

**OFIFC**

Ontario Federation of  
Indigenous Friendship Centres

# Connecting for the Dream:

Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound  
Program Evaluation



April 2019

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## About the OFIFC

Founded in 1971, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) works to support, advocate for, and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario.

Emerging from a nation-wide, grass-roots movement dating back to the 1950's, Friendship Centres are community hubs where Indigenous people living in towns, cities, and urban centres can access culturally-based and culturally-appropriate programs and services every day. Today, Friendship Centres are dynamic hubs of economic and social convergence that create space for Indigenous communities to thrive. Friendship Centres are idea incubators for young Indigenous people attaining their education and employment goals, they are sites of cultural resurgence for

Indigenous families who want to raise their children to be proud of who they are, and they are safe havens for Indigenous community members requiring supports.

In Ontario more than 85 per cent of Indigenous people live in urban communities. The OFIFC is the largest urban Indigenous service network in the province supporting this vibrant, diverse, and quickly-growing population through programs and initiatives that span justice, health, family support, long-term care, healing and wellness, employment and training, education, research, and more.

Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities, and they are inclusive of all Indigenous people - First Nation, Status/Non-Status, Métis, Inuit, and those who self-identify as Indigenous from Turtle Island.

# Learn more about the work the OFIFC does to support Friendship Centres at [www.ofifc.org](http://www.ofifc.org)



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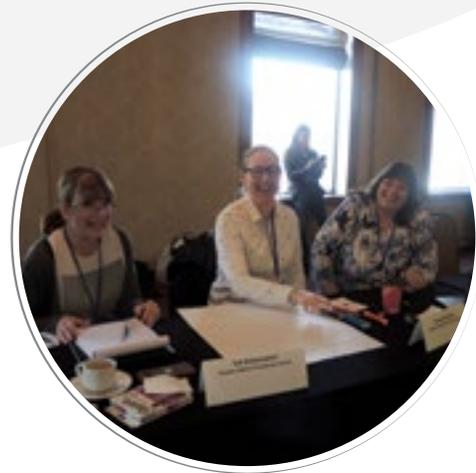
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## About the Cover

The strawberry is one of the first medicines to make themselves available to us each year. They begin their life cycle by blossoming tiny, delicate flowers hidden amongst the broad leaves. These are the infants and young children; the excitement, potential, innocence, and beauty.

To see the strawberry in its youth, is to see the familiarity of those strawberry traits and the essence of what makes a strawberry a strawberry. However, there is still much growing to do. As they develop they begin to embody their potential and show their vibrancy to the world. As this is true for strawberries, it is true for our youth; it is important that we role model what vibrancy looks like and nurture their gifts.

Finally, the adult strawberry is ripe. She has carried with her the seeds for future generations. She has shown her resiliency, retained her sweetness, and brought joy with her spirit.

This illustration depicts the life cycle of strawberries. It may be interpreted as the personal development journey we undertake in our lives or as a family of strawberries with a parent, a youth, and a small child. Regardless of the aforementioned interpretation, the broad leaves are representative of the influence, inspiration, and impact of community. Communities are the protective and enabling forces that help us grow and thrive in the physical, mental, and spiritual realms. Strawberry plants, though appearing on the surface as individual plants, are all connected by tendrils. They are an interconnected community. Women often assume the role of maintaining connection of the community. A strong community raises a strong woman, and a strong woman maintains a strong community.



# Impact Statements

***“I felt so stuck and this program gave me the confidence to get out of a dark place I once was in.”*** - UIHB program participant

***“This program is the light in my life.”***  
- UIHB program participant

***“The program has changed my life.”*** - UIHB program participant

***“UIHB is helping me to fulfill my dreams.”*** - UIHB program participant

***“This program saved me.”*** - UIHB program participant



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# Executive Summary and Overview of Recommendations



The Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program (UIHB) is an innovative initiative that aims to tackle the complex and multiple barriers faced by sole-parent Indigenous women when trying to find meaningful employment, enhanced wellbeing, and prosperity for themselves and their children. UIHB follows a four-year program delivery model founded on the provision of key supports such as housing, access to culture, childcare, education and life-skills, transportation, case coordination, health access, and mental health supports. UIHB is currently being developed and implemented in seven Friendship Centre communities across Ontario.

Key findings of this evaluation highlight how the UIHB program is an innovative model of social program service delivery in urban Indigenous communities. This evaluation demonstrates that wholistic, wraparound supports are critical to meeting the needs of sole-parent Indigenous women and supporting education to employment transitions. Although it is too early to make assertions about economic outcomes of Indigenous women in this program, early findings show that the clear majority of participants have had life-changing experiences and have taken great strides toward their employment and broader life goals. Friendship Centres have been highly

successful in implementing this program because of their long history administering wholistic, culture-based programming and services in urban Indigenous communities. The UIHB has been instrumental in formalising local networks of support and partnerships with key stakeholders that efficiently and effectively meet the needs of Indigenous single mothers through coordination of services and navigation of community resources.

The evaluation of the UIHB Program is grounded in the principles of the USAI Research framework of *Utility, Self-voicing, Access, Inter-relationality* (USAI, 2016). The UIHB evaluation consists of a *process* evaluation. The value of conducting a process evaluation is for the OFIFC and participating Friendship Centres to assess the implementation of the program in each community and to learn what components of the program are working well and what elements of the program might require revision and/or adaptation unique to community context.

The evaluation of UIHB has demonstrated that the following recommendations may result in added value to the experience and outcomes for program participants, the urban Indigenous community at large, and other stakeholders.

1. Multi-year, sustainable funding is committed by all levels of government in order to strengthen the UIHB program model and Community of Practice, in recognition of the successes the program has demonstrated the need to act upon the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action #7:
  - "We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."
2. Employment and Skills Development Canada (ESDC) structures its innovation program to adequately support project continuity and advance innovation initiatives that demonstrate successes.
  - To support UIHB beyond its implementation phase, ESDC should coordinate on sustainability opportunities through Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) programming.
3. The federal government co-develops a national urban Indigenous housing strategy with urban Indigenous housing and related service providers that is resourced to support implementation of innovative housing initiatives in addition to addressing the expiry of operating agreements and existing capital repair backlog.
4. Resourcing to address urban Indigenous housing and homelessness should proportionally reflect known rates of urban Indigenous homelessness and housing inadequacy.
5. All levels of government and regional service delivery partners support the enhancement and further development of the UIHB program as a response to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls as it is demonstrating positive impacts in the lives of individuals who have experienced violence.
6. National and provincial health agencies commit dedicated health funding toward UIHB, recognising the program's direct impact on improved social determinants of health for Indigenous women and the health, mental health, and addictions supports required of UIHB participants.
7. The provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities work with UIHB-affiliated post-secondary institutions to establish a framework through which institutions can easily support Ontario colleges in sponsoring tuition for UIHB participants.
8. All levels of government work with the OFIFC to establish a network of Indigenous controlled post-secondary education (PSE) programming that is responsive to local community priorities, lands, knowledges, and traditions in urban Indigenous communities across Ontario.

