

# Our Gifted Children

Keechee Kahkaytahwaytahmoowiin Ahwahsheesh Binoojiinhyik



## Highlights In This Issue

- Special Education and Education Transformation
- Community Success Stories
- Special Education in the School: Assessment



## Chiefs of Ontario Mission Statement

The main objective of the Chiefs of Ontario office is to facilitate the discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of all local, regional and national matters affecting the First Nations people of Ontario. The intention of basing the central office in Toronto is to maintain a presence for First Nations in Ontario that is non-government and non-political in order to communicate with government officials on an urgency basis.

## Chiefs of Ontario History

In March of 1975, at the First Annual All Ontario Chiefs Conference, a joint First Nations Association Coordinating Committee was formed, constituting an unincorporated federation of the four major Ontario First Nation organizations. The purpose of the committee was to provide a single Ontario representative to the Assembly of First Nations (then, the National Indian Brotherhood). From this committee emerged the Chiefs of Ontario office whose basic purpose is to enable the political leadership to discuss and to decide on regional, provincial and national priorities affecting First Nation people in Ontario and to provide a unified voice on these issues.

About the Logo: The circle and the map represents the continuity, strength and harmony of the First Nations peoples of Ontario; the five feathers signify the four political organizations of the Chiefs of Ontario; the fifth feather represents the independent nations and First Nation peoples living off reserve, First Nations who are not forgotten. The overall symbol represents the continuance of the First Nations peoples of Ontario struggle for pride, culture, self-determination and spirituality.

Listed below are the former Ontario Regional Chiefs, from left to right: Grand Council Chief Pat Madahbee, Deputy Grand Chief Gord Peters, Angus Toulouse, Charles Fox, Chief Tom Bressette.

### Save the Date – Special Education Information Sharing Session



**Date: October 2 – 3, 2018**

**Location: Thunder Bay**

**Venue: Airline Hotel and Conference Centre**

Various presenters will share their knowledge on Trauma, Mental Health, and Drug related issues as it relates to learning and child development.

**Contact: [holly.golabek@coo.org](mailto:holly.golabek@coo.org)**

## Special Education and Education Transformation

In the spring of 2017 a national joint task team (includes federal and First Nation representatives) was struck to embark on the co-development of a Policy Proposal on Transforming First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education. This work was prompted by recommendations from a national joint task team on funding mechanisms that focused on addressing issues and concerns regarding federal funding provision for First Nations education. In December 2017 the co-developed Policy Proposal was accepted by the national Chiefs in Assembly at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly. The Policy Proposal was then included as an appendix to a federal Memorandum to Cabinet submitted in February 2018.

The Policy Proposal includes two main elements: 1) Regional First Nation Education Agreements and 2) an Interim Funding Approach. The Interim Funding Approach will be implemented in all First Nation communities in Ontario (except for those under the Anishinabek Education System) in April 2019 and will collapse much of the funding previously provided through proposal-based programs into a single allocation of core funding. The Interim Funding Approach for First Nations in Ontario is still being finalized and there are specific implications on the methodology for the distribution of special education funding.

The COO Chiefs in Assembly have mandated engagement with First Nation communities to provide information and obtain input that informs the finalization of the Interim Funding Approach in Ontario. Two community information/engagement sessions will be held in each community between now and the end of October. These sessions will include specific discussions on the preferred methodology for special education funding. Please contact COO Policy Analyst, Angel Maracle at [angel.maracle@coo.org](mailto:angel.maracle@coo.org) if you have any questions related to these information/engagement sessions in your community.

Niá:wen

Julia Candlish, Director of Education

Chiefs of Ontario



# Upcoming Special Education Information Sharing Sessions

The Education team at the Chiefs of Ontario are continuously planning future Special Education Sharing Forums. These sharing forums consist of a combination of keynote speakers, case studies, workshops, developments in research, and training sessions. These sessions are meant to leave education professionals with new found knowledge, skills, and tools that can be utilized in their workplace and community. Furthermore, the forums provide excellent opportunities for communities to network with other communities.

