



REPORT FOR ACTION

Update: Expanding Indigenous-led Early Years Programs and Services

Date: February 9, 2018

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Children's Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides an update to the report dated August 18, 2017, Expanding Indigenous-led Early Years Programs and Services, which outlined proposals to expand Indigenous-led early years programs and services jointly submitted by the City of Toronto and its Indigenous planning partners to the Ministry of Education's Journey Together initiative. In response to these proposals, Toronto was allocated \$6,893,497 for 2018 and \$4,067,606 for 2019, with these allocations included in the 2018 Council Approved Operating Budget for Children's Services. On February 9th, 2018, Children's Services was informed by the Province that an additional proposal for First Nations School was approved. This report outlines the scope of the new programs and services that these investments will fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. Community Development and Recreation Committee receive this report for information.

Equity Statement

The expansion of Indigenous early years programs provides an opportunity for Children's Services and the City of Toronto to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions #5 and #12 that address the need for the development of culturally appropriate parenting programs and early childhood education for Indigenous families.

Indigenous families in Toronto have echoed the need for expanded Indigenous early years programs and services in many community consultations. Toronto Children's

Services recognizes the demand for culturally-specific child care in the 2015-2019 Service Plan through Action #11: Work with the Aboriginal community to increase the number of culturally-specific spaces for Aboriginal children through a variety of approaches, including supporting the viability of new and existing Aboriginal child care centres.

The expansion of Indigenous-led early years programs and services through the provincial Journey Together initiative will increase access to culturally relevant child care and child and family supports, leading to enhanced well-being for Indigenous children and families in Toronto.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Allocations from the Ministry of Education (MEDU) for new and expanded Indigenous early years programs and services in Toronto are 100 per cent provincially funded.

A total of \$6,893,497 is included in the 2018 Council Approved Operating Budget for Children's Services as new funding, with programming to be delivered through the Journey Together program.

Additional funding for the project at First Nations School will be reported through Budget Committee, once the amount of the additional funding has been finalized. At that time, the 2018 Council Approved Operating Budget for Children's Services will be amended to include the additional funding, which has no net impact, as the Journey Together program is 100 per cent funded by the province.

The Acting Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On October 2, 2017 City Council adopted a report titled, Expanding Indigenous-led Early Years Programs and Services which provided an overview of proposals being submitted to the Ministry of Education under their Journey Together initiative.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD22.4>

COMMENTS

Background

On May 30, 2016, the Province of Ontario announced The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, which provides a significant investment across the province to "address the legacy of residential schools, close gaps

and remove barriers, support Indigenous culture, and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples".

The Ministry of Education's initiative under Journey Together will provide up to \$93.5 million in new funding over the next two years to expand Indigenous early years programs and services across the province. Urban Indigenous communities (formerly termed 'off-reserve' communities) will see up to \$70 million over the next two years (including capital investments) for child care and child and family programs delivered by Indigenous organizations. Ongoing annual operating funding for these programs of up to \$30 million will be distributed starting in 2018-2019.

On December 4th 2017, Children's Services was informed that the allocation for new and expanded Indigenous early years programs and services in Toronto, as a result of the project proposal process, totals \$10,961,103, to be distributed over two years. This allocation provides operating funding for culturally safe mobile Indigenous child and family programs. It also includes capital and operating funding for two new Indigenous child and family centres. On February 9th, 2018, Children's Services was informed that an additional proposal for a co-located Indigenous child and family centre and Indigenous child care centre at First Nations School of Toronto was approved. Funding for this project will be reported to Budget Committee, once the amount of the additional funding has been finalized. Please see the approved projects with brief synopses in Appendix A.

Comments

Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is a provincial initiative to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. The Ministry of Education, through its initiative under 'Journey Together' aims to increase the number of culturally relevant child care spaces and expand access to child and family programs for Indigenous children and families who live in urban communities.

Children's Services worked in partnership with Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) to complete a vigorous community needs assessment that informed project proposals. Indigenous families, children, Indigenous service providers and other relevant community stakeholders (including Toronto Public Library and Toronto Public Health) were consulted about the needs of Indigenous children and families. The needs assessment also included data from service providers and Well Living House (an Indigenous research unit at St. Michael's Hospital), as well as recommendations from local and Canadian-specific Indigenous early learning and care research and reports. Key themes that emerged from consultations were the need for increased access to Indigenous cultural programming for families and children, including accessible ways to learn Indigenous languages, participate in land based programming, and opportunities for families and children to engage around Indigenous cultural knowledge. Other needs that surfaced through the assessment process include culturally safe parenting programs for fathers as well as intensive prenatal and postnatal supports for Indigenous families and infants.

Eleven proposals were developed and submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. One of these, for a project at First Nations School of Toronto, was submitted jointly with the Toronto District School Board to a separate school capital fund. All proposals were developed based on the themes that emerged from the needs assessment. On December 4th 2017, Children's Services was informed that six of the submitted proposals were approved. Subsequently, on February 9, 2018, the Ministry also announced approval for the project at First Nations School of Toronto. With the exception of Native Child and Family Services, Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre, none of the projects have an Indigenous service provider identified to operate the programs. An Indigenous service provider will be identified through an Expression of Interest process for each project. Children's Services attended the December 2017 TASSC board meeting, which was open to the broader community, to formally announce the approved projects and discuss the next steps in the Expression of Interest process. The Ministry of Education also attended to communicate their process for approving proposals and to communicate their ongoing commitment to this initiative.

