergenerational learning between children, youth and Elders
- Integrate traditional activities and ways of celebrating

BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework

The BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Council (FNECDC, 2011), which developed the *BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Framework*, states there are several guiding principles that should be considered when designing quality First Nations ECD programs and services (p. 10):

1) **First Nations customs of knowing and being**: All programing, infrastructure, services and supports must be anchored in First Nations knowledge, beliefs and values. Spiritual connection to the land and all living beings must be respected and upheld.
2) **Community-based and directed**: ECD programs and services are developed through a community and delivered based on the needs of First Nations communities
3) **Holistic, universal, accessible and comprehensive**: ECD programs and services must be accessible to all children (on and off reserve, and in urban and rural settings). Services and programs must support the development of the whole child (emotional, physical, cognitive, cultural, linguistic and spiritual) and allow for a seamless connection to other services (education, social services and health).
4) **Integration and coordination**: ECD legislation, licensing, regulations, and standards must be synchronized for an integrated and coordinated ECD system
5) **Transparency and accountability:** Monitoring, evaluation and reporting should lead to enhanced quality of programs. Accountability will help identify gaps, needs and overlap in service.
6) **Sustainability**: Funding must be ongoing to ensure trust, to help with ongoing recruitment and retention of qualified staff and be long term to make a positive difference in children's lives.

In addition to the above outlined guiding principles, FNECDC (2011, p. 11) also specified 3 main goals:

1) **Increased availability, accessibility and participation in ECD programs, services and supports by First Nations children and families:** To reach this goal, services must be vastly improved. Parents should be provided with information on why ECD programs and services are important to their child's

development and learning. Parents also need information on how to access quality programs, and have assurance that there is ongoing funding commitment to keep these programs and services open.

2) **Enhanced quality of ECD programs, services and supports:** Developmental content of ECD programs including linguistic and cultural components must be excellent. The need for training of local educators and caregivers must be recognized, and the structure and regulations must "speak to a First Nations viewpoint".
3) **Improved integration and collaboration at all levels of a First Nations ECD system:** Quality ECD should focus on all developmental aspects of a child and recognize the important link with parents, families, and communities. This should be a comprehensive approach that incorporates families, prenatal and parenting programs, education, health, and social services.

FNECDC (2011) also outlined specific strategic objectives and actions that are required by the First Nations communities and other stakeholder groups to achieve the above-mentioned goals (p. 13-19).

More specific criteria for strong and successful Aboriginal licensed child care spaces programs was summarized by the BC Aboriginal Licensed child care spaces Society. The *Handbook of Best Practices in Early Childhood Programs* (2003) suggests that successful programs should incorporate the following elements:

- Staff that were committed, had diverse qualifications (beyond basic ECE), and included a cultural resource person with strong links and connections in the community
- Adequate sustainable funding
- Licenses exceeding minimum required standards
- Flexible and culturally appropriate curriculum/pedagogy to meet individual learning needs of every child
- Recognition of and instruction in local language
- Community control and support based on partnerships
- Parent and elder communication where input of elders was actively sought and valued
- Strong facilities-ideally near a school, a playground and an elder's residence
- Focus on nutrition-provide education about healthy eating
- a holistic approach-focusing on physical, emotional, social, intellectual, cultural and spiritual needs of children
- Long term plan, with a focus on a three-year plan outlining goals, objectives and outcomes of the program

This *Handbook* contains several tools and templates with specific suggestions on how to get started with designing a culturally focused early years learning curriculum/pedagogy for First Nations children. The guidelines are flexible and can be adapted to a wide range of local settings and environments. The handbook contains the following

chapters: culturally-focused curriculum/pedagogy, traditional languages and language development, networking and outreach, policies and procedures, program evaluation and child assessments.

New Zealand's Approach to Early Childhood Learning

In 1996, New Zealand's Ministry of Education developed the first bicultural framework for providing culturally appropriate children's early learning and development (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016a). The national curriculum/pedagogy contains curriculum/pedagogy specifically designed for Maori immersion services in early childhood education. This is an example of a national curriculum/pedagogy that has been successful in incorporating traditional cultural ways of knowing and learning with mainstream learning trends and expectations.

New Zealand's early childhood curriculum/pedagogy is envisioned as a "whariki (or mat), woven from principles, strands, and goals". The curriculum/pedagogy considers many distinctive contexts of early childhood care and education, but the principles, strands and goals apply to each context. Special identification is given to two specific programs. The first is Maori immersion programs, which aim to protect Maori language and tikanga, Maori pedagogy, and the transmission of Maori knowledge, skills and attitudes through using Maori language. The second is Tagata Pasefika programs, which are designed for groups of migrants from the Pacific Islands who incorporate curriculum/pedagogy which recognizes the diversity of Pacific Islands cultures, historic links to language and culture and their common geographic heritage.

There are 4 principles and 5 strands (and corresponding goals) for the Early Childhood Development.

Principles:
1) Empowerment (Whakapapa)
2) Holistic development (Kotahitanga)
3) Family and community (Whanau Tangata)
4) Relationships (Nga Hononga)

Strands (essential areas of learning and development):
1) Well-being (Mana Atua)
2) Belonging (Mana Whenua)

3) Contribution (Mana Tangata)
4) Communication (Mana Reo)
5) Exploration (Mana Aoturoa)

Each strand has several goals, and learning outcomes have been developed for each goal.

A unique approach to assessment in ECD involves a *Learning Stories* approach that is a highly individualized assessment approach. "Learning Stories provide anecdotal, and narrative and graphic representations of where the child is in the process of learning." (as cited in Gerlach et al., 2008).

The New Zealand's Ministry of Education has recently been updating the curriculum/pedagogy to reflect the changing trends in educational thinking and practice. The updated Te Whariki is expected to be available in 2017 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2016b).