## 2018

### ***Trauma, Mental Health and Drug Related Issues***

Tuesday October 2 and Wednesday  
October 3, 2018

Airlane Hotel and Conference Centre  
698 Arthur St W, Thunder Bay, ON

#### ***Speakers will include:***

Dr. Brenda Restoule, Dr. Michael Kirlew,  
Dr. Mark Aquash, Dr. Teresa Naseba  
Marsh, Alison Benedict & Lisa Wabange  
(CAMH), Hayley Stinson (Child  
Development Institute ) and more.

acceptance  
empathy  
seek help  
awareness  
HELP understand  
care  
treatable  
listen  
SUPPORT

## 2019

January 2019 - Sault Ste. Marie (details TBA)

April 2019 - Toronto (details TBA)

For more information on workshops and speakers, and to provide suggestions for future forums please contact your Special Education Support Technician (SEST) or [holly.golabek@coo.org](mailto:holly.golabek@coo.org)

## Needs-Based Funding

### What is Needs-Based funding?

The needs-based process is an application-based process initially developed by the OFNSEWG (Ontario First Nation Special Education Working Group) to distribute part (approximately 25%) of the additional funding provided through the 2016-17 Federal Budget. This process provides an opportunity for recipients to identify targeted special-education needs that cannot be covered through the formula allocation. Additional funding is provided based on need and not all applications are guaranteed.

### What is the Needs-Based application process?

The first call for applications takes place in June to accommodate recipients planning and budget process for the upcoming school year. The second call for applications occurs in October. This application process provides an avenue for HCSEP recipients to apply for additional Special Education funding if required.

### Next application date

The next Needs-Based application due date is **October 19, 2018**. Confirmation of additional funding will be provided by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) approximately six weeks after the due date. For more information please contact Patrik Lowen at [patrik.lowen@coo.org](mailto:patrik.lowen@coo.org) or your local SEST.

Established in 2005, the OFNSEWG is a joint working group of the Chiefs of Ontario and Indigenous Services Canada (former INAC/ AANDC).

Ontario First Nation Special Education Working Group	
Name	Organization
Julia Candlish	Chiefs of Ontario
Dobi-Dawn Frenette	Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Murray Waboose	Union of Ontario Indians
Gina McGahey	Association of Iroquois Allied Indians
Yolanda Fobister	Grand Council Treaty #3
Jessica Keeshig-Martin	Independent First Nations
Shelley Knott-Fife	Indigenous Services Canada

# Special Education in the School



## Assessing students with possible special educational needs

Perceptions surrounding assessments can often vary depending on who you are speaking to. Parents can sometimes feel confused, intimidated or hesitant when it is suggested that their child could benefit from being assessed at school. Teachers often support assessment because it can give them a clearer picture of a student's strengths and needs.

## Why assess?

In special education the overall purpose of assessment is to gather information into a student's abilities, strengths, needs, and behaviors. The results of the assessment will help school staff make informed decisions as to what support services and instructional practices a student may benefit from.

## Role of parents

Assessment requires consent from parents or guardians and any effective assessment protocols will include parents throughout the whole process. Information from parents or guardians about their child is vital to the accuracy of any assessment. Normally teachers, SERTS, and/or a psychometrician will interview parents to gain insight about the child's behavior and development outside of school. Sometimes medical history can also assist in the assessment process.

## Types of assessments

Most assessments are done by the classroom teacher and typically include observations, student work, and information shared by parents, educational assistance, and resource staff. For some students the recommendation will be to conduct more formal testing such as a psychoeducational assessment (Psych-ed). This assessment will assess cognitive, behavioral and academic development of a child.

## Some issues surrounding formal assessments

A major criticism of standardized tests is that they are biased and discriminate against lower socio-economic groups and people from minority cultures. Also, these tests can be very lengthy and demanding for a child.

To overcome some of these issues it is recommended that information about a student is gathered from a variety of strategies and sources.

## Parental Information

### How can you as a parent or guardian be involved in your child's assessment ?

- ◆ **Talk** to your child to find out how they feel about school and how you can support them.
- ◆ **Communicate** any concerns regarding your child's progress at school.
- ◆ **Attend** all meetings regarding your child at school.
- ◆ **Check in** with your child's teacher regarding your child's progress from time to time.
- ◆ **Advise** your school of any strategies or programs that have been successful for your child in the past.
- ◆ **If necessary provide** the school with any relevant health information such as hearing or sight conditions.
- ◆ **Ask questions** Assessments can often be hard to understand so it is important for you as a parent to ask as many questions as you need . As a parent you should understand why your child is being assessed, what the results of the assessment means, and what support is being put in place to support your child.



### How will I know how my child is progressing?

There are many ways you as a parent or guardian should be informed of your child's progress by your child's school. For example, regular test results, report cards, and EQAO evaluations should be sent home. Perhaps the best way to be involved is to communicate regularly with teachers to discuss and review your child's progress.

