

Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin

Everyone working together to raise our children

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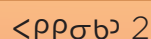
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כאן רב יצחק טייטלבוים

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Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin Newsletter

Everyone working together to raise our children

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- Tikinagan marks pride month with new initiatives
- Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin model sees Tikinagan through pandemic
- Tikinagan events



Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin is the Tikinagan service model. In Ojibway/Oji-Cree, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin means, “Everyone working together to raise our children.” It is a system of protecting and caring for children and supporting families that has been designed and is delivered by First Nations people.

The Creator entrusted First Nations with the sacred responsibility of protecting our children and developing strong families and healthy communities. The Chiefs created Tikinagan to support and strengthen our children, our families, and our communities. The future of our communities is our children.

Everyone needs a time to be recognized and celebrated, and for children and youth in the care of Tikinagan Child & Family Services, the upcoming Honouring Our Children Day is one of those special days.

The day was started in 2010 as a way to honour children in care across the 30 Northwestern Ontario First Nations the agency serves, usually at the end of the school year. Since then, it's grown into an annual event celebrated a little bit differently in each community.

“Kids need to be celebrated and honoured from time to time, especially those who are in care and away from their families,” she says. “They need to see there is a caring, supportive community standing with them and cheering them on.”

This year, many communities are using Honouring Our Children Day as a way to honour the 215 children found buried in



unmarked graves at a former Residential School site in Kamloops, BC earlier this month. Some communities choose to wait and celebrate it along with their fall feasts, while others make it part of a long list of Canada Day events.

Children and families living in urban areas served by Tikinagan, such as Thunder Bay and Sioux Lookout, also join in the fun. In previous years, that has included bouncy castles and barbecues.

“The kids would be lining up all day,” said Morris. “The joy on the kids’ faces makes it worth it.”

Celebrations will be different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, Tikinagan continued to bring awareness to the day with a virtual message campaign, featuring guest speakers including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Ontario Regional Chief Roseann Archibald, and even former NHLers.

The videos were widely viewed and shared, drawing excitement about the day among

communities and staff.

“It was amazing to see the local, provincial and national participation,” says Morris.

With public health measures still in place, it will be up to communities to select a date to celebrate Honouring Our Children Day and how they want to mark the occasion.

The month of June brings another important date, National Indigenous Peoples Day, which provides Canadians the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the unique culture, traditions, and history of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples on June 21.

The work of honouring children in care along with Indigenous history and culture happens every day at Tikinagan, says Morris, but the special occasions offer a chance to reinforce those values.

“The month of June is an opportunity for everyone to acknowledge the historical contributions of our peoples, the strength and resilience they show today, and the hope we have for our children, families, and communities to healthy,” she said.

“Many of our values at Tikinagan are reinforced in Honouring Our Children and National Indigenous Peoples Day. Our elders share the history of our communities and the roots of our culture, providing us wisdom, guidance, direction and encouragement.”

MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BECOME A FOSTER PARENT

We need caring Indigenous Foster Homes and Foster Parents in the Thunder Bay district to care for children. We are looking for people who support Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, the Tikinagan service model.





Tikinagan marks pride month with new initiatives

Honouring and supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ community is a natural extension of Tikinagan Child and Family Services' motivating philosophy, the organization says as it marks pride month.

"In the spirit of Mamow Obiki-ahwashsoowin, 'everyone working together to raise our children,' Tikinagan strives to be a diverse and inclusive organization that supports equality and is committed to fostering a supportive environment for all," said associate executive director Rachel Tinney.

Tinney sits on Tikinagan's recently formed 2SLGBTQ+ committee, one piece of what the organization calls a growing effort to uplift 2SLGBTQ+ children, staff, and parents.

"Prior to COVID-19, we were running frequent 2SLGBTQ+ trainings for staff and foster parents," she said. "We think it's important the adults in the lives of our children and youth are providing effective, affirming, and equitable services for diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions."

The agency, which serves over 30 First Nations throughout Northwestern Ontario, is also developing a resource to provide information about 2SLGBTQ+ definitions, rights, frequently asked questions, and more.

The 2SLGBTQ+ committee, which meets bi-weekly, has launched an internal staff survey, created an inclusion statement for Tikinagan, and held and supported pride month events.

It also designed shirts for staff and children and youth in care to mark pride month this year. "We affirm the rights of all our First Nations children and youth to their identity, expression, and sexual orientation," Tinney said.

It's all part of an operating philosophy that attempts to transform traditional child service models, according to Tinney.

"Our agency is rooted in the fundamental value of respect," she said. "We have respect for all creation and we are grateful for the gifts that we are blessed with every day... This respect is demonstrated through humility, a non-judgmental attitude, effective listening, clear communication, and recognition of the unique strengths of others."



Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin model sees Tikinagan through pandemic



A guiding philosophy based in community collaboration has helped Tikinagan Child and Family Services continue to grow during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Following Tikinagan’s Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin model, we used the wisdom, guidance, teachings, and direction our communities and Elders to help move forward together in these unprecedented times,” said executive director Thelma Morris.

The Ojibway/Oji-Cree phrase means “everyone working together to raise our children,” a value reflected in Tikinagan’s dual-mandate approach to child welfare.

Tikinagan is accountable to chiefs of the 30 First Nations it serves to provide services that are culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous children, families and communities. Created as one of the first Indigenous-led child welfare agencies in 1984, Tikinagan is one of 53 children’s aid societies mandated under Ontario’s Child, Youth and Family Services Act to protect children from harm.

The service model is now described in detail in a set of comprehensive service manuals, including service standards and policies, and case management procedures and forms.

“Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin is designed to respect the inherent authority of First Nations to care for our own children,” according to the agency. “It acknowledges that our First Nation mandate supersedes provincial legislation and that our ultimate goal is the pursuit of complete First Nation jurisdiction over our own child welfare services.”

“Until this goal is achieved, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin services are designed to be culturally appropriate and meet the needs of our First Nations and provincial legislation, regulations and standards.”

In practice, the Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin model means emphasizing multi-generational connections through Wee-chee-way-win Circles, supporting connection to traditional languages, and providing care through community-based workers, who often live in the communities they serve.

Workers collaborate with community representatives on client files to determine their needs and how to meet them while aligning with family and community values.





“We seek to maintain a child’s connection to their community, culture, and family,” says Tikinagan’s board chair Lorraine Crane. “This is important for our people because this is our history and our way of living. Childcare law was knowledge passed down.”

It’s a philosophy that served the agency well as it moved to adapt to the pandemic, with community-based staff becoming more essential than ever to maintain service delivery in its communities.

That now also includes Thunder Bay, with Tikinagan serving children and families from its 30 First Nations residing in the city.

They look at aspects such as language, religion, values, and time spent previously with the prospective foster parent, seeking to cause as little disruption as possible in the life of the child while keeping them close to their community and culture.

The expansion into Thunder Bay continued during pandemic, with children and families beginning to be transferred from other agencies, and the hiring of new staff and establishment of new office space in the city.

Tikinagan Events | Important Dates



September 30 – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Honour survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

October 27 – Dress Purple Day. Raise awareness about the important role that individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families.

Be in the know!

For more information, career opportunities, or to become a Foster Parent, visit [tikinagan.org](https://www.tikinagan.org). Follow us on Facebook @Tikinagan, Instagram @Tikinagancfs and on Youtube.