5. COMMUNITY GATHERINGS

5.1. INDIGENOUS EARLY LEARNING LEADERSHIP GATHERING FOR THE WINDSOR-ESSEX COMMUNITY

On March 29, 2017, a gathering of early learning and Indigenous leaders was held in Windsor, Ontario. This full-day gathering provided an opportunity for formal presentations and training as well as opportunities for building collaborations and partnerships (see Appendix 1 for the agenda). Teachings included "How Does Learning Happen? Mino Bimaadziwin The Good Life and, Child Welfare". The gathering also provided time for "Visioning and Conversation". Thirty-three Early Learning Leaders attended the gathering. Participants were provided with a copy of How Does Learning Happen as well as a copy of the Ministry of Education Early Years Resources 2016-17.

At the end of the session participants were asked to provide feedback about their experience and learning in the workshop (see Appendix 2 for Participant Feedback Form). Twenty feedback forms were received; Table 1 provides a summary of participant responses.

Table 1: Participant Feedback on Workshop

Number of responses = 20

AREA	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Not Sure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The workshop was well organized and the main points were well covered and clarified	80	21	9		
The facilitators demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter	89	3			
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge about Indigenous early learning	80	21			
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge about the Journey Together strategy	58	37	5		
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge of The Good Life	74	26			
This workshop helped me to understand my role in providing early learning and care to Indigenous children and families	53	47			
I gained usable knowledge and will apply it to early learning within my work place	63	37			

Feedback from participants indicates the gathering met the intended goals of increasing participant knowledge and awareness of Indigenous culture, the HDLH framework, and The Journey Together initiative.

Participants were then asked to respond to three open-ended questions. A thematic analysis was conducted and the responses are below.

What was the most valuable aspect of the workshop?

A word search of the qualitative responses indicated that the teachings, The Good Life and personal stories were most frequently cited as valuable aspects of the workshop.

What aspects of the

workshop can be incorporated into their work place and what support they may need to do so?

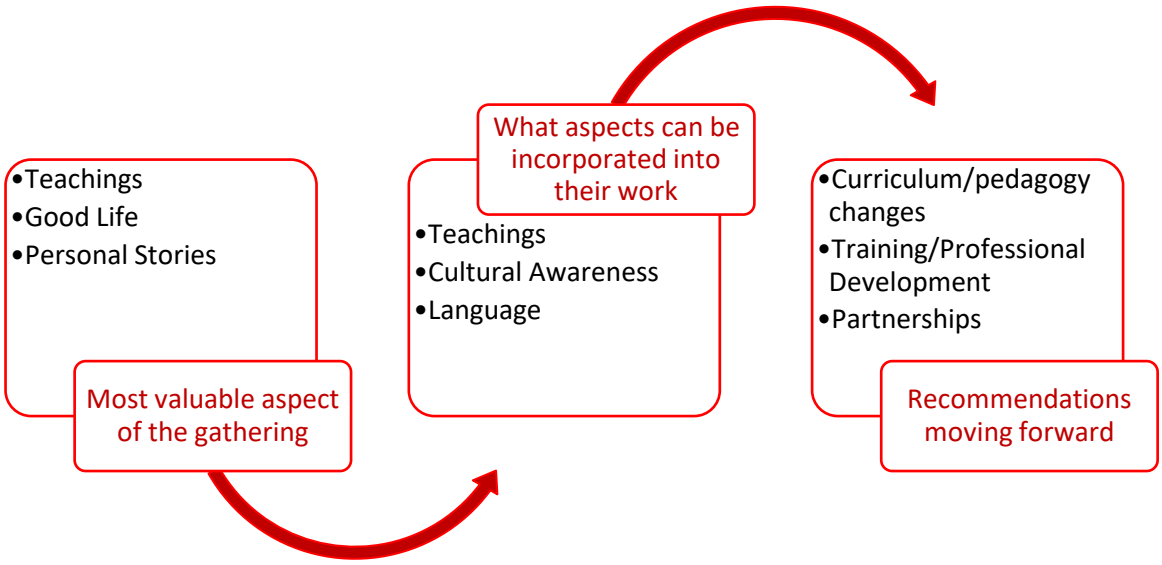
Participants noted that they would incorporate the Indigenous teachings into their interactions with children and staff and whenever possible incorporate Indigenous language into programming. They noted that they are interested in ongoing support to increase their awareness of the indigenous context of early learning and they are interested in becoming involved in outreach, advocacy and creating partnerships with Indigenous families and service providers.

Participants were asked if they had any recommendations to assist in the facilitation of Indigenous Early Learning and Care?

Most frequently, participants indicated that more Indigenous teachings in curriculum/pedagogy, training and professional development for educators, and more extensive and effective partnerships with Indigenous families and service providers would help to facilitate Indigenous early learning and care.

Figure 5 summarizes participants' responses to the open-ended questions.