# Community Stories

## Using visual supports allows all students to engage in the learning process



This past year, staff at **Hillside Elementary School in Kettle and Stony Point First Nation**

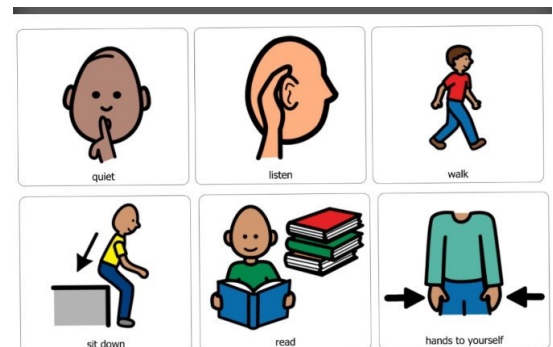
have expanded their use of picture (pic) symbols with positive results. Using visual supports has facilitated all students at Hillside School to actively participate in the learning process. Some students (including those with autism spectrum disorders, speech & language disorders, developmental disabilities and behavioural disorders) communicate more effectively with visual supports than with verbal information alone. Verbal information can overwhelm and even exasperate some people with certain exceptionalities, says Autism spokesperson and professor, Temple Grandin.

Visual supports are best tailored to each student's needs, stage of development, and learning goals. It is best to start with one pic and gradually build from there. Picture/word cards can be generated from software such as Boardmaker and created to be around 2" x 2" in size and then laminated. Apps such as Proloquo2Go can also be used on an iPad. To provide consistent reinforcement of the pic symbols and to accelerate the learning process, all the staff working with students using the system wear the pics on lanyard.

### Pic symbols can be used in any of the following ways:

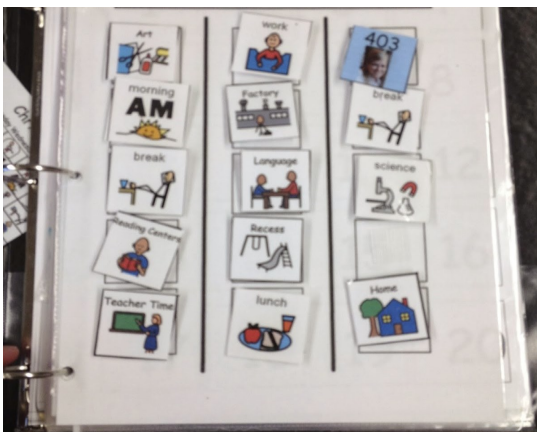
#### To communicate expectations/praise:

Basic pics can include: quiet, listen, sit down, look, hold hands, breathe, work, stop, good job, and keep hands to yourself. They are better stated positively (i.e. walk) rather than negatively (i.e. don't run down the hall).



#### Schedules:

Pics can detail what students will be doing and when they'll be doing it. Pics on velcro strips can be removed by the student as tasks are completed.



### First-then board:

Unappealing tasks can be paired with an incentive that will be given immediately after the task is completed. This is very motivating and can increase the chance of task completion.



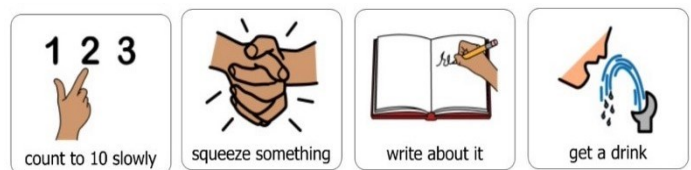
### Routines and task strips:

The sequence of steps in a task can be broken down to enable the student to learn something new.



### Feelings board:

Visual pics can assist a dysregulated student in regaining control of his/her emotions.



### Incentives:

Choice boards can include many activities that the student can choose as a reward for their appropriate behaviour/task completion.



### Power cards:

Power cards foster appropriate social interaction and decrease undesirable behaviours. They may include directions for a particular area of concern.



The challenge to staff is to point to a picture without verbal discourse. It is then that one realizes how much they do talk! However, it is surprising how fast a student can learn to rely on the visual supports for direction. One of the greatest advantages of the pic system is that students become less reliant on staff and more independent. Although they are designed to support students with exceptionalities, visual supports improve communication skills and benefit all students in the class.

## Community Stories

### Special education in a language immersion setting

Located in Six Nations of the Grand River Territory the Kawenni:io/Gaweni:yo School has been operating since 1996 as a language immersion K-12 school. Through language and culture the school is committed to educating the whole child. The children are taught all subjects in Cayuga and Mohawk languages with a belief that all students can learn. To support the learning for all students including special education students the Kawenni:io/Gaweni:yo school utilize iPads, interactive SMARTboards, Can-8 language mini-computer labs, etc.