9. All levels of government work with OFIFC to create and support Indigenous child care and child and family programming that is responsive to local communities, lands, knowledges, and traditions in urban communities across Ontario.



# Program Background



The visioning process for UIHB began in 2012 when the OFIFC recognised alignment between WoodGreen Community Services' (WCS) Homeward Bound (HB) program model and the wraparound, culture-based services delivered by Friendship Centres across Ontario. OFIFC and WCS embarked on a years-long process of relationship building, developing an understanding of the unique context of Friendship Centres and the potential relevance of the mainstream Homeward Bound program if adapted to local Indigenous contexts.

Initial partnership activities included a three-year UIHB Feasibility Project which culminated in the development of the UIHB Continuum, a culturally and contextually adapted Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound program model (Appendix A).

Six Friendship Centres were a part of this process; Dryden Native Friendship Centre (DNFC), Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC), Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), N'Amerind Friendship Centre (N'Amerind), Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC) and Timmins Native Friendship Centre (TNFC). Indian Friendship Centre (IFC) in Sault Ste. Marie later joined the initiative, while TNFC stepped back from implementation activities. Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (NFC) recently joined the initiative in 2019 and conducted a feasibility study and needs assessment to determine

if the Friendship Centre will pursue full implementation of the program.

Friendship Centres began undertaking UIHB program activities locally throughout 2016 and 2017, while OFIFC advocated for program funding. During this time, Friendship Centres implemented the program locally, through funding sources secured outside of OFIFC. As funding was secured, different locations moved from vision to design and implementation stages, Friendship Centres supported one another through the sharing of resources, identification of funding sources, and conversations that facilitated shared learnings and capacity development. It was through this community-driven approach that UIHB launched in Friendship Centres.

In 2018-19 the OFIFC was successful in receiving three grants across private, provincial, and federal funders:

- Counselling Foundation of Canada;
- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) - Innovative Solutions to Homelessness;
- Ministry of Housing - Innovation Evidence and Capacity Building.

OFIFC and WCS continue to work collaboratively to support a Community of Practice for UIHB and Homeward Bound (HB) sites across Ontario that is comprised of Indigenous and non-

Indigenous Homeward Bound practitioners who support one-another through the sharing of wise practices, knowledge and emerging issues. This partnership supports resource development, capacity supports and program implementation activities. This initial process evaluation, supported through the Government of Canada, will support long-term impact-based evaluation activities by OFIFC.

## Program Description

UIHB is a four-year program model that aims to address the systemic barriers sole-parenting Indigenous women face when trying to find meaningful employment, enhanced wellbeing, and prosperity for themselves and their children. UIHB is founded on the provision of key supports such as housing, access to culture, childcare, education and life-skills, transportation, case coordination, health access, and mental health supports.

WCS is a key partner and advisor to the Indigenous-led UIHB program. Like WCS's program, UIHB culminates in post-secondary attainment and opportunities for career-track employment at family sustaining salaries. It also utilises a similar, phased approach (Appendix B). UIHB is distinct from the WCS model, in that it is:

- Culture-based;
- Adaptable to local urban Indigenous and community contexts;
- Embedded within Friendship Centre programming and community;
- Responsive to the needs of urban

Indigenous women and their children; and

- Provides ongoing access to cultural events and ceremony.

## Program Target Audience

Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to:

- Youth-aged Indigenous mothers and their children;
- Families with institutional involvement with child welfare agencies or corrections services;
- Indigenous families who have experienced prolonged, frequent episodic, or provisional homelessness;
- Indigenous families who have experiences long-term reliance on social assistance programs; and/or
- Indigenous families leaving institutional settings such as shelters.

## Program Goal

To systematically address the barriers that prevent Indigenous women from entering the workforce and create a system of supports that generates intergenerational prosperity and wellbeing.

## Program Objectives

The Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program delivers unique wraparound services including education and employment opportunities to sole-parent Indigenous

mothers. It will engage Indigenous mothers, their children, as well as local stakeholders to promote a positive sense of Indigenous identity; contribute to multi-generational healing and wellness; enhance local capacity in site communities to work with Indigenous families; and target and fulfill local labour market opportunities.

Two groups are developed locally to support the work of UIHB:

- The UIHB Advisory Committee is comprised of community partners and leaders who provide input into program development and implementation, community engagement, intake and assessment processes, strategic program initiatives, and partnership and protocol development; and,
- The UIHB Industry Council provides insight into local labour market conditions and relevant post-secondary programs, leads workshops on different possible career opportunities, offers mock interviews with feedback, and most importantly guarantees internships to UIHB participants who have completed a two-year college diploma program.



# UIHB Continuum



The UIHB Continuum is a cycle. Beginning from the center with Cultural Supports, the cycle moves outwards in a spiral formation. Each ring of the Continuum starts in the east and reads clockwise. This Continuum

represents the Friendship Centre Program Development Process as well as the core components of UIHB. All these elements are embedded in and based on cultural supports.



# UIHB Implementation in Friendship Centre Communities



The program is currently being implemented in seven Friendship Centre communities at various phases of development and implementation. Currently, one site has dedicated transitional housing, with on-site childcare. Other sites are relying on scattered-site housing delivery, meaning participants are housed in available units across catchment areas, spanning market rent and community housing while actively pursuing funds to support a dedicated housing model. For more detailed community profiles please see Appendices C and D.