Figure 5: Summary of Participant Feedback from Gathering



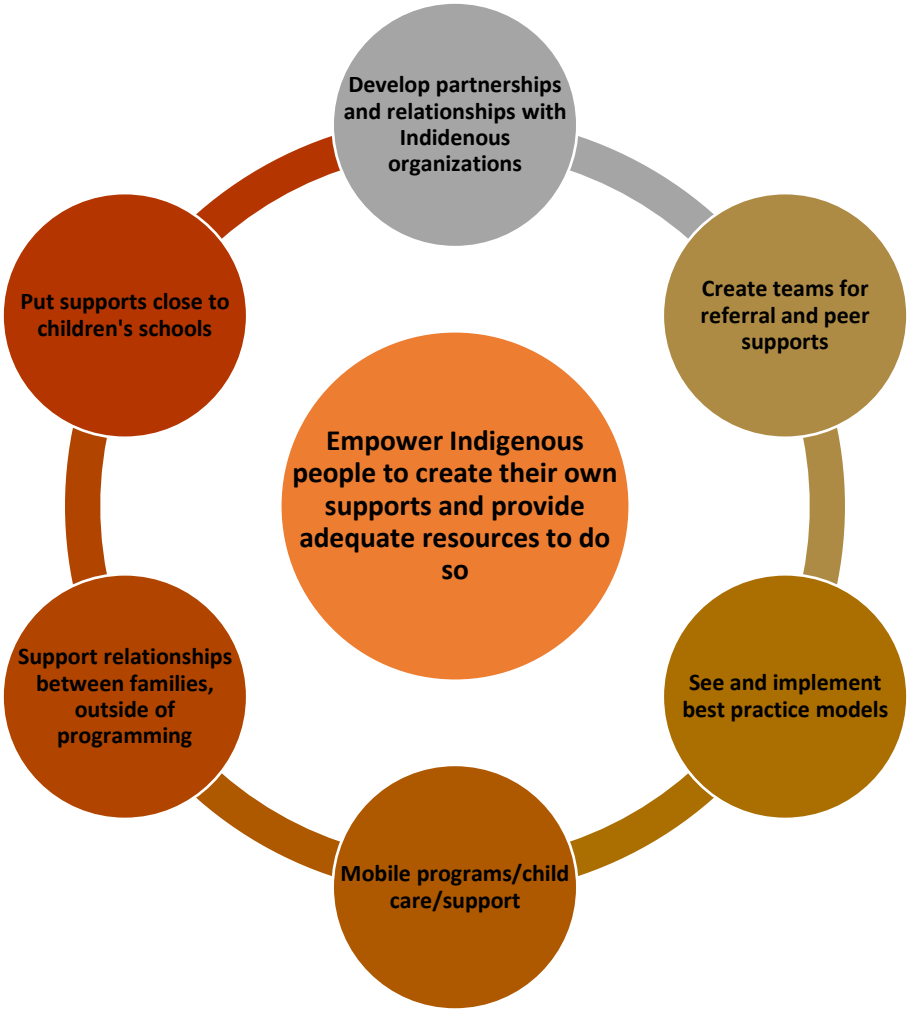
Leaders were asked to make a commitment to journeying together by answering the following question(s):

- What will you do differently in your agency, now that you have spent the day with us?
- What do you hope to do?

Participant responses indicate a desire to create collaboration, mobilize providers and resources and build relationships with Indigenous partners. Responses are aligned with the teachings of the day and present an opportunity to build on the expressed desire to incorporate Indigenous values and teaching into their centres. Responses note a need for ongoing learning to change relationships with Indigenous communities. For example, participants stated the need for Indigenous presence in the community and within their organizations, including Indigenous staff, as well as more community engagement and cultural awareness. They also stated that finding ways to connect families to resources in the community, engaging in outreach and creating resources to assist Indigenous families to access supports in the community specific to their needs is important.

Leaders were asked if there are alternative ways to provide support to children and families other than attending their agencies. Figure 6 notes the most frequent recommendations.

Figure 6: Alternate Ways to Support Indigenous Children and Families Outside of OEY's and Licensed child care spaces Centres



Leaders also made several long-term recommendations for consideration:

- Cultural awareness training in school systems, for students and educators
- Post-secondary support to Indigenous students to facilitate increased graduation of Indigenous youth
- Cultural and language teachings in programs and for home
- Curriculum/pedagogy development based on cultural and language teachings
- Explore "what does meaningful urban support look like for Indigenous families"?

Finally, Leaders were asked to identify the barriers faced by Indigenous families accessing support; these responses can inform the proposed strategy by creating a plan that will address the barriers articulated by participants.

The main themes from 45 responses include:

- Lack of transportation
- Lack of Indigenous staff/presence in agencies
- Lack of trust of governments systems and programs/racism/discrimination
- Mainstream agencies are not welcoming and lack understanding of Indigenous ways/teachings
- Scarcity of Indigenous resources/family supports
- Licensed child care spaces costs are prohibitive
- Centres' hours of operation are not aligned with community needs
- Isolation from each other, family and community

5.2. CAREGIVER GATHERING

On April 18, 2017, a gathering of parents and caregivers was held in Windsor, Ontario at the Can-Am Friendship Centre. Nine caregivers participated in the discussion about early learning and care; two staff from the Centre, one facilitator and one recorder were also in attendance. The first part of the gathering included teachings about The Good Life. After lunch, participants were asked to discuss the following areas:

- Positive experiences with early learning programs and services
- Their challenges, if any, accessing or participating in early learning programs
- Recommendations for service improvement

5.2.1. Positive Experiences with Early Learning Programs and Services

Participants noted the following strengths of the current delivery system:

- Early learning services are centralized (located in one place)
- Staff have knowledge of resources and can refer if needed
- Opportunities for a broad range of workshops and sessions

5.2.2. Challenges, if any, Accessing or Participating in Early Learning Programs

Accessing:

- Lack of awareness of services
- Little to no Indigenous presence in most agencies
- Uncertainty of support for Indigenous children with special needs or "flight risks"
- Lack of transportation to attend programs
- Fear of being judged
- Distrust of "mainstream" agencies
- Scarcity of Indigenous agencies when compared to mainstream organizations

Participating:

- Feel judged and uncomfortable
- Lack of Indigenous programs and services in agencies close to their homes

5.2.3. Recommendations for Service Improvement

- Include mentors and elders in programs
- Create a service hub for families, which might include early learning, support for literacy and education, an outdoor classroom, gardens, Indigenous service providers, designed from traditional Indigenous teachings and culture and open to all children
- Provide transportation to programs and services
- Provide comprehensive training and development for agency staff and educators about cultural and language teachings
- Integrate Indigenous culture and values into early learning
- Hire Indigenous staff to work in children's mental health and early learning organizations
- Increase awareness of services through hubs, social media (Facebook), providing information at birth in the hospital
- View services and programs at Western University and London Friendship Centre as models

NOTE: There was consensus that housing significantly impacts their compliance to Children's Aid Society requirements: they require a set number of bedrooms dependent on the number of children in the family which participants stated is contrary to traditional values.