Despite the many successes at the school the implementation of special education programming in an immersion setting can be challenging. Principal Linda I. Staats says that there are challenges when it comes to incorporating special education support and services into a language immersion school. For example, obtaining qualified and experienced staff for special education support that are both able to speak the language and deliver special education services can be very challenging. As an immersion school this can to a certain extent be addressed by building internal capacity but special education services often also rely on second level service providers who do not speak the native language. Furthermore, assessment and provincial special education guidelines are based on the English or French language.

To overcome many systematic challenges that exist; the Kawenni:io/Gaweni:yo School is fortunate to be supported by a caring community, involved parents, and an exceptional staff. The school and its staff do their best to navigate language barriers that exist in special education, keeping in mind that one of the main goals is for their students to develop an understanding of self through the learning of Onkwéhon:we Language and Culture.



## Resources and Tools

### The Looksee Checklist : A Child Development Developmental Screening Tool

“All of our children have gifts and strengths and all of them can reach their developmental potential.” This belief was the starting point for the Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS), a non-profit organization now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year of helping children, parents and caregivers in Ontario and worldwide.

Recognizing that learning is life-long and begins in infancy, a group of dedicated early childhood specialists created an easy-to-use tool to assist parents and caregivers to monitor their child’s development from 1 month to 6 years. It can help identify strengths and areas for follow-up which can be useful when visiting the doctor or other professionals. The tool has recently been rebranded as Looksee Checklist and is a series of simple “yes” and “no” questions about the child’s abilities, based on skills that are typically seen at the given age, and includes tips to help them grow and ideas for fun activities for parents and children to do together. This is an informal checklist therefore examples can be used from the family’s everyday experiences allowing for cultural sensitivity.



The Looksee Checklist is available free to all residents of Ontario under a licensing agreement with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. In addition, NDDS has been working with First Nation communities across Canada for many years and more recently with the Jordan’s Principle initiatives to ensure that this valuable tool is more widely accessible. In addition to the tool itself, NDDS provides training to community members such as parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, healthcare professionals and others who work with or care for children.

All are encouraged to visit the newly-designed, user-friendly website [lookseechecklist.com](http://lookseechecklist.com) or contact NDDS by phone at 1 888-582-0944



Our Special Education Sharing Forums have been well received and there have been consistent requests for these to continue. To date we have covered *Policy and Administration, Behaviour and Exceptionalities, and Trauma, Mental Health, Drug related issues.*

We are currently looking for suggestions and recommendations for future Special Education Sharing Information Forums and future Webinars . Do you have an idea you want to share? Is there a practitioner or expert you would recommend? Is there a specific topic or theme that you would like to see featured ?

Please send these recommendations to Patrik Lowen at [patrik.lowen@coo.org](mailto:patrik.lowen@coo.org)

## Coming Soon!

To further build capacity and share knowledge and expertise among communities we are pleased to offer **webinars free of charge** through out the year.

### **How we are using Jordan's Principal at our school to support students**

**Karen Cox-Gurdon, SERT at Big Grassy River First Nation**

October 2018 : The exact date and time will be emailed out to all recipients once it is confirmed.



# Resources

You can find many great resources on our [Education Portal](http://education.chiefs-of-ontario.org) <http://education.chiefs-of-ontario.org>



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## HCSEP

### High Cost Special Education Program (HCSEP)

The contribution funding authority for the HCSEP funding has now been changed by INAC from "Set" to "Fixed" effective 2016/2017 fiscal. The Fixed Contribution funding approach enables recipients to retain any unexpended funding balances.

Should you have any questions regarding this change please contact Shelley Knott-Fife (INAC Senior Education Officer) at 705-768-3547 or [Shelley.KnottFife@aadnc.gc.ca](mailto:Shelley.KnottFife@aadnc.gc.ca) or your INAC Senior Funding Services Officer.

[Read more](#)

### Resource Bank

A repository of information on First Nations pedagogy, curriculum, language, culture and more

### Interactive Maps

An interactive tool rich in information about schools and programs in First Nations Education in Ontario

### Member Forums

Ask questions and engage in discussions about topics that matter to you in First Nations Education



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## Special Education

[ISC HCSEP National Program Guidelines](#)

[Special Education Newsletters](#)

[Special Education Webinars](#)

Psychoeducational Assessment Presentation - (Wednesday May 9, 2018) Karen Cox-Gurdon and Samantha Stouffer

Jordan's Principle and Special Education - Date TBD November 2018

SERT-Classroom Teacher Relationships - Date TBD February 2019

**Special Education Sharing Forum**

October 2 - 3, 2018 - Thunder Bay, Airlane Hotel and Conference Centre

**Special Education Documents**

HCSEP Toolkit 2018

Special Education Position Paper 2017

Letter HCSEP Needs-Based Process 2018-19

HCSEP Needs-Based Application Process 2018-19

ISC HCSEP National Program Guidelines

Full Guidebook- Education Services (Tuition) Agreement

Charting our Own Path Forward: Preliminary Analysis of the HCSEP - 2015

Ontario First Nations use an intervention-based approach to high cost Special Education, whereby funding is determined by formula. A benefit of this approach is that formal assessments are not required before intervention strategies are introduced.