## **Dryden Native Friendship Centre (DNFC), Dryden, ON**

In September 2015, DNFC hosted a community engagement session in Dryden, Ontario, facilitated by OFIFC and WCS. At the session, approximately 45 services providers in attendance unanimously agreed that this model could benefit Dryden. In December 2015, DNFC and key partners toured WCS in Toronto. Design and development for DNFC's UIHB program took place in 2016-17, with the first and second program cohorts going through the intake process in 2018.

A third program cohort will begin intake in Spring 2019.

In February 2019, DNFC's UIHB building opened. The facilities are inclusive of dedicated transitional housing units, on-site daycare, programming space and office space. The UIHB program site is a retrofitted surplus elementary school, secured and developed in partnership with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) and the Kenora District Services Board (KDSB). DNFC has established a management team with Confederation College and the Dryden Literacy Association (DLA) to best support participants' academics. DNFC UIHB's program also has an active Advisory Committee that is comprised of key community partners as well as an Industry Council with local employers and strategic sector mentors for the participants.

## **Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC), Fort Erie, ON**

In 2016, after listening to the concerns of rural Indigenous women in Fort Erie regarding their fears and apprehensions about navigating

city life, and in consultation with Niagara Chapter of Native Women Inc. (NCNW), the FENFC decided to create a rural stream of UIHB that is called Indigenous Homeward Bound Fort Erie (IHBFE). Recognising the limitations of the four-year WCS model in adequately supporting participants' transition into their new lives, IHBFE was designed to include an additional program year for each IHBFE participant to ensure culturally relevant supports are in place. The IHBFE's first cohort joined the program in the Fall of 2017 and FENFC is set to launch a second cohort in the Spring of 2019.

### **Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC), Hamilton, ON**

HRIC's design of the UIHB program was deeply supported by other Friendship Centres also undertaking the process, including DNFC, N'Amerind and NRNC. A coordinator was hired in Fall 2017 with intensive community consultation and implementations taking place through 2018. HRIC held community engagement sessions with targeted focus groups (women in employment, women in post-secondary, and mothers) to identify what they saw as important for the program. Through these engagements, HRIC launched their program in June 2018, with community guidance to support program success. The first cohort completed intake processes in September 2018. A second cohort intake will take place in 2019.

### **Indian Friendship Centre (IFC), Sault Ste. Marie, ON**

IFC joined the original six Friendship Centres implementing the UIHB program after the initial feasibility work. IFC's UIHB staff started in their positions in Winter 2019 and the

design and implementation of the program is currently being developed. The first cohort of IFC's UIHB participants is set to begin in Spring 2019. Through partnerships with OAHs and the City of Sault Ste. Marie, a surplus school property is being retrofitted for UIHB. The site will include residential units, on-site daycare, and programming space.

### **N'Amerind Friendship Centre (N'Amerind), London, ON**

N'Amerind has been engaged with UIHB for four years. Early activities included meetings with OFIC and WCS as well as site visits to WCS's HB site in Toronto. Several focus group sessions took place to help envision UIHB in London including an event with 40 local service providers where the program opportunities were discussed and many early and pivotal partnerships were formed. N'Amerind's' first UIHB intake took place in 2017, and the second intake in 2018. A third cohort will begin in September 2019. N'Amerind is utilising a scattered housing and daycare model, while actively pursuing more long-term housing opportunities. All UIHB program participants are in educational upgrading or post-secondary enrollment.

### **Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC), Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON**

Initial meetings concerning UIHB in Niagara began in June 2015, where twenty local agencies across sectors (shelters, housing, children's services, etc.) created a service map to support the local adaptation of HB. During 2016, NRNC engaged with OFIC and WCS in the development of the UIHB Continuum Model. NRNC's UIHB staff started in their positions in Winter 2017 to support

the design of the program and to consult with the local community on UIHB. NRNC has met consistently with OFIFC and WCS and engaged with Elders who guided the development of UIHB-specific policies, procedures, and curriculum for the program. The first NRNC UIHB cohort began in Fall 2018, and all participants are housed through a scattered-site housing model. A second intake will happen in Fall 2019.

**Nogojwanong Friendship Centre (NFC),  
Peterborough, ON**

NFC began a UIHB program implementation feasibility study in Peterborough in January 2019. This process included a series of focus groups with sole-parent mother-led families, sole-parent father-led families, and NFC staff. As part of the feasibility study, an online survey was also sent out to local health service providers. Results of the feasibility study have recommended that the Friendship Centre pursue UIHB implementation. While the City of Peterborough currently operates a Homeward Bound model that is not Indigenous-specific, Nogojwanong can offer UIHB, from a trauma-informed Indigenous approach that supports sole-parent Indigenous families in Peterborough.



# Program Evaluation



The process evaluation of the UIHB was designed to support an understanding of the perceived quality and usefulness of the Community of Practice and its resources. A constructive process evaluation lens assessed the implementation of the program by identifying areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. To gather this information, interviews and surveys with program workers, Executive Directors (ED) and program participants took place.

## Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation as follows:

- To assess how the UIHB program is being implemented by identifying successes, adaptations, challenges, and opportunities;
- To determine the relevance of the Community of Practice and its resources; and
- To support a future impact evaluation of the program.

## Evaluation Approach, Methods, & Analysis

The process of the UIHB evaluation was grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and guided by the principles of the USAI Evaluation Path; *Utility, Self-Voicing, Access, and Inter-Relationality* (OFIFC, 2016a).

## USAI Principles

The OFIFC developed the *USAI Evaluation Path* (2017) to guide all evaluation conducted by the OFIFC and the urban Indigenous communities it serves. The OFIFC regularly partners with member Friendship Centres on evaluations for programs, projects, and research.

The *USAI Evaluation Path* expands on the *USAI Research Framework* originally developed in 2012 (OFIFC, 2012; second edition in 2016). The *USAI Evaluation Path* takes its acronym from the four ethical principles of Indigenous community-driven practice that guide the OFIFC's work: *Utility, Self-Voicing, Access, and Inter-relationality*. The USAI principles ground evaluation in a community-driven approach as follows:

- *Utility*: evaluation must be practical, relevant, and directly benefiting communities.
- *Self-voicing*: evaluation is reflective of communities and speaks in their voices.
- *Access*: evaluation recognises all local knowledge; knowledge is accessible to communities; no "translation" needed.
- *Inter-relationality*: evaluation takes place in a variety of contexts and relations.