5.3. EARLY LEARNING LEADERSHIP GATHERING

On May 9, 2017, a Joint Meeting with the Children & Youth Planning Committee (CYPC), licensed child care spaces Network (CCN) and Ontario Early Years (OEY) Network was held in the City of Windsor. Using the Indigenous Visioning Circle as a framework (see Appendix 3 for Visioning Circle), participants were asked to respond to the following:

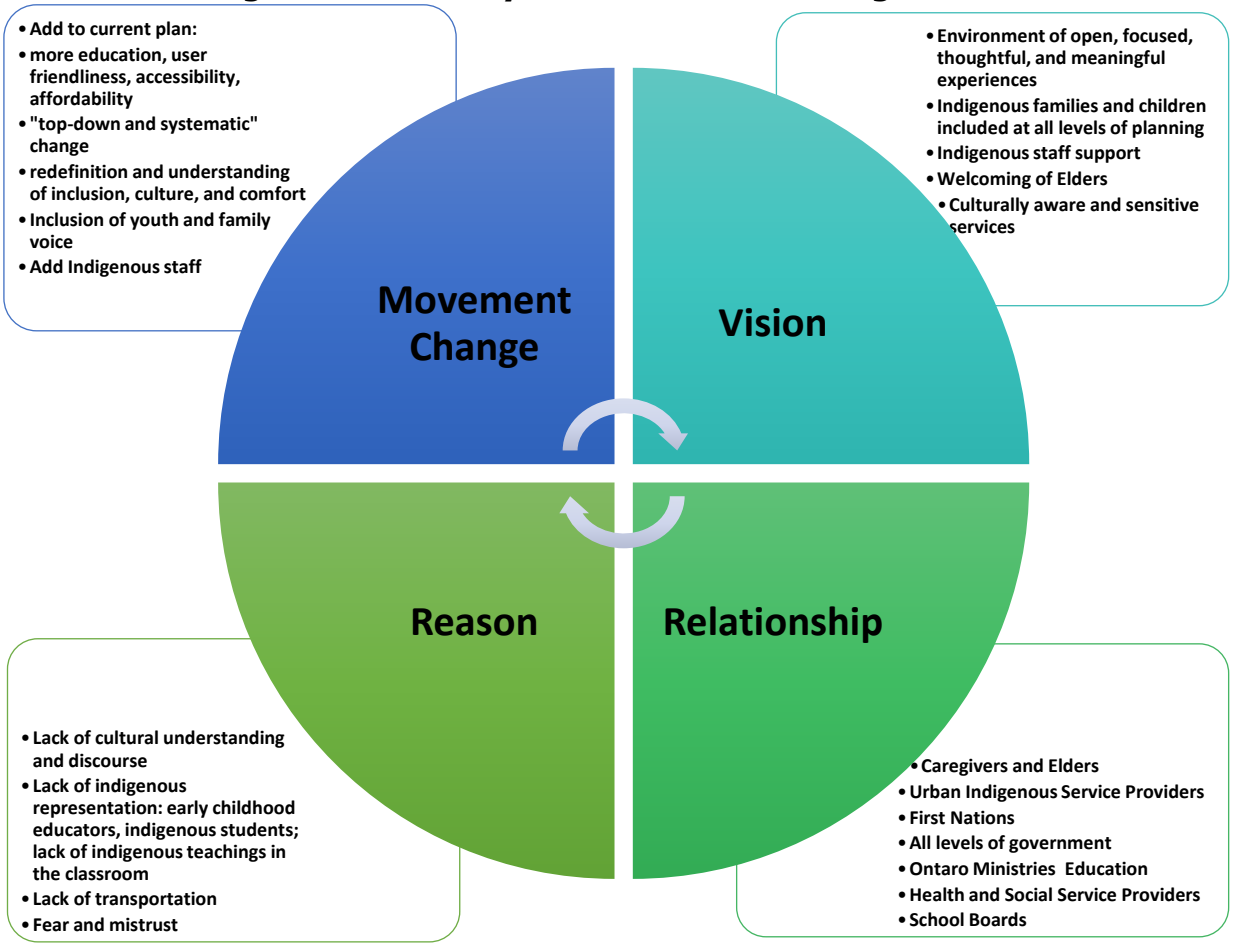
Vision: What is our vision for Indigenous early learning and care in Windsor-Essex County?
Relationship: Who needs to be in our relationship circle to achieve the vision?
Reason: Why? What are we going to do together?
Movement/Change: Do we have to revise the current plan? Create a new one?

Participants worked individually and then synthesized individual commentary into one group narrative that was shared with the larger group. Thirty individual Visioning Circles were analyzed for themes. Ten groups then worked to reach consensus at their tables and completed a synthesis of the group's overall responses to present to the large gathering.

5.4. INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK

Figure 7 provides a summary of 30 individual Visioning Circles.

Figure 7: Summary of *Individual* Visioning Circles



The themes from thirty Visioning Circles are discussed in greater detail below.

5.4.1. Vision

The overall vision is to creating an environment of open, focused, thoughtful, and meaningful experiences. Indigenous families and children need to be included at all levels of planning to ensure maximum development of programs. Indigenous teachers and learners should work with non-Indigenous staff to ensure quality services and an inclusive environment for all. Indigenous staff and participants need to be present at all levels of planning to ensure insight, inclusivity, and cultural understanding. Indigenous staff will be the best support for Indigenous families and children in the early years. Welcoming Elders to ensure Indigenous practices are being supported and honoured is extremely important. Within this context, there needs to be time for reflection of history, and to fully integrate the 7 Grandfather Teachings, the Good Life, and to embrace outdoor learning to reconnect with the natural world. If this is implemented, families and children will fully embrace their culture, and will feel empowered. Educators need to be culturally aware and culturally sensitive when working alongside Indigenous people.

