ONTARIO FEDERATION OF INDIAN FRIENDSHIP CENTRES (OFIFC)
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

- OFIFC; is a provincial Aboriginal Organization

- Vision: Improve the quality of life for Aboriginal People in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities

- We represent 29 Friendship Centres in Ontario
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

- Friendship Centres; are not-for-profit corporations which are mandated to serve the needs of all Aboriginal People

- The OFIFC administers programs that are delivered by local Friendship Centres

- Programs; Health, Justice, Family Support, Education, Children and Youth Initiatives and Cultural Awareness
Today; more than 80% of Aboriginal People in Ontario live in urban communities

Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS); reported that 15-21% of children and youth are affected by mental health disorders…with significantly higher rates for Aboriginal children and youth
“Aboriginal Children’s Mental Health”; reported that 20-25% of Aboriginal children suffer from an emotional disorder

Friendship Centres across Ontario respond to thousands of Aboriginal People requiring culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate programs and services in urban communities
What programs support Aboriginal children and youth mental health?

Akwe:go
- “All of us”
- for children 7-12
- One-on-one and group based program
- Areas of focus include: Social Support, Health and Physical Development, Institutional Interventions, Children in Care and Children with FASD or other disabilities
Akwe:go

Social Support
- Anger management
- Addressing self-esteem
- Peer counseling

Health and Physical Development
- Physical activities
- Nutritional learning activities; portion control, traditional food preparation
Akwe:go

Institutional Interventions

- Homework support
- Access to tutors
- School suspension support
- Assist in the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
FASD and Other Disabilities
- Homework and tutoring support
- Physical activities
- Learning activities
- In-school support and advocacy

Children in Care
- Cultural activities
- Traditional teachings
Wasa-Nabin

“To look ahead”

For youth 13-18

One-on-one and group based program

Areas of focus include; Social Support, Health and Physical Development, Youth in Care, Education, Justice Intervention and Violence Prevention
Wasa-Nabin

Social Supports

- Addressing self-esteem
- Anger management
- Peer counseling

Health and Physical Development

- Physical activities
- Nutritional learning activities; portion control, reading food labels, cooking
Wasa-Nabin

Youth In Care
- Access to Elders
- Traditional Teachings
- Cultural activities; ceremonies

Education
- Homework assistance
- Access to tutors
- School suspension support
Wasa-Nabin

- Justice Intervention
- Justice support
- Advocacy and referrals to Alternative Sentencing
- Streetwolf: 7 Principles of Self-Leadership

Violence Prevention
- Roles and Responsibilities Teachings
- Anger Management programs
- Kiizhay Anishnaabe Niin; “I am a Kind Man”
Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin

Program Workers

- Meet with children and youth at school to offer one-on-one assistance

- Deliver the Streetwolf Program to their clients and participants in schools

- A number of working relationships and protocols currently exist between Friendship Centres, local schools and school boards
Children’s Mental Health Demonstration Projects (CMHDP)

- For children and youth 7-15
- Access to one-on-one support
- Advocacy
- Referrals to professionals
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/ Child Nutrition Program (FASD/CN)

- No age limit
- Work with individuals and families affected by FASD
- Provide support and advocacy to clients
- Provide resources to individuals and their families on proper nutrition
- Referrals to diagnostic clinics and professionals
Aboriginal Community Mental Health Program (ACMHP)

ACMHP
- For individuals ages 16+
- One-on-one and group based program

Offers
- Supportive counseling
- Life skills development
- Crisis intervention
- Advocacy and referrals
- Education and awareness on Aboriginal mental health to non-Aboriginal agencies
Alternative Secondary School Program (ASSP)

- Established in 1990
- Delivered in partnership with local school boards
- Help students deal with issues affecting their academic achievement
Participant Programs for Students

Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY)

- Participant based
- For children and youth 10-24
- Areas of focus include; Cultural Development, Leadership Development, Community Engagement, Life Skills and Wellness and Youth Engagement
Measuring Success

How are these programs successful in addressing and supporting Aboriginal children and youth mental health?

Akwe:go

“One of my clients is a ten year old boy who has been diagnosed with ADHD and has had huge difficulty with out of control behaviour, smoking, seeing drugs and staying home. He was taken out of the home and placed in foster care for two months. During this time, I was able to follow-up with him weekly and now he is back at home with his mother and is able to follow rules and is receiving help at school”.
Measuring Success

Wasa-Nabin

"A youth was referred to the Wasa-Nabin program by the high school attendance counselor, who was unsuccessful in attempting to engage the youth. The youth has been without any formal education for at least four years and most of their time since then has been spent in their house playing video games. The youth's mother contacted the Worker stating she had concerns about the youth's mental health. The youth had been talking about suicide and the mother had also relayed the youth was in need of a drug and alcohol treatment program. The Worker was able to connect with an Aboriginal treatment centre within the local community. The Worker followed up on the youth's progress at the Aboriginal treatment centre and reported the youth is doing well."
Measuring Success

Children’s Mental Health Demonstration Projects (CMHDP)

Clients struggling with drug abuse sought support from the program and are now making healthy choices, improving school attendance. Clients have also learned coping skills to deal with anger and self-harming behaviours that range from identifying feelings through sharing circles, writing, creating music, traditional teachings and being involved with their communities.
Measuring Success

Aboriginal Community Mental Health Program

The clients of the ACMHP have stated that the program provided them with a safe place to learn about their mental health issue, to receive culture-based services and support to receive a medical diagnosis for their mental health issue.
Measuring Success

Alternative Secondary School Program (ASSP)

- Students at the ASSP sites completed a total of 1015 credits. Forty three (43) students graduated with their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

- Average grade from 60% to 70%
Measuring Success

Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY)

"The youth were invited to another CCAY program to be host drum for a Youth Gathering. The youth from the Youth Center were invited to join the 4 Directions Youth Drum Group during the evening of the Drumming Social. The 4 Directions Youth Drum Group role modeled for the youth in showing them in how to drum around the Grandfather Drum. They all were so proud of themselves and the town of had great things to say about our future leaders."
Next Steps: Supporting Children and Youth Mental Health

The OFIFC is advocating for:

- Aboriginal Children and Youth Mental Health Workers in schools
- That an Aboriginal Children and Youth Mental Health Program be established at every Friendship Centre
- That Urban Aboriginal Family Treatment Centres be established in four regions in Ontario
For more information on Friendship Centre programs and services, contact your local Friendship Centre.

For a complete listing on Friendship Centre locations or for more information on the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres visit:  

www.ofifc.org