

Our Gifted Children

Kiiniwi Miini-goowizjik Binoojiinhyik



Welcome Message

On behalf of the Chiefs of Ontario Education Team, I would like to extend a warm welcome and greetings to everyone as we begin a new year - 2018. We are excited and looking forward to seeing what 2018 will bring us.

Since the additional federal investments for High-Cost Special Education were announced in 2016, communities have seen significant increases in their special education budgets as well as an opportunity to apply for additional needs-based funding. With the new monies in 2016, we were able to hire four (4) Special Education Support Technicians who have been busy over the past year supporting First Nation communities and organizations in the effective use of High-Cost Special Education Program (HCSEP) funding.

In the upcoming year, our communities and organizations will see more changes in education funding as a result of the co-developed Memorandum to Cabinet on Education Funding. The resulting Interim Funding Approach will come into effect in fiscal 2019/20 and will result in increased funding levels and increased First Nation control over education funding. COO is committed to providing timely communication as the provision of special education funding is modernized through the Interim Funding Approach.

Many of our communities and organizations continue to face challenges due to their geographic location, high staff turnover, lack of access to professional services, teacher recruitment and retention and unique funding needs, to name a few. We believe that by working together, we will conquer these challenges and continue to build education capacities in our communities and organizations that ensure the unique needs of our learners are met.

Niá:wen

Julia Candlish, Director of Education
Chiefs of Ontario

High-Cost Highlights



Information Sharing Sessions Feedback



Special Education in School: Parental Information Placement Options



Community Success Stories

Naming Contest:

The **WINNER** of the Spec-Ed Quarterly Newsletter Naming Competition is:

The Lloyd S. King Elementary School from the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation



In the picture: Anishinaabewowin teacher James Shawana, SEST Patrik Lowen, Principal H. Danielle MacDonnell and students Hayden B. and Dante K.

The name that was chosen is **Kiiniwi Miini-goowizjik Binoojiinhyik** (in Anishinaabemowin) which means **Our Gifted Children**.

According to the Principal, Mrs. MacDonnell, the rationale behind the name is that all children are given to us with gifts. Mrs. MacDonnell strongly believes that as "educators we are responsible to assist children in recognizing their gifts and helping to nurture the development of those gifts." Kiiniwi Miini-goowizjik Binoojiinhyik is an asset-based perspective rather than deficit-based perspective that reflects the idea that all children are capable of learning and thriving.

To respect and acknowledge the various languages that exist across Ontario we will rotate the name in the different languages throughout the year.

High-Cost Highlights:

Information Sharing Forums

What we covered

Our Information Sharing Forum this past school year focused on three major themes within Special Education for First Nations. These were Mental Health and Drug-Related Issues (Toronto), Policies and Administrations (Timmins), and Behaviour and Exceptionalities (Thunder Bay). By focusing on these three areas, our Special Education team hoped to cover the complexity of special education and the multiple factors affecting First Nation students' learning.

We began with Mental Health and Drug-Related Issues, which took place in Toronto. With a packed schedule, we explored CAMH's Child-Adult Relationship Enhancing workshop, expertise in behavior management. The Policy and Administration session in Timmins provided information on student data collected by the province, an overview of gaps in Special Education, and criteria for an improved strategies for special needs, special education, and school board based relationships.

Finally, our Behaviour and Exceptionalities session was held in Thunder Bay. Here we had an opportunity to explore real case studies of young children living with different needs and classified with exceptionalities. We also looked at spec and language therapies, addressed the needs and complexities of Autism, and share practical strategies in many of these areas. All the presentation materials that presenters have had the approval to share are available on the COO Education portal <http://education.chiefs-of-ontario.org/events>

Information Sharing Forum evaluations - Your feedback

Mental Health and Drug Related Issues:

Many have articulated that these resources assist in advocating for the needs of children and families. However, there was a strong desire for more support specific to dealing with drug-related issues. A high number of requests for another session with this theme to access similar supports and training regarding drug-related issues, along with more time to delve deeper into the information being shared by facilitators.

Policy and Administration:

The development of a special education policy and strategy received strong approval. Although one of the workshops focused on Education Service Agreements, there still exists a need for more information and support regarding ESAs. Bridging the transition from high-school to post-secondary for students with high-

needs was an identified area for further exploration.

Behaviour and Exceptionalities:

Some considered this session to be the strongest one out of the three! Much of this was due to a sense of participants having felt they connected strongly with other practitioners and other workers. By this point, our "cohort" for the 2017-18 year had met for the third time. Much of the information was practical and provided hands-on strategies. A strong need for additional information, resources, and strategies for drug-related issues was raised here again. Some differentiation between age groups (junior, intermediate, high school) was also noted. A strong recommendation we gathered from this session is ensuring that culturally based approaches are reflected in the knowledge and strategies.