## Design and Methodology

The evaluation of the UIHB program is a *process* evaluation and involves mixed-method, purposive sampling, and non-experimental design. The principles of USAI call for flexibility in the evaluation to assure community engagement throughout the entire process, thus allowing for local knowledge and voices to be meaningfully represented and celebrated. The *process* evaluation assessed the overall UIHB implementation in participating sites, as well as the relevancy and usefulness of the Community of Practice for Friendship Centres. The evaluation demonstrates program strengths, wise practices, and opportunities in Friendship Centre communities and make recommendations for future action. This process may amplify positive results and increase program relevancy and efficiency for urban Indigenous communities. This work is planned to take place in 2019-2020.

## Evaluation Ethical Guidelines

The evaluation of the UIHB was guided by the ethical protocols embedded in the USAI Evaluation Path and was revised by the OFIC Research Ethics Committee prior to engaging in evaluation activities with Friendship Centre staff and program participants.

## Methods of Engagement

### *Detailed document review*

A comprehensive document review of program documents and previously collected data was conducted. Examples of documents include: quarterly statistical and narrative reports, meeting minutes, briefing notes, etc. The wide-reaching document review served to provide important background and context to the primary data collection that was undertaken through interviews and focus groups.

### *Key Informant Interview*

A total of fourteen Interviews took place with twenty Friendship Centre staff, e.g. Executive Director, UIHB Coordinator, other staff identified by Executive Director, and program participants, were conducted to gain in-depth understanding of the immediate effects of the program on participants, their families, and the Friendship Centre community.

### *Focus Group*

A total of five focus groups took place in five Friendship Centres. The focus groups engaged with 18 program participants and four (4) Friendship Centre staff. This was an effective way to collect qualitative data that provides a more in-depth and robust understanding

of the program implementation across Friendship Centre communities.

### ***Non-structured Conversations***

Non-structured conversations occurred in various spaces between UIHB Coordinators and the OFIFC staff supporting the evaluation process. This flexible and non-prescribed method of engagement is an effective culturally-responsive way of building relationships that are based on trust and respect with participants and to gathering meaningful information in community-driven Indigenous research and evaluation contexts. All staff participants were asked if the information they shared during these engagements could be added to the evaluation.

### **Evaluation Limitations**

Some of the limitations of this evaluation pertain to time constraints associated with the evaluation planning and implementation and external factors such as poor weather conditions. The later led to cancelation of a few evaluation activities in a couple of delivering sites and has impacted OFIFC staff ability to engage with some program participants.



## Evaluation Site Map



# Findings



**“The more women we get through this program, the more role models we will have in our community. That is part of the solution.”**

*-Friendship Centre Executive Director*

The following section explores the key findings from this evaluation. The findings have been grouped into the themes of program implementation, challenges and adaptations and lessons learned. A total of 34 individuals across the seven UIHB sites participated in the evaluation, including Friendship Centre staff and program participants, and shared how the UIHB program contributes to life transformations for Indigenous women and their families.

## **Culturally-adopted approach as a catalyst of transformational change**

Each UIHB site has made its own adaptations to the WCS HB model to ensure cultural contexts shape program implementation. Through interviews with Friendship Centre EDs and the UIHB Coordinators, it is clear that cultural teachings, activities, and approaches to assessment and case coordination are fundamental to participants' conceptions of prosperity. Provision of supports for educational upgrading, post-secondary

attainment, job readiness, career and goal planning, childcare, housing, group and one-to-one activities, and nutrition all consider the historical contexts of Indigenous trauma and Indigenous values that impact Indigenous women and their families. Each Friendship Centre provides cultural activities tailored to their local community and are impacted by geography, access to Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders and local relationships.

Participants felt that the program has been providing the understanding and care they need to nurture their cultural identity and roles as Indigenous women. Participants who did not feel familiar with their Indigenous identity prior to intake, expressed eagerness to connect with teachings, cultural activities, and community to support their success in UIHB. All participants felt that access to culture through the Friendship Centre and UIHB from initial intake provides them with supports not accessible through other local service providers.

Early findings demonstrate that the culturally-adopted approach to the HB model is providing the opportunity for lasting positive impacts for UIHB participants. In focus group discussions, participants credited the support of the UIHB and wraparound Friendship Centre programs as a catalyst of transformative change in their lives. A participant in phase two shared how the program changed her life:



**“This is the reason I have a place to live, it got me into school, and now I’m getting my daughter back. None of this would have happened without the [UIHB] program.”**

*-UIHB program participant*

Housing the UIHB program within the Friendship Centre Movement has been effective in recruiting participants who felt ready to create change in their lives. The support of other community-based cultural programming accessed within Friendship Centres allow UIHB Coordinators to create wholistic support plans for participants that focus on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Many UIHB participants were referred into the program through accessing other Friendship Centre programs and services. A participant receiving UIHB pre-supports explained how her Friendship Centres’ Indigenous Community Mental Health Program offered shared programming with the UIHB Coordinator that led her to seek support for long-term mental health concerns. The co-programming offered created an opportunity for this participant to access UIHB as a means to improve her and her children’s lives.

### **Supports through transitions**

Friendship Centres completed intake processes at various times through the year due to differing external factors. To provide the space and time required to support participants through transitions, many Friendship Centres including HRIC and

NRNC noted that they will allot more time for the intake process to take place based on experiences of not having enough time to support the transition process during the first intake. NRNC and HRIC recommend two to three months to support the scope of intake. Across the Friendship Centres, the intake process involves some, or all, of the following activities: individual and family interviews, academic assessment, sessions with Traditional Knowledge Keepers, credit counselling, and an essay question. Friendship Centres have also reported taking applications on an ongoing basis, while setting aside specific time for intake.

Below is a sample intake timeline that has been successful for N’Amerind:

1. Interviews = **July-August**
2. Acceptance = **September**
3. Transitional supports and stabilisation of childcare, housing, Ontario
4. Works/Ontario Disability Support Program = **September to December**
5. Start upgrading = **January**

\*duration of upgrading period depends on individuals’ education background and desired post-secondary course of study.

Considerations are also made concerning the available courses/institutions in the local community, the start date for skills upgrading, and enrollment in school, which can vary depending on amount of education upgrading required.