Approved projects include capital and operating funds for two new Child and Family Centres, one in the Mount Dennis area and one in Scarborough. These locations were identified through the needs assessment as areas where Indigenous children and families live and currently have limited or no access to services. Children's Services is currently searching for appropriate sites that can be retrofitted to accommodate the centres, with capital funding provided as part of the 2018 allocation. The timeline for accomplishing this task is challenging, given that this money needs to be expensed by the end of 2018. Children's Services is working diligently to meet the deadlines. Additionally, the co-location of an Indigenous Child Care program and Child and Family Centre within First Nations School of Toronto was approved.

The Child and Family Centres are envisioned as gathering places where children and families can receive holistic support, make connections and participate in Indigenous cultural programming. Programming offered at the Centres will align with the mandatory core services and other requirements of the newly branded EarlyON Child and Family Centres with additional funding to support the removal of barriers (namely transportation) and provide culturally supportive enhancements (including staff positions for a traditional knowledge keeper, and a family support and outreach worker). Additionally, each centre will have the capacity to provide mobile programming which will provide easier access and outreach to families that may be unable to travel to a specific location for culturally relevant programming.

Native Child and Family Services currently operates a small Child and Family Centre at the same location as its child care at the Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre. A proposal to enhance both the child care and child and family program was approved. This will provide increased capacity at that location to increase services offered to families and provide the same culturally specific enhancements that will be incorporated at the other project sites. Most notable is funding to support the cost of transportation, which is a support that has been requested by the community numerous times (including as a recommendation in the Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) Final report). Transportation costs have been built in to all the proposals.

In addition to the three child and family centres, three mobile programs have been approved that will provide specific programming across the city. They include; Indigenous Land-Based Programs, Culturally Secure Parenting Supports for Fathers, and an Indigenous Central Language Program. These programs were designed with the community and will provide programming across the city. Details of these programs can be found in Appendix A.

Conclusion

Children's Services will continue to partner with the Indigenous community as we build a system that will significantly change the landscape for Indigenous children and families across Toronto. Children's Services welcomes and looks forward to all of these new opportunities and partnerships.

Children's Services will attend the April meeting of the Aboriginal Affairs Committee to discuss the process and outcome of this initiative, as well as how the expansion integrates with the broader implementation of the City's service system manage role for Child and Family Centres.

Going forward, Children's Services will apply the knowledge gathered through the Journey Together needs assessment to inform the creation of a robust Indigenous early years system service plan that will align with the upcoming Children's Services' 2020-2024 service plan.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Approved Journey Together Proposals with Brief Synopsis

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Journey Together Initiative New Indigenous Early Years Programs	Funding Amount	
	2018	2019
<p>Indigenous Land-Based Child and Family Programs</p> <p>Vision: Families will have equitable access to land and enjoy opportunities learn and participate in land based activities that increase cultural knowledge and practice, connect children and their families to the land, provide physical activity, and increase access to local, low cost, nutritional food options.</p>	\$508,420	\$489,920
<p>Culturally Secure Parenting Supports for Fathers</p> <p>Vision: Indigenous fathers meet regularly for drop-in programming, educational workshops, cultural teachings, and socials. A mentorship model would be used where fathers of older children are welcome to pass along knowledge to fathers of younger children. This program will be open to expecting fathers, as well as non-Indigenous fathers of Indigenous children. There will be space made to ensure that specific programming is made available for diverse groups such as Two-Spirit parents, Metis, Inuit, young fathers, and fathers of lone-parent families.</p>	\$235,342	\$232,342
<p>Indigenous Central Language Child & Family Program</p> <p>Vision: Specialized team to lead language programming for children, and assist in the development of language transmission skills in centers and families. Based on the ideology of the language nests that have been so successful in other communities, this program will bring fluent speakers and immersion into Indigenous child care programs and Indigenous child and family centers, to enable more effective implementation of language programming for children 0-6. The group will focus on Anishnaabemowin resource development in general, but also work with community members and fluent speakers from other Indigenous languages groups to coordinate and design programs that are more representative of Toronto's Indigenous population.</p>	\$647,793	\$632,793

Journey Together Initiative New Indigenous Early Years Programs	Funding Amount	
	2018	2019
<p>Enhancements to Indigenous Child Care and Child and Family Programs at the Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre</p> <p>Vision: Enhance existing Indigenous child care program with the addition of two staff roles: a Traditional Knowledge Keeper and a Family Support Worker. Increase access to culturally specific child care by providing transportation for Indigenous children attending the child care program at this site. Increase child and family programming at this site through adding two Registered Early Childhood Educators. Further increase early years capacity through the addition of a supervisor to help coordinate transportation and new child and family programs.</p>	\$592,822	\$587,822
<p>Mount Dennis Indigenous Child & Family Centre</p> <p>Vision: a new Indigenous Child and Family Centre in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood, serving the West Toronto area with mobile child and family services. The Indigenous Child and Family Centre will provide the core services of an EarlyON Child and Family Centre, delivering programming based in Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages.</p>	\$2,454,560 (capital retrofit and start-up)	\$1,078,458 (operating)
<p>Scarborough Indigenous Child & Family Centre</p> <p>Vision: a new Indigenous Child and Family Centre in Scarborough, serving the East Toronto area with mobile child and family services. The Indigenous Child and Family Centre will provide the core services of an EarlyON Child and Family Centre, delivering programming based in Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages.</p>	\$2,454,560 (capital retrofit and start-up)	\$1,046,271 (operating)
<p>First Nations School of Toronto</p> <p>Vision: Co-location of a Child Care and Child and Family Centre within the City's only publically funded Indigenous elementary and high school program. The Indigenous Child and Family Centre will provide the core services of an EarlyON child and Family Centre, delivering programming based in Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages. Additionally culturally specific child care will help create strong connections with the school community.</p>	TBD	TBD