

# Toronto Child and Family Network

## Aboriginal Advisory and Planning Committee

### Terms of Reference

#### Network Vision

**Every child has the right to high quality, meaningful childhood experiences that respect diversity, are rooted in communities, and support engagement in life-long learning and healthy development. An inclusive, integrated and accessible community service system places children at the centre, appreciates their unique potential, is responsive to families and promotes positive outcomes**

#### PURPOSE:

The Aboriginal Advisory and Planning Committee is responsible for constructing an Indigenous integrated service model based on the needs of Aboriginal children (birth to 12 years old) and families in the City of Toronto that truly reflects cultural, linguistic, political and historical integrity.

There are unique features of the functions of this group that are specifically designed to reflect the cultural traditions and the communication styles common in Indigenous communities.

The Aboriginal Advisory will make recommendations on policies, funding and other decisions related to the delivery of services to the Steering Committee of the Toronto Child and Family Network. This committee forms one of six planning committees that make up the Network (the others are Early Learning and Care, Early Identification and Intervention, French Language, Family Support, and Health)

#### PRINCIPLES

- Promotion of traditional Aboriginal values to build a strong sense of community in the City of Toronto where resources are shared, communication of program services is comprehensive and culture is maintained in an urban environment. The support and guidance of Elders is the solid base that this committee works from.
- Acknowledgement of the residential school experience and its generational effects; grief and trauma and its continued effects on the child and the family; the necessity of healing practices as part of family life
- Programs and services in Aboriginal child care and early learning reflect the cultural traditions and Indigenous languages of the children and families they are serving in the City of Toronto

- Collaborative efforts will be made to involve libraries, local school boards parents/caregivers, Elders, extended family members, Traditional cultural teachers, service providers, the municipality, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ministry of Education; a continuum of services for families
- Community based planning and consultation will reflect the integrity of aboriginal community needs and the voices of the aboriginal families; an open and transparent communication process
- The diversity of needs within aboriginal families demands a broad based community network of services required across neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto; accessibility of services for children with special needs as well as integrated multi-disciplinary services
- Responsive service and equity of access for Aboriginal children are necessary and will evolve through integrated service planning at the neighbourhood level
- Early years service providers have strengths and capacities in cultural competency that will manifest through establishing linkages, collaborative action plans, and sharing of resources at the local level to benefit aboriginal children and families.

## **THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE**

### **Membership**

The Aboriginal Advisory is reflective of leaderless leadership, recognizing the value of the expertise of each member and the equality of all voices in the planning processes. Lateral empowerment is a key factor in relationships among the Members of this Group. There is no hierarchy of authority. Membership will remain fluid with new members invited into the circle on an issue basis. Core representation is made up from the following organizations and agencies.

- Aboriginal Education Centre - TDSB
- Anduhyaun-
- Anishnawbe Health Toronto
- City of Toronto
- Council Fire
- Native Child and Family Services
- Native Women's Resource Centre
- Noojimawin Health Authority
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Mothercraft Institute for Early Development
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Toronto Coalition for Better Childcare
- Toronto District School Board
- Shelter and Housing

## **Roles & Responsibilities of Members**

- Link with Aboriginal service organizations in the City to utilize their expertise in the network of Aboriginal organizations responsible for child care and early learning
- Establish strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community
- Act as a conduit between the other parts of the network and the community
- Identify the issues, barriers and gaps to bring forward to the Steering Committee by the Conveners

## **Frequency of meetings**

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis and more regularly as necessary.

## **Decision Making**

Using the values found in the 7 Grandfather Teachings consensus decision-making is the goal. (attached)

## **Convener**

The Group will select a Convener who will Chair the meetings. A Co-Convener will also be chosen at this time and act as the Chair of the meetings should the Convener not be able to attend.

## **Term of Convener**

Conveners and Co-Conveners shall act in this capacity for two years. After two years membership will select a Convener and Co-Convener or re-appoint the incumbents. Appointments shall be by consensus.

## **Communication Imperatives of Conveners**

The Convener will open the meeting in a good way to honor the intent of the gathering and call Spirits to be present during the deliberations. The Convener may ask others present in the Circle to do this or invite Special Guests to perform the ceremony. The Convener is responsible for holding the integrity of the Rules of the Circle. Also the Convener is the person responsible for calling Executive meetings to formulate the monthly agenda of the Aboriginal Advisory.

The position of the Convener performs the following functions:

- introduces items for discussion
- keeps the discussion on track and does not move to the next item on the agenda until decisions have been made on the current item under discussion
- seeks consensus on the issues; initiates decision-making processes
- uses the Talking Stick when necessary: when the Talking Stick is in use, no one interrupts the Speaker and must wait until he/she is done speaking; only then will the Talking Stick move on to the next person
- allows withholding of opinions by Members: allows opting out of decision-making

- summarizes discussion at the end of the meeting and reads decisions out loud for consensus of all Members
- sets next meeting date after agreement by the Members: ensures responsibility and action are clearly expressed to those accepting duties for the next meeting date

### **Steering Committee Representation**

The Convener and Co Convener will represent the committee on the Steering Committee.

### **Recording and Distributing the Minutes**

Recording, distribution and posting of the minutes will be supported by the City of Toronto with the approval of the conveners.

## **COLLECTIVE VALUES GUIDING OUR OPERATIONS**

### **RESPECT**

Assume good intentions, listen carefully to the words and feelings of others;  
Demonstrate kindness and dignity in situations where there are differing opinions  
and alternate positions;  
Avoid taking things personally; search for answers, do not assign blame for problems.

### **COURAGE**

Take risks - learn from what doesn't work;  
Take ownership for outcomes;  
Stand for the highest order of values and practice.

### **HONESTY**

Communicate with openness, clarity and avoid pettiness;  
Use words carefully;  
See oneself as transparent, without a hidden agenda or seeking control of others.

### **LOVE**

Use intuition not just one's mental abilities;  
Let decisions be made from the heart;  
Come forward to express opinions from a position of love, not fear.

### **HUMILITY**

Understand that the whole is greater than the parts;  
Reflect inner peace knowing that the Creator guides us and holds all power;  
Keep an open mind and heart.

### **WISDOM**

Use discernment, not judgment;  
Trust the process even if you don't always agree with the decisions;  
See wisdom in all ways, faiths and traditions and to commit to being a seeker;  
Understand and appreciate that we are the voices for the children and their needs.

### **TRUTH**

Keep agreements and to walk knowing we are guided by the Spirits, the  
Ancestors and the Great Mystery in all that we do and say.