An emergent theme was also the importance of time to create a supportive and trusting



environment for participant success. For example, FENFC has designed their UIHB program to include a full year of participants' transition to support confidence development. Additionally, FENFC's model supports job placements within the Friendship Centre that allow participants to develop skills and identify roles they are passionate about. FENFC's UIHB year of transition also provides for the time that relationship-building requires to foster patience, trust, and understanding among participants and UIHB staff.

### Housing challenges

DNFC is the only UIHB site with a completed housing and child care space. IFC in Sault Ste. Marie is currently in the process of completing construction on a surplus elementary school to establish a model similar to DNFC with dedicated transitional housing, on-site child care facility and program space. At the time of this evaluation, six women are living in the DNFC's 15-unit facility that features a daycare and UIHB staff on-site. The site is located within walking distance of the Friendship Centre, Confederation College, and DLA where many of the participants attend classes, and local schools participants' children attend. All UIHB participants will be able to access the daycare after its scheduled opening in Spring 2019.

DNFC UIHB participants, who live on-site in centralised housing, demonstrated markedly different outlooks on their education and family life compared to participants enrolled in UIHB programs that do not have central housing units established. DNFC UIHB participants were able to describe their current positions within the phases of the UIHB program model and provide details of the personalised support network created by the UIHB Coordinator.

They shared that their housing situations before moving into the UIHB units were often unsafe, crowded, and distracting from their education and employment goals. The private units have given DNFC UIHB participants a sense of safety, support, and security for their children and family and the space to focus on their schooling.



**“The best part of living here is the security, personal space and community”**

*-UIHB program participant*

Participants at DNFC feel the direct access to the UIHB Coordinator, Navigator (Case Worker), and dedicated program driver improves their program access and the quality of their educational experience. DNFC UIHB participants are the only contributors to this evaluation that express disinterest in expanding their current network, explaining that they feel fully supported by the program, community, and one another. During the semi-structured interview at DNFC, participants could speak to the specific details of fellow participants' lives, families, children, and goals, indicating a high level of integrative support and attachment among the participants - a culture-based support structure premised on community connection. These findings demonstrate how the creation of a social safety net is critical to program and participant outcomes.

Due largely to the lack of affordable land, housing, and partnership commitments from key partners, the other four Friendship Centres with active cohort intakes all currently

rely on a scattered-site housing model where participants live in available housing across the city or town. Where participants are underhoused, living in shelters, or at imminent risk of homelessness, UIHB staff support housing searches and navigate necessary systems with participants. Participants report feeling better equipped to attend classes, focus on schoolwork, and achieve their academic goals when they perceive their housing is secure, safe and stable. With off-site housing it is difficult to set the appropriate structure required for transition supports and academic upgrading. It was further reported that without on-site housing it is difficult to create community and relationships among the participants, a key aspect to Indigenous supportive housing models.

The UIHB program housing model with on-site childcare and program space reduces and/or eliminates transportation barriers often experienced by unemployed and underemployed single mothers. With the scattered-housing model, transportation is often costly and ineffective which impacts program participation. All other Friendship Centres continue to work with program partners to secure resources required to develop UIHB housing.

### Approaches to childcare

Approaches to providing childcare as part of the UIHB program model varied across the UIHB sites based on existing Friendship Centre and community services. FENFC provides on-site daycare facilities that can support the families of UIHB participants to access culturally-based childcare services. At FENFC, the UIHB Coordinator has developed a close partnership with their Friendship

Centre daycare staff to ease access to childcare openings as they arise.

Where Friendship Centres do not have immediate access to childcare, they rely on local Indigenous and mainstream daycare facilities. This can be challenging in communities where waitlists exist for childcare and transportation is difficult to access. Following the UIHB model, SSM IFC and DNFC will have on-site daycare services to support participants.

Many of the UIHB participants have youth-aged children that are supported by the program through transportation and referrals to other Friendship Centre programs and activities. At NRNC, one participant shared that her child was only able to access an activity camp over the March Break due to the transportation services provided by the program. Overall, participants gave the sense that the UIHB program helps them role model positive behaviour for their children of all ages.



**“I am feeling better than I have in years. My daughter has followed me and is back in school. Creator put this program in our path.”**

*-UIHB program participant*

Early impacts of UIHB participation have also resulted in family reunification through the support of Friendship Centre staff and case coordination with local child and family service providers. The supports of the UIHB program provide stable environments that support participants when addressing child protection

plans of care. Through culturally supportive family reunification, participants feel improved senses of security and stability and in turn are able to focus on academic and employment pursuits.

### Navigating academic systems

The UIHB Coordinators support the participants' access to education by creating in-depth networks of local and regional education institutions, provincial support services, literacy, and financial supports which facilitate educational upgrading and post-secondary enrollment.

Friendship Centres have reported that engagement with local colleges is supportive during the upgrading phase, with strong partnerships with departments within colleges that provide educational upgrading (Ontario Secondary School Diploma, General Education Development) supports. At HRIC, Mohawk City School comes to the Friendship Centre multiple times per week and provides upgrading supports to UIHB participants on-site. Similarly, NRNC receives support from Niagara College for upgrading requirements.

Friendship Centres expressed difficulty in navigating academic systems and supporting the coordination of post-secondary applications, loans, and tuition for participants. UIHB staff shared difficulties learning the post-secondary landscape and initially building relationships that would create flexibility for Indigenous student success. The elimination of free tuition programming for low-income students during the 2019-20 academic year will result in the greater need for innovative partnerships between Friendship Centres and post-secondary institutions to support

bursary and scholarship applications.

N'Amerind Friendship Centre initiated a partnership with Fanshawe College wherein all of the participants receive tuition and the necessary resources to participate in their courses, including laptops, software, and textbooks. Participants and staff at N'Amerind found that the partnership has improved their access to education. In addition to tuition supports, N'Amerind has found that housing and childcare needs must be stabilised prior to educational enrollment to support participant academic success. Other UIHB sites report positive engagement with local post-secondary institutions and are working towards similar partner agreements.

Engagement with educational institutions also varies greatly based on location and is adapted based on local community services available. In Dryden, where Confederation College has a regional campus, DNFC has partnered with the Dryden Literacy Association (DLA), a local education and training service provider that supports UIHB program participants through educational upgrading and tutoring supports in post-secondary.

Friendship Centres and participants also reported frustrations around limited availability for two-year college programs. Limited diploma options, coupled with the requirement of some programs to enroll in evening and online classes, impact the program participants' self-determination to choose a career path that meets their specific needs, circumstances, and aspirations. Many of the participants are seeking Indigenous-specific programs that will prepare them to support their community's development goals, and not merely their individual goals.