### Priorities

- [Charting Our Own Path Forward](#)
- [Early Learning](#)
- [First Nation Lifelong Learning](#)
- [K-12 Education](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Post Secondary Education](#)
- [OSAP](#)
- [Special Education](#)
- [National Joint Collaboration](#)

# The Special Education Technicians

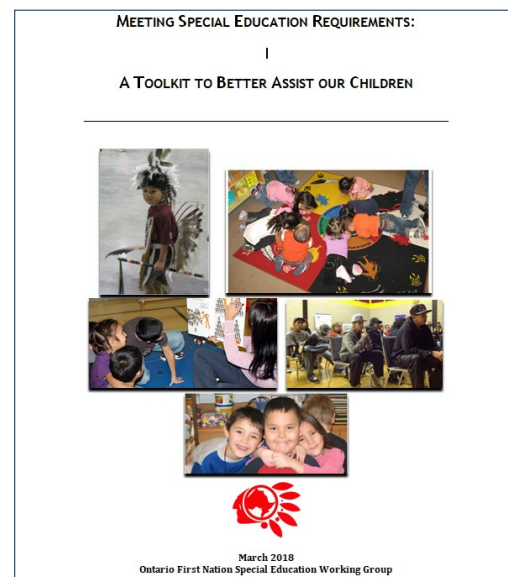
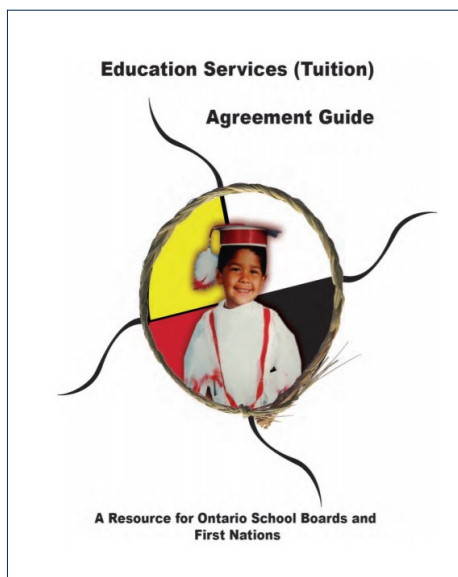
## What is a Special Education Support Technician (SEST)?

There are four SESTs providing support to the First Nations in Ontario. They are based out of the Kenora, Thunder Bay, Central and Southern parts of Ontario. The SEST positions resulted from an All Ontario Chiefs Resolution in 2016 when the High Cost Special Education Program (HCSEP) received a funding increase. The role of the SEST is to support and assist First Nations with:

- effective use of HCSEP funding;
- understanding and addressing capacity issues around special education;
- collection and analysis of information related to improving the First Nations special education programs;
- liaise and strengthen relationships with First Nations, Tribal Councils, Chiefs of Ontario and other organizations;
- identifying and addressing barriers and challenges in the delivery of special education services.

## Who we are

The Chiefs of Ontario is a political forum and secretariat for collective decision-making, action, and advocacy for the 133 First Nations communities located in Ontario. Guided by the Chiefs in Assembly, we uphold self-determination efforts of the Anishinaabek, Mushkegowuk, Onkwehon:we, and Lenape Peoples in protecting and exercising their inherent and Treaty Rights. Keeping in mind the wisdom of our Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, and the future for our youth, we continue to create the path forward in building our Nations as strong, healthy Peoples respectful of ourselves, each other, and all creation.



# Special Education Support Technicians



**Southern Ontario Region:**  
Patrik Lowen  
[patrik.lowen@coo.org](mailto:patrik.lowen@coo.org)



**Kenora Region:**  
Vincent Ostberg  
[vincent.ostberg@coo.org](mailto:vincent.ostberg@coo.org)

## Positions currently vacant

Thunder Bay Region  
Sudbury Region





**Contact:**

**Chiefs of Ontario**

**468 Queen Street East, Suite 400**

**Toronto, ON M5A 1T7**

**Toll Free: 1-877-517-6527**

**Phone: 1-416-597-1266**

**Political Office Location**

**236 Frontenac Street**

**Batchewana First Nation, ON P6A 6Z1**