Coming Next

Since our information have been so well received, and there have been consistent requests for these to continue, the Special Education team at the Chiefs of Ontario are currently taking steps to plan our set of information Sharing Forums! We also have the opportunity to delve a little deeper into individual topics of interest through webinars.

We are looking for suggestions and recommendations for both the Information Forums and webinars. Have an idea you want to share? Is there a practitioner or expert you would recommend?

Send these recommendations along to your regional Special Education technician!

Save the Date - Special Education Information Sharing Forum



Dates: October 2nd & 3rd, 2018

Location: Airline Hotel & Conference Centre, Thunder Bay, ON

Topic: Trauma, Mental Health, and Drug Related Issues

For more information please contact: holly.golabek@coo.org

Parental Information:

How parents can help their child in school



- ◆ Communicate with your child. Ask how the day was, what he or she is learning in school, how you can help etc. By asking questions, children feel like you care and are engaged in their education.
- ◆ Communicate with the school. Participate in school events, visit or call the school. Keep notes and records that may be relevant to your child's development and schooling.
- ◆ Ask questions. Schools often use jargons and terminology that is difficult to understand so do not be afraid to ask for clarification or an explanation. Often you can ask for support from the band education staff regarding your child's education.
- ◆ Be supportive. In all likelihood, both the home and the school want what is best for your child so being supportive of both your child and the school typically works the best.
- ◆ Create a vision. Talk to your child about his or her future dreams and aspirations. Even at a young age, it is important for a child to have goals and dreams to work towards.

Bennett, S., Weber, K. J., & Dworet, D. (2013). Special education in Ontario schools. Toronto: Highland Press.

Special Education in the school:

The range of placement options

In the previous newsletter, we described the general process that takes place from a referral to an IEP. We will now focus on the different levels and implementation options of support that a student with an IEP can receive.

Schools in Ontario work under the premise that inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom is often the best option. In most cases, students with exceptionalities are supported in an "indirect" manner which means that the student's classroom teacher is the one supporting the student through accommodations or modifications. Students may also receive support from a Special Education teacher in the classroom or through withdrawal assistance. As well, some students will receive the partial or full support of an Educational Assistant/Teacher Assistant.

A small number of students may also be placed into a partially integrated classroom where they will work, in addition to spending time in their regular classroom, in alternate classroom settings with students that have similar identified special needs.

Finally, special dedicated purpose schools or demonstration schools are available to service students that are blind or blind/deaf, have severe learning disabilities or are in care, treatment, or custody facilities (Section 23 Schools).

Community collaboration aimed at sharing knowledge and building capacity

Focus exceptionality: Autism Spectrum Disorder

It is reported that 1 in 94 children is diagnosed with ASD in Canada. However, the numbers are believed to be greater among First Nations children. The average classroom has a wide variety of strengths and needs that the classroom teacher and support staff need to account for when planning and delivering lessons. It is therefore crucial that working in a unique First Nations context; educators are particularly prepared to support the diverse needs of their students.

Supporting Students with ASD

- ✓ *Be Proactive*
- ✓ *Be Prepared and Planned*
- ✓ *Be Patient*
- ✓ *Praise Positive Behavior*
- ✓ *Adapt Programming*
- ✓ *Provide a caring and safe classroom environment*
- ✓ *Interact with Parents for Support*

In collaboration with Autism Ontario and Wasauksing Kinimaugewgamik Elementary School, Chiefs of Ontario organized a day of professional development in the spirit of learning to support students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Students with ASD can experience particular difficulties in verbal communication, behaviour, or social interactions. However, since ASD is a spectrum disorder, the challenges can vary significantly from one individual to another individual.

In an effort to service as many communities and schools as possible, participants from neighbouring First Nations were invited to participate in the professional development. 40 educators from 8 different First Nation communities actively engaged in the learning. Jamie Read from Autism Ontario delivered a presentation that focused on the basics of ASD aimed at giving participants a good basic understanding of ASD. Kayla Raaflaub from HANDS concentrates on the intricacies of understanding and working with challenging behaviours in the classroom. Finally, Kenny Robertson from Four Directions Autism informed the audience of the challenges and obstacles that Indigenous children with ASD face in Canada and the work he is doing to advocate for these children.

Chiefs of Ontario and Autism Ontario is looking at the possibility of bringing this professional development model to other areas of Ontario.

Community Stories

KATTAWAPISKAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION

Submitted by Irene Yumul, Special Education Resource Teacher

The Kattawapiskak Elementary School accommodates up to 540 or more students from Kindergarten to grade 8. In 2016, Irene Yumul became the Special Education Resource Teacher at KES. Some of the special education projects at KES include:

Online speech and language therapy: We have 42 students supported by online speech and language therapy. Assessments were made during the school year 2016-2017, from early learning division up to grade 8. Because of our remote location, from time to time, we face many challenges with internet connectivity; however, the children benefit from having one-on-one time with the therapists.