At NRNC, it was reported that one UIHB participant would have to travel to Hamilton to complete their first choice program at Mohawk College instead of Niagara College. Transportation issues presented a barrier to the participant's career path as the participant ultimately decided on a different program to remain in Niagara where her support network was. DNFC also expressed challenges with the lack of local career options for participants, particularly for those interested in the trades or an apprenticeship as many of the trade programs and accessible apprenticeships are only available in Thunder Bay or Winnipeg.

### Understanding the employment landscapes

The most significant program variations across UIHB sites occur within the employment planning services and the development of the local UIHB Industry Councils and Advisory Committees. Three of the UIHB sites are located in communities with less than 100,000 residents and limited local economic drivers accelerating job development. In these communities, the UIHB staff and Friendship Centre Executive Directors are concerned about implementing the model as it was developed in Toronto.

Through evaluative activities, it was found that a high proportion of Indigenous women are altogether not driven by economic means of prosperity. Instead, the drive to contribute to, and improve outcomes in, one's community are regarded more highly - a finding consistent with research on the motivations of Indigenous post-secondary students (Indspire, 2017). Career goals of the UIHB participants were commonly linked to lived experiences, community values, and cultural teachings. One participant who is

working towards becoming a parole officer described the impact that the Indigenous-led Three Fires Justice Circle had in her life and as a result, in setting her career goals. Through witnessing the supports that the Three Fires Justice Circle program provided to members of her family, she has been inspired to work toward a career that will allow her to also give back to others involved in the justice system.

UIHB participants are primarily seeking careers in social services and early education to support others with similar lived experience to their own. The only participant enrolled in a business administrative-related program explained that her career aspiration is to support Indigenous youth to start small businesses. None of the participants cited economic drivers as their purpose for seeking a specific training or career.

Because of this major difference in Indigenous perspectives, the development of the UIHB Industry and Advisory Councils require significant tailoring to local community, individual and cultural contexts. In the WCS model, a HB Industry Council is comprised a collective of local industry representatives and potential employers relating to banking and information technology sectors. During evaluation conversations, the Executive Directors of several UIHB sites discussed how limiting participants to predetermined education streams does not support the local labour market realities of their small or rural communities as this model would in a metropolitan, like Toronto.

In some UIHB communities, the main industries include paper mills, mining, and waste management companies that directly conflict with cultural values that Indigenous people hold towards environmental protection of

water, air, and Mother Earth. While these communities are hesitant to create situations where the participants of the program will feel pressured to work in these industries, the Friendship Centres include them within the Industry Councils to facilitate job creation and mentorship for UIHB participants as the programs grow and expand.

For some of the UIHB sites, the Friendship Centres themselves are serving as economic drivers for the participants of the program. In one Friendship Centre, several of the UIHB participants receiving pre-supports are employed in administrative roles at the Friendship Centre. These same participants have expressed interest in continuing to work in the urban Indigenous community once they complete their education. In another example of Friendship Centres incubating employment opportunities locally, the development of the on-site housing and childcare facility for the UIHB program at DNFC has created 11 full-time positions. Additional economic impacts of the development of the on-site housing and childcare facilities include contribution to local businesses, trades, and social service providers.

UIHB program participants are also gaining development of soft skills. Through participation in workshops, educational upgrading, post-secondary enrollment and housing supports, participants are increasing their ability to cooperate, work together, organise, problem solve, meet deadlines and attend regular meetings.

### UIHB support groups

UIHB Advisory Committees are being established in many UIHB sites, made up of community partners and leaders who meet

regularly to provide input into program development and implementation, community engagement, intake and assessment processes, strategic program initiatives, and partnership and protocol development. Many Friendship Centres have developed guiding documents that support this work. Often the Advisory Committee is comprised of key partners in areas such as education, housing, and culture. HRIC met regularly with their Advisory Committee during the initial intake which ensured partners were aware of what was happening and helped put services in place to support participants' transition into the program. For example, the participants' OW case worker sits on the committee and helps navigate the transitions that impact access to social assistance benefits and supports their skills building and employment readiness.

UIHB Industry Councils are also being established for most UIHB sites as an employer-side support for the program. The Industry Council provides insight into local labour market conditions and relevant post-secondary programs, leads workshops on different possible career opportunities, offers mock interviews with feedback, and most importantly, guarantees internships to UIHB participants who have completed a two-year college diploma program. Most Friendship Centres chose to establish their Advisory Committees initially and to focus their efforts on implementing the UIHB program before establishing the Industry Councils. Three Friendship Centres have begun Industry Council development. In Dryden, a position was created to support the development of the Industry Council and they now have six local employers or leaders engaged to support and mentor UIHB participants while also creating internship opportunities.

A formal Advisory Committee or Industry Council has not been a programmatic focus for all sites. Program implementation is guided by the direction of the Executive Director and close Friendship Centre partnerships without formalised structures in place. This has also been demonstrated through adaptations to the role of the Industry Council locally, where employment opportunities and supports are adapted for individual supports and mentorship.

### **Addressing mental health**

It was found through semi-structured interviews at UIHB sites with completed intakes that a majority of UIHB participants self-reported mental health concerns. Experiences of childhood trauma and violence, intergenerational trauma from residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, substance use and addiction, and intimate partner violence were common shared experiences for the mothers enrolled in the UIHB program. For women who had these experiences, breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma, addiction, abuse, and poverty were all prominent factors in their seeking education to employment supports through UIHB.

While the program provides the opportunity and space to receive the supports required for UIHB participants to succeed, the potential for a return to unhealthy coping strategies seemed to remain within participants. Participants are vulnerable to cycles of heightened mental health challenges. One UIHB Coordinator explained how the UIHB participants actively adapted to support one another when one participant requires more intensive attention from the program. The participants' collective response to support one

another represents a culture-based supportive approach grounded in an Indigenous worldview of collective responsibilities for the wellbeing of all members of the community.