5.4.2. Relationship

- Children, their families, and kin
- Indigenous Elders
- Urban Indigenous people
- Indigenous bands
- Municipal, provincial, and federal governments
- Support services such as medical agencies, childcare, mental health
- Ministry of Education and education institutions
- CYPC planning committee
- OEY network
- Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society
- Local Friendship Centres
- Ska:na Family Resource Centre
- Caldwell First Nations
- Health and Social Services networks and associations

5.4.3. Reason

The most frequently cited reason for change is the lack of cultural understanding and discourse between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Preconceived beliefs need to be dismantled to move forward proactively. The major narrative in this feedback is re-education and a fundamental change in how children are taught about their past.

Education needs to be transformed because there has been a lack of Indigenous representation, both in early childhood educators and students, and a lack of Indigenous teachings in the classroom/curriculum/pedagogy. Acknowledgement of the impact of Residential schools and the Sixties Scoop will confirm that knowing the past will help Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants create a positive future.

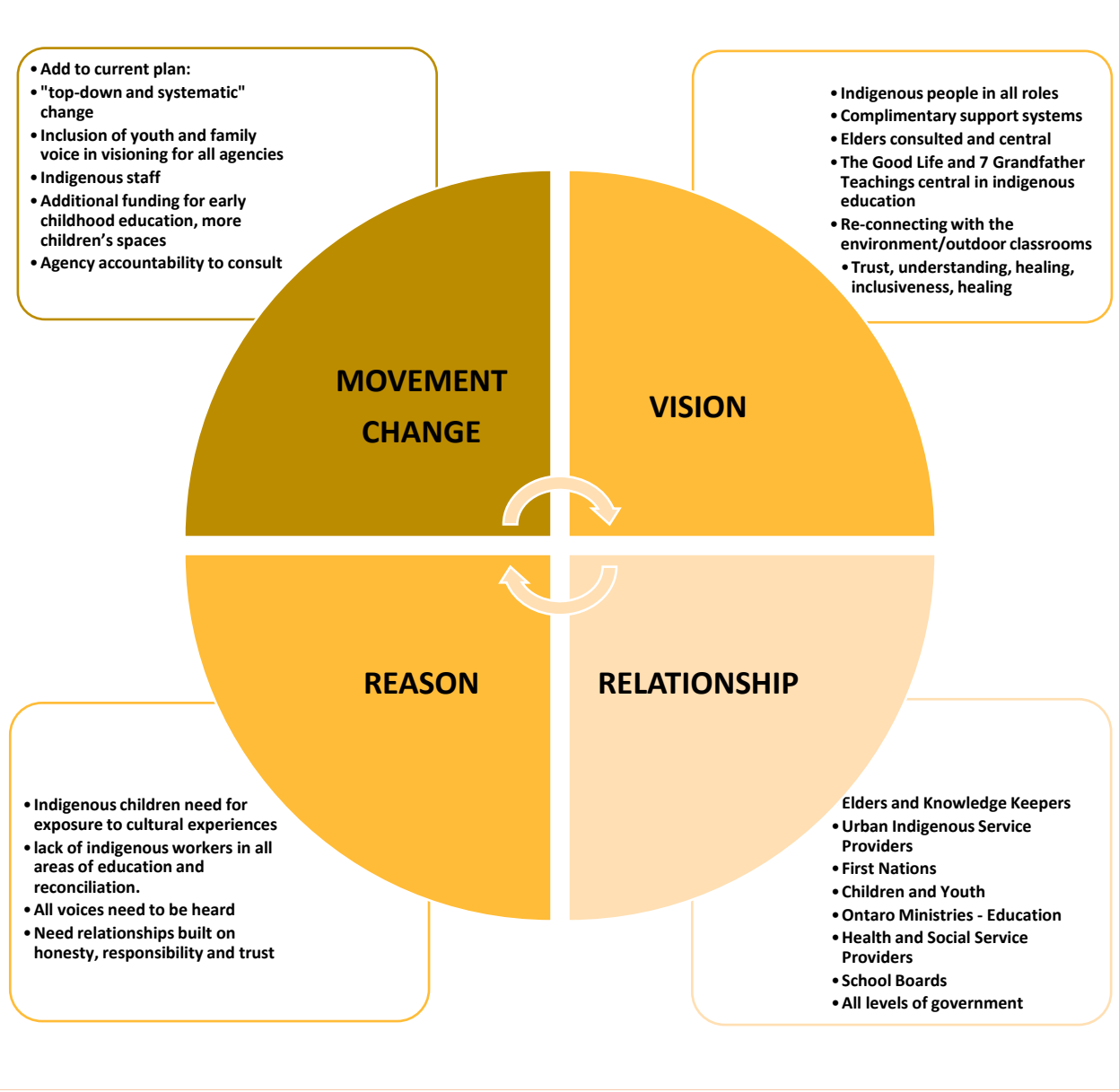
Lack of funding for Indigenous agencies, and policy development and implementation has created a gap in services for Indigenous children and families. Transportation to access services was once again raised as a barrier to participating in support and social programs. Fear and mistrust need to be addressed through education and by building alliances for greater cohesion and stronger relationships.

5.4.4. Movement/Change

When asked, "Should we add to the current system?" most participants answered "yes". A minority of participants stated that the system should be realigned to minimize problems. Respondents noted that there must be more education and accessibility. Furthermore, the current system needs to be made affordable. There needs to be a top-down change, and a systematic change that will increase understanding of the rights of all people in Canada. There must be a redefinition about what inclusion, culture, and comfort mean. Children and youth need to be included, as their perspectives will help drive vision forward. Indigenous staff should be present to help facilitate and proactively engage with community members.

Figure 8 represents the group responses to the Visioning Circle.

Figure 8: Summary of *Group* Responses to the Visioning Circle



The themes from ten group Visioning Circles are discussed in greater detail below.

Vision

First and foremost, Indigenous people should be present in all roles. There can and should be complimentary support systems in place for Indigenous children and families. Elders should be consulted and be central in the educational system. The Good Life and 7 Grandfather Teachings should play a central role in Indigenous education to facilitate self-identity and create a positive space that is respectful of culture and heritage. Re-connecting with the environment and nature through outdoor classrooms and

appreciation for the natural world was a frequently cited theme. The vision should include creating a safe space where Indigenous children and families can learn and grow together, working toward trust, understanding, healing, and inclusiveness. The centrality of children in healing wounds from the past, creating a healthy environment in the present, and allowing these same children to become leaders of the future through education, trust, and understanding should form a significant aspect of the vision for Indigenous early learning and care.

Relationship

Most responses noted that the following relationships have to be nurtured to positively move forward:

- Children
- Indigenous Educators
- Elders
- Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society
- Occupational and Speech and Language Services
- Windsor Essex Community Health Unit
- The City of Windsor
- Knowledge Keepers
- Early learning professionals
- Spiritual leaders
- All school boards
- All levels of government
- Ministry of Education
- Ontario Early Years and Licensed child care spaces Centres

There was an emphasis on empowering children, as they "are the ones who will change the world". This narrative was consistent throughout all feedback gathered during this session. Children play a central role in the education process to make a constructive impact on society at large.

Reason

Indigenous children do not have exposure to their own cultural experiences and there is a scarcity of Indigenous staff in all areas of education and reconciliation. To move forward proactively, Indigenous people need to be on the frontlines of the effort to combat stereotypes and reclaim identity. This means that all voices need to be heard, and that relationships must be built on honesty, responsibility and trust. Action needs to be taken to strengthen families, foster respect and understanding, and to demonstrate unwavering commitment to honour and learn from Indigenous partners. There also needs to be acknowledgement of First Nations ideas and philosophy, honouring the 7 generations before and 7 generations to come, the 7 Grandfather Teachings, and the Good Life model. Every child and family needs encouragement to meet his or her full

potential by ensuring the integration of services to help fully provide for Indigenous children and their families.

Movement/Change

Participants agreed there must be "top-down" change. In other words, the system requires transformation beginning with funders, legislators, and policy-makers. There needs to be additional funding for early childhood education, more licensed child care spaces, and more Indigenous people in education and advocacy positions. Youth involvement and younger staff should be present on visionary committees across agencies. Indigenous youth can further these narratives and assume an influential role in promoting cultural understanding. Agencies and centres should be held accountable to consult with Indigenous people in program planning and development. There may be opportunities to learn from other national and international initiatives who have had similar experiences in the early learning and child care system. Most participants stated that a transformation of the systems in place is necessary.

5.5. CONSULTATION WITH ABORIGINAL CHILD RESOURCE CENTRE – WINDSOR SITE

The Aboriginal Child Resource Centre is a program of the N'Amerind Friendship Centre, located in London, Ontario. Located in Windsor, Ontario, the Aboriginal Child Resource Centre provides support to families with children (0 – 6 years), through provisions of holistic healing and preventative service. Services are provided in a culturally based manner that targets the preconception, prenatal, postnatal, infant, toddler and pre-school years of a child.
During the consultation (conducted by Munro Consulting Services on behalf of the City of Windsor), the facilitator met with educators and mothers. The most frequently identified barrier to participating in early learning and care programs included:

- Lack of trust in "mainstream organizations"
- Lack of transportation to get to much-needed services
- Lack of space/gathering place for children and their families
- Need for additional services for children with special needs
- Absence of Aboriginal language and culture in early years settings

5.5.1. Recommendations to Improve the System

- The Centre utilizes volunteers, social work students, high school volunteer hours and families who bring grandmothers, aunties, and uncles; however, there is a need for more volunteers
- Families and children need additional space; they do use local parks to create a pop-up Centre; however, they need ongoing access to a gymnasium, outdoor space (garden), exercise program, bigger kitchen, play room and sewing room

- Hire additional paid staff
- Transform the early years curriculum/pedagogy to include cultural and language teachings
- Provide transportation for families to participate in Centre programming
- Create deliberate partnerships in additional to current partnerships
- Provide mobile babysitting (in home) for family respite

6. JOURNEYING TOGETHER

The next phase of the journey is to create a system of early learning and care that is reflective of Truth and Reconciliation and The Journey Together. How do we ensure that happens? How do we develop a shared understanding of early learning and care throughout the early learning system and how do we make meaningful change for Indigenous children and their families, indeed for all children and families?

As one part of the Journey Together, and central to the transformation of early learning and care, is the Two Row Wampum Belt. The Two Row Wampum belt is the symbolic record of the first agreement between Europeans and American Indian Nations on Turtle Island/North America. John Borrows, an Indigenous legal scholar and the author of *Canada's Indigenous Constitution*, describes the physical nature of the Two Row Wampum as follows:

"The belt consists of two rows of purple wampum beads on a white background. Three rows of white beads symbolizing peace, friendship, and respect separate the two purple rows. The two purple rows symbolize two paths or two vessels travelling down the same river. One row symbolizes the Haudenosaunee people with their law and customs, while the other row symbolizes European laws and customs. As nations move together side-by-side on the River of Life, they are to avoid overlapping or interfering with one another." https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/a-short-introduction-to-the-two-row-wampum

"We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers. [Our treaties] symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birchbark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel." (Ray Fadden, Kanien'kehá:ka Historian)

The Two Row Wampum can function as a framework for decolonization right across Turtle Island, since holding true to the Two Row Wampum means supporting the right of First Nations people to maintain themselves on their own land bases according to

their own systems of self-governance, organization, and economics.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wampum#/media/File

A representation of the original Two Row Wampum treaty belt.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wampum#/media/File:Tworowwampum.jpg

A second and central teaching which frames the context for transformation is The Good Life. It is these two teachings that provide the foundation for change.

6.1. MOVEMENT AND CHANGE

6.1.1. What We Heard: Challenges in the System

Families, caregivers and providers discussed the barriers faced by Indigenous children and their families in accessing and participating in Early Learning and Care:

- Lack of transportation to attend centres and programs
- Lack of Indigenous staff/presence in agencies
- Lack of trust of governments systems and programs
- Mainstream agencies lack understanding of Indigenous ways and teachings
- Scarcity of indigenous resources/family supports in the community
- Licensed child care costs are prohibitive
- Centres' hours of operation do not meet family needs
- Urban families feel isolated from each other, from their community and from services

6.1.2. What We Heard: Recommendations

Figure 9 provides a summary of recommendations from parents, caregivers and providers.

Figure 9: Journeying Together

Based on community feedback, the literature, and previous recorded commentary from the local Indigenous community, the community has agreed upon a number of policy and service design initiatives for urban Indigenous children and families.

As noted in Figure 9, we are recommending that the province fund the creation of a team of Indigenous Specialists to implement the solutions noted above: Elders and Knowledge Keepers, Caregivers, Staff, Early Learning and Care Providers, and Youth. This team in consultation with community members will lead the design and delivery of services and programs, a key component of the direction moving forward.

This proposal is multi-pronged and includes the following:

1) Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery
   - Good Life Lead (1 FTE)
   - Indigenous Specialist (1 FTE)
   - Cultural and Curriculum/pedagogy Specialist (2 FTE)
   - Administrative and Data Coordinator (1 FTE)
2) Enhance community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs: one located in the west end of the City and the second in the east end; these hubs will house OEYCFC's
   a. Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families
   b. The 7 Stages of the Good Life provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.)
3) Determining the feasibility of and need to provide services in the County
4) Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen?
5) Working toward policy changes, especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces
6) Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families
7) Building deliberate relationships with community partners within the context of the Indigenous treaties (Two Row Wampum) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing
8) Observing, reflecting and evaluating for long-term outcomes for children

Table 2 provides a summary of the proposal's alignment with the Journey Together objectives.

Table 2: Proposal Alignment with Journey Together Objectives

Objective	Response in Proposal
Increase access to culturally relevant early years programs and services and licensed child care spaces for Indigenous children and families off-reserve	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen? • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families • Building deliberate relationships with community partners within the context of the Indigenous treaties (Two Row Wampum) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing
Enhance Indigenous control of service design and delivery	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Creating two Indigenous-led community hubs: one located in the west end of the City and the second in the east end; these hubs will house OEYCFC's • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g.

	Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen? • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families
Foster greater opportunities for Indigenous children to learn about their culture and language from an early age	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in in the County • Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen?
Support improved outcomes for Indigenous children including healthy child development, parent and family supports and greater participation in employment and training for parents	• Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families • Observing, reflecting and evaluating for long-term outcomes for children

Table 3 provides a summary of the proposal's alignment with the OEYCFC goals and objectives.

Table 3: Alignment with OEYCFC Goals and Objectives

Goals and Objectives	Response in Proposal
Parents and caregivers have access to high quality services that support them in their role as children's first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in the County • Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen? • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families • Observing, reflecting and evaluating for long-term outcomes for children
Children have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and experience positive developmental health and well-being	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in the County

	• Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen? • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families • Observing, reflecting and evaluating for long-term outcomes for children
Parents and caregivers have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in in the County Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families
Francophone children and families have access to French language programs and gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition Parents and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up to date information about community and specialized services	• Not applicable for this project

Indigenous children and families have access to culturally responsive programming	• Hiring Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery • Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in in the County • Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and How Does Learning Happen? • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families
Local service providers collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way	• Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care • Depending on community need, Indigenous organizations can be co-located or in a partnership model in which organizations attend regularly to support children and families • The 7 Stages of the Good Life, provides the foundation of the services offered and informs hub planning and infrastructure (e.g. Inclusion of elders, language/cultural teachings: (Largely Ojibway) land, ceremony, basic needs, etc.) • Continue to monitor and review the need for services in in the County • Working toward policy changes especially eligibility to access subsidy and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces • Building deliberate relationships with community partners within the context of the Indigenous treaties (Two Row Wampum) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing

6.2. THE JOURNEY TOGETHER OUTCOMES FOR WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY

Table 4 provides an overview of desired outcomes for Indigenous children and families in Windsor-Essex County.

Table 4: The Journey Together Outcomes

The Journey Together Windsor Objectives	Outcomes
Hire Indigenous people to lead and implement the service design and delivery	• Building Indigenous leadership • Building Indigenous workforce capacity • All programming, infrastructure, services and supports anchored in Indigenous knowledge, beliefs and values
Enhancing community capacity by creating two additional Indigenous-led community hubs, preferably west and east location; these hubs will house OEYCFC's and child care	• Increasing engagement of mainstream early years and licensed child care spaces agencies • Building Indigenous organization capacity • Improving service coordination and integration • Improving health, economic and social outcomes for Indigenous children and families • Holistic, universal, accessible and comprehensive programs and services accessible to all children off reserve • Seamless connection to other services-education, social services and health • Access to culturally relevant early years programs and services and licensed child care spaces for Indigenous children and families off-reserve • Comprehensive approach that incorporates families, prenatal and parenting programs, education, health, and social services
Continue to monitor and review the need for services in the County	• Increasing availability, accessibility and participation in early years and licensed child care spaces programs, services and supports for urban Indigenous children and families • Increasing access to culturally relevant early years programs and services and licensed child care spaces for Indigenous children and families off-reserve
Transforming early learning curriculum/pedagogy toward Indigenous ways of knowing and	• All programming, infrastructure, services and supports anchored in Indigenous knowledge, beliefs and values • Increasing access to culturally relevant early years programs and services and licensed child care spaces for Indigenous children and families off-reserve

How Does Learning Happen?	• Holistic, universal, accessible and comprehensive programs and services accessible to all children off reserve
Working toward policy changes, especially eligibility to accessing subsidies and increasing the number of Indigenous licensed child care spaces	• Increasing availability, accessibility and participation in early years and licensed child care spaces programs, services and supports for urban Indigenous children and families
Creating a mobile early years care team to support Indigenous children and families in home or in agency, and reach out to urban Indigenous families	• Increasing availability, accessibility and participation in early years and licensed child care spaces programs, services and supports for urban Indigenous children and families
Building deliberate relationships with community partners within the context of the Indigenous treaties (Two Row Wampum) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing	• Seamless connection to other services-education, social services and health • Increased engagement of mainstream early years and licensed child care spaces agencies • Improving service coordination and integration
Observing, reflecting and evaluating for long-term outcomes for children	• Improving service coordination and integration • Improving health, economic and social outcomes for Indigenous children and families

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APPENDIX 1: WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY CONVERSATION FLYER AND AGENDA

AGENDA

A conversation around the Province of Ontario's commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in regards to Early Learning Education and Care with Indigenous organizations taking the lead with service system managers.

Presenters: Gertie Beaucage, Sue Doxtator, Faith Hale and Sue Chanko

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Registration Opening and Welcoming	Continental Breakfast Buffet open
10:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 11:15 a.m. 12:30 p.m.	Faith Hale and Sue Chanko BREAK Gertie Beaucage	How Does Learning Happen? Mino Bimaadziwin "The Good Life"
12:30 p.m.pm – 1:00 p.m.pm	LUNCH	Buffet Lunch Corn Soup, Fry Bread Indian Taco Bar
1:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m.	Sue Doxtator Reflections and Closing	Child Welfare Visioning and Conversation

Chi-Miigwech

Thank you for your participation, your words are medicine and your contributions are appreciated.

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM

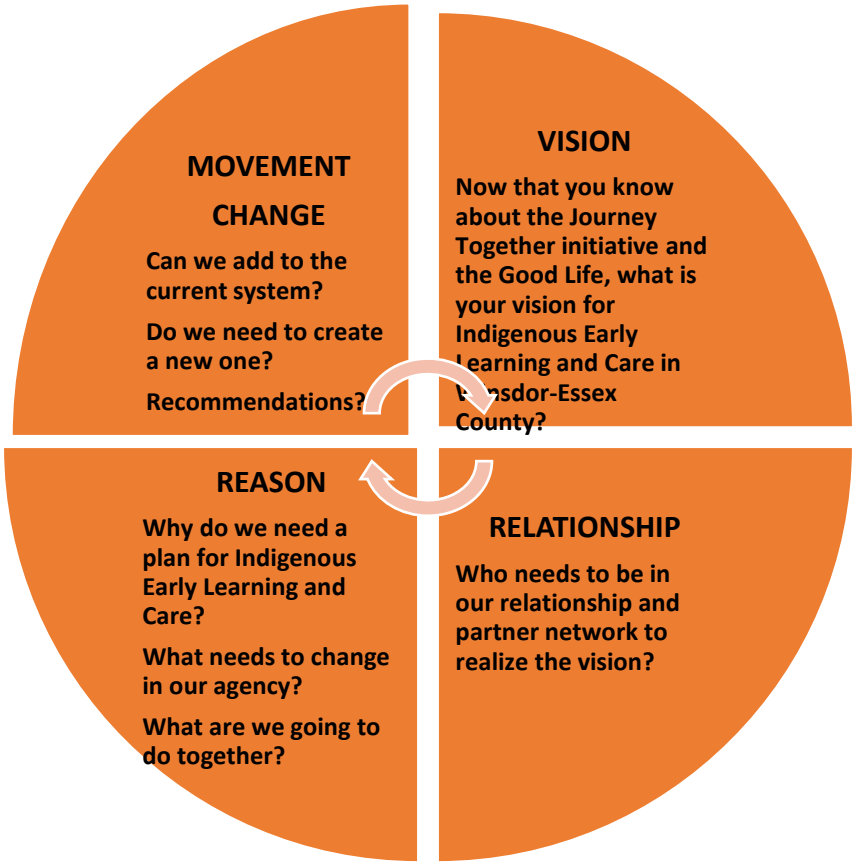
Please rate the following items on a scale from 1 to 5 by checking the appropriate box: 1=Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Not Sure; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree

AREA	1	2	3	4	5
The workshop was well organized and the main points were well covered and clarified.					
The facilitators demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter.					
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge about Indigenous early learning.					
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge about the Journey Together strategy.					
Because of this workshop, I have more knowledge of The Good Life.					
This workshop helped me to understand my role in providing early learning and care to Indigenous children and families.					
I gained usable knowledge and will apply it to early learning within my work place.					

What was the most valuable aspect of the workshop?

Please identify aspects of this workshop that you can incorporate into your work place and any support you may need to do so.

What will you do differently in your agency, now that you have spent the day with us? What do you hope to do?

Do you have any recommendations to assist us to facilitate Indigenous Early Learning and Care?

APPENDIX 3: INDIGENOUS VISIONING CIRCLE