Autism and sensory room: The autism room is a classroom used by the special education teacher and tutor escort and is a place where they can work one on one quietly with the students, away from distractions. This quiet area also provides an opportunity for students to learn social skills with other high needs students. The sensory room is available on an as-needed basis for all students and is a supervised respite room where we can safely and quietly calm the students down, etc.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Classroom: One of our big projects this past year is the establishment of a Deaf /Hard of Hearing Classroom for the local students who are deaf or hard of hearing. We have two local staff members who are familiar with basic ASL (American Sign Language) and can communicate with our students at a basic ASL level. We are currently working with staff and educators from the E.C Drury School in Milton and Sir James Whitney in Belleville School for the deaf. We are in the process of establishing a virtual classroom for our students so that they have access to lessons and activities that are available to students in those schools. Internet infrastructure continues to be an issue in First Nations communities, so we will try to get around that by using Google drive as a storage place for the lessons, and also mailing the lessons contained in a memory key.





KEEWAYTINOOK OKIMAKANAK BOARD OF EDUCATION

Partnering to provide collective services to community elementary schools

Submitted by Jill Woolley, KOBE Special Education Consultant

Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education (KOBE), located in northwestern Ontario, has been working toward providing centralized and communal Special Education services for students in the five Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) communities. Previously, the elementary schools in Deer Lake, Fort Severn, Keewaywin, North Spirit Lake and Poplar Hill First Nations had to seek separate special education service contracts.

“We are trying to develop a holistic approach in the communities,” says KOBE Director of Education Darrin Potter. He adds the Board values partnerships and has been working with other KO departments and outside organizations for the benefit of the students and staff.

At the beginning of the school year, each school allocates a portion of their High-Cost Special Education funding to a contract with KOBE which covers several year-long services.

Speech-Language Services

During the 2016-2017 school year, KOBE hired a Speech-Language Pathologist and two Communicative Disorders Assistants. This team offers daily speech therapy to students using video conferencing technologies. Speech-Language staff also travel to the communities to complete assessments and provide training to school staff.

Student Assessments

Continuing in the 2017-2018 school year, KOBE has contracted the services of Dr. Todd Cunningham and his team to provide cognitive assessments, diagnostic services and individual plans of treatment. Student needs are prioritized at the school level, and assessments are administered in person at each school. These reports are essential for the identification of cognitive abilities, learning disabilities and for providing referrals to medical services that are required by schools for High-Cost Special Education funding.

This year, the contract also includes post-assessment work with teachers and parents. “Videoconferences are provided to work on the student’s plan. There is back-and-forth communication so that everyone is continually working together to meet each student’s goals,” says KOBE Student Assessment Lead Stephanie Mushinski who coordinates the delivery of this service to each community.



Darrin Potter, Director Of Education

Early Childhood Development Screenings

Beginning this school year, KOBE is building on the relationship with Dr. Cunningham to extend services to preschool-aged children. Each community has allocated funding accessed through Jordan's Principle to have assessments completed during community visits.

"We are working with Health Services and Early Education programs. We want to get students prepared for their entry to school," says Potter.

The efforts of KOBE on behalf of the KO schools eliminate the requirement for each school to search out services, allow for centralized planning and offer consistent delivery.

For further information on these initiatives, please contact Stephanie Mushinski at 1-800-387-3740 ext. 4613 or stephaniemushinski@edu.knet.ca.



Atikameksheng Anishnawbek:

Raising spirits and building healthy relationships

Atikameksheng Anishnawbek is helping to develop a positive work ethic with their learners, along with setting up accountability measures, to determine their life paths, goals and future endeavours. This begins with having supportive staff. Starting in late January 2017 Tim Saikkonen was hired on as the Education Support Worker and has

opened doors by building relationships with many schools and students. He started a Life Skills based program and made tutoring accessible to many students.

In April 2017 Jessie Gorman was hired on as the second Education Support Worker to work alongside with Tim. Together as a team, they schedule weekly visits to the five provincial schools which our elementary and secondary students attend; totalling 78 students. During these visits, they also participate in school functions, field trips and have been invited by the schools to attend Parent Teacher Interviews. Also, they participate in weekly student progress meetings with the school's resource staff, various teachers and Principals.

Currently, there are 25 students actively involved with tutoring and a handful of students who are doing their High School volunteer hours through the Special Education program. This experience provides them with the opportunity to gain work skills in planning and preparation of activities.

The primary role of the Education Support Workers is to support students identified with special learning needs. Their activities are based on a mixture of cultural and mainstream programming which are offered through workshops and/or presentations. In providing a variety of programs, they anticipate this will assist in uplifting the students' minds, improving self-esteem and well-being.



Aidan MacNeil - Best attendance award

The Spec-Ed 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.

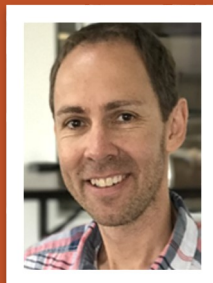
Who we are

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.

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