There are limited culture-based supports specific to mental health crisis planning and support within the Friendship Centres with UIHB. Where there are dedicated mental health workers accessible in Friendship Centres, the UIHB participants feel supported to focus on improving their mental and emotional wellbeing. The model of accessing embedded services that are offered through adjacent programming is recognised as a wise practice model by researchers in the area of Indigenous health and wellbeing. For Friendship Centres without mental health programs, challenges in adequately meeting the needs of participants were shared. At one site without mental health supports, the UIHB Coordinator struggles to consistently connect participants with the culture-based mental health supports that they require and relies on the traditional healer through a nearby regional Health Access Centre, which is located in a neighbouring city. In another UIHB site, additional supports for the UIHB participants and families affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are an expressed need.

### **Concerns about transportation**

The lack of affordable, accessible, and reliable transportation was a concern at every Friendship Centre. A foundational and immediate impact of the dedicated transitional housing model used within UIHB is to reduce this barrier. However, even when housing, childcare and cultural programming space is all in one site, participants still experience limited transportation options to access

school, groceries, the Friendship Centre, and other local services. In Dryden, a driver specifically for UIHB was hired in partnership with the KDSB to manage the transportation service gap. In other communities participants must rely on program supports for taxi and bus passes. In more rural locations, such as Fort Erie, the program has supported participants to get their driver's licenses. The OFIFC has documented the barriers to community and social cohesion caused by a lack of transportation planning that disproportionately affects urban Indigenous community members. In submissions to the provincial government, the OFIFC has reported issues of social isolation, the lack of access to opportunities and essential services, and serious safety concerns that transportation barriers cause (OFIFC, 2016b; OFIFC, 2016c).

### Community of Practice (COP)

OFIFC and WCS work collaboratively to support a COP across Ontario. The COP is comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous UIHB and HB practitioners who support one-another through the sharing of wise practices, knowledge and emerging issues. Friendship Centres reported positive experiences engaging with the COP as they were able to engage with agencies outside of their networks. This fostered knowledge exchange and capacity development opportunities. Shared learnings across the COP included an adaptable model for local implementation, the importance of community involvement in development and the need for local program champions and partners. The success of building a UIHB/HB program relies on trusting, mutually beneficial relationships between community

agencies and local partners. It is important to note that while Friendship Centres reported that being a part of the COP was helpful, the supports received from each other and the ongoing relationships between Friendship Centre communities have been imperative to UIHB implementation.

### Importance of Sustainable Funding

Without long-term sustainable funding, Friendship Centres rely on a grant-based funding model for program delivery. Grant writing and alternatives to government provincial and federal supports takes time away from program delivery and case management of program participants. Friendship Centres have reported that UIHB cannot be a one worker model as participant numbers are expected to increase with annual intake cycles. UIHB coordinator position requires a high-level of competency across the housing, employment and education sectors, as well as the ability to develop, maintain and leverage strategic partnerships within the local community and region. It has become a wise practice to have at a minimum a UIHB coordinator to support partnership development and related work and a Case Worker to support participants. Five of the UIHB sites were able to fund additional staff to directly support the UIHB program. Full-time positions include case workers, one site with a liaison to develop the Industry Council and a dedicated driver to support the mothers. Two sites had part-time student placements. Where additional positions are not funded, the UIHB Coordinator supports the women across all necessary sectors as well as coordinates the Industry Council and develops local partnerships with the support of the Executive Director.

# Lessons Learned



## Wraparound support model

Friendship Centres have been highly successful at implementing the UIHB program because of their long history of delivering wholistic, wraparound supports. Due to the nature of program delivery at Friendship Centres, UIHB staff are able to support participants who may not be ready for UIHB to Friendship Centre programs that can support skills and self-development prior to UIHB intake, including literacy, alternative secondary school, mental health, cultural programs, and other family stabilisation programs.



**“UIHB is formalising supports for Indigenous mothers that the Friendship Centre has already been providing.”**

*-Friendship Centre Executive Director*

## Relationships

Taking time to build relationships is imperative to the success of this program, both in terms of reciprocal and reconciliation based partnerships at the local, provincial and federal levels, but also the relationships between the Friendship Centre Executive Directors, UIHB staff, and program participants.

All UIHB staff discussed the importance of establishing trust and communication with the participants. Without time, patience, trust and communication, staff struggle to support the participants when challenges arise. As reported by UIHB staff, participants cannot be supported through four years of their lives if trust and communication do not exist.



**“Patience. Patience takes time and builds trust. In order for participants in the UIHB program to be successful, they must not only trust in themselves but also trust in the support from those around them, including the program coordinator.”**

*-UIHB Coordinator*

Relationships are also pivotal for partnership development to support mutual reciprocal understandings across all areas of program implementation.

## Cross-sector Supports

A significant level of expertise is required to launch the UIHB program locally, including knowledge of transitional housing regulations, daycare and childcare legislation, post-

secondary school landscapes and local labour markets. Understandings of these landscapes supports partnership development and aligns with the service coordination that is required for UIHB. Cross-sector partnerships also facilitate adaption to local challenges and utilises available resources to address immediate community needs.

### UIHB as “Education to Employment”

Friendship Centres discussed the importance of clear and consistent messaging around specific supports offered by the program. While housing supports are provided, either through access to dedicated transitional housing units, or through rental supplements, the program is ultimately an education to employment program, with wraparound supports. UIHB coordinators shared the importance of being clear about this to manage participant expectations.



**“The #1 lesson is to be careful how you talk about the program. The participants can’t move forward without a secure home, it is a foundational first step, but it can’t be promoted as a housing program. When the program is advertised as an education and employment program, the participants are more successful.”**

*-UIHB Coordinator*



# Analysis



Friendship Centres have provided the space for wholistic, culture-based programming in urban Indigenous communities across Ontario for the past five decades. UIHB builds on the knowledge and expertise of existing Friendship Centre programs and services in the areas of education, employment, housing, wholistic wellbeing, and children's services to coordinate targeted interventions that systematically address the barriers Indigenous women face when seeking meaningful, gainful employment. The findings on the implementation of UIHB across Friendship Centres are consistent with best practices on service delivery across sectors which supports wholistic, community-based and cultural-based programs and service delivery as the key to the success for Indigenous women and mothers.

Research indicates that structured and centralised housing security for Indigenous people, coupled with wraparound culture-based supports, has a direct positive effect on educational achievement and self-determination. The research also demonstrated that residential mobility has negative impacts on education, children's wellbeing and can impact safety. (DeRiviere, 2017; Snyder & Wilson, 2015). UIHB Coordinators agree that housing stabilisation must take place prior to post-secondary enrollment, and based on individual participant circumstances, prior to educational upgrading. The experiences

shared by UIHB Coordinators supporting participants in phase one and two demonstrate that the stabilisation of a safe and secure home has been critical to academic success. The creation of housing stability, such as that generated by UIHB, is a critical component of wellbeing for Indigenous people and also provides opportunities for improved intergenerational prosperity (Snyder & Wilson, 2015). For Indigenous women who are sole parents, the impacts of housing stability while working towards skills upgrading and academic goals can be life changing. The UIHB participants interviewed for this evaluation, particularly those housed in the transitional dedicated housing units at DNFC, depict early impacts that align with these research findings. Feelings of security, community, social cohesion, and happiness were shared by UIHB participants as a result of their housing and as contributors to their early success in post-secondary schooling and employment goals.

An evaluation of a similar Indigenous housing program in Manitoba found that the following elements contributed to individual success:

1. Wraparound services including life skills, emotional support, culture-based resources, concurrent programming at the Centre, and connections to community networks;
2. Provision of education supports and connections to educational pathways;

3. Food mentoring and the promotion of healthy living;
4. Financial assistance including rent subsidies, food budgets, and trainings; and
5. Highly committed and connected staff who can mentor participants (DeRiviere, 2017).

These aspects are found in UIHB and Friendship Centres programs which contribute to the early successes observed in participants and their families. UIHB Coordinators reported difficulty with providing consistent and sustainable financial assistance as well as optimal education supports without strong reciprocal partnerships with local service providers and post-secondary institutions.

Findings from this evaluation exhibit how participants of UIHB require education supports that are responsive to their individual needs and Indigenous identity. The desire to make an impact and give back to their community is the driving force for the UIHB participants' education and employment goals. This theme is consistent with research that highlights the high number of Indigenous students that expressed intent to contribute through their employment to bettering their communities and serving community members who have similar lived experiences (Indspire, 2015). The UIHB Coordinators, Friendship Centre Executive Directors and their educational partners have been supportive in adapting the HB model to align with the values guiding UIHB participants' goals.

A wise practice was found at N'Amerind Friendship Centre, where a partnership with Fanshawe College created financial stability

for UIHB participants through provision of tuition supports. This practice resonates with research findings on Indigenous students, especially Indigenous women "sole support providers for their families," requiring a variety of support services and access to financial aid in order to achieve their academic goals and to actualise their leadership abilities (King, 2008).

Regardless of financial assistance provision, UIHB supports additional services including transitional preparatory academic supports and a support system beyond Indigenous students' families, which supports a structured environment for participants. Culture-based supports offered in Indigenous communities can mitigate anxiety, stress, and fear as results of transition (Ottman, 2017). UIHB implementation in Friendship Centre provides a wholistic, wraparound approach as a stabilising force against the disruptive nature of times of change and transition experienced by program participants accessing educational supports. UIHB Coordinators described the strengths and challenges experienced while connecting and supporting success for program participants accessing educational upgrading and college courses. Through this evaluation, it was found that where there are partnerships between Friendship Centres and local educational institutions, the UIHB Coordinators can facilitate accommodations for UIHB participants. This early indicator of systems change in post-secondary education can support Indigenous students attain post-secondary school success.

Investing in Indigenous women's education to employment pathways is a highly effective way to improve the economic security of

Indigenous families. Family income, for example, is lowest among lone mothers and Indigenous women are twice as likely to be lone parents (Fox & Moyser, 2018). At the same time, data shows that Indigenous women with higher education earn more than non-Indigenous women with similar levels of education (\$49,947 compared to \$47,742) while Indigenous women without a formal post-secondary education qualification earn just \$15,208 (Arrigada, 2016). It can be deduced that by investing in programs like the UIHB model, sole-parent Indigenous mothers will have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous families and communities.

While the Friendship Centres are in the early stages of UIHB implementation, planning and discussions around the future employment of participants has begun within each community. Executive Directors and UIHB Coordinators acknowledge the self-determination of Indigenous women and have adapted the HB model on career planning to align with their goals for themselves, their family and community. This approach is congruent with research that describes how Indigenous people demonstrate a set of skills, abilities, and culture-based gifts that are tied to their Indigenous identity and culture (King, 2008). These findings “directly [support] Indigenous epistemology and the reciprocating norm,” as identified by research on recent Indigenous post-secondary graduates’ career decision-making processes:

many people who have witnessed, experienced, or are impacted by assimilative approaches find healing in understanding the underpinnings of such approaches and want to

extend outreach to others who may be struggling (Indspire, 2015).

UIHB participants are supported in soft skill development through the phase one transition and life skill development workshops that take place before educational upgrading activities. Soft skill development is as critical as economic, social and technological factors in impacting workforce opportunities. A recent report by the Royal Bank of Canada states:

An assessment of 20,000 skills rankings across 300 occupations and 2.4 million expected job openings shows an increasing demand for foundational skills such as critical thinking, coordination, social perceptiveness, active listening and complex problem solving (RBC, 2018).

As participants move through UIHB phases, complete post-secondary, and engage in mentorship opportunities and internships, they will continue to develop the skills needed to succeed in the future workforce. The development of the Advisory Committees and Industry Councils at each Friendship Centre is locally informed in order to support UIHB participants with the skill development, and mentorship required to meet local labour market opportunities and build economic prosperity in communities.

An immediate finding of this evaluation highlights how Friendship Centres have implemented UIHB to support participants requiring stabilising pre-supports such as referrals and collaborative service delivery with other Friendship Centre programs. Considering the high degree of transition that UIHB participants experience upon program

intake, the need for culture-based care and supports are necessary to promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Research suggests that promising programs consist of those which are culture-based and focused on reclaiming participants' Indigenous identity, integrated (including parenting services), women-specific, and which incorporate life-skills trainings including workshops focused on mental health (Niccols et al., 2010). Initial program evidence indicates that UIHB are providing a culturally-rich environment that supports participants' Indigenous cultural identities and provides a sense of security through a wraparound program model.

**An analysis of the implementation of UIHB thus far has established new pathways to partnership development within Friendship Centres, engaging multiple sectors to enhance local coordination, partnerships, and community capacity to work with Indigenous families. UIHB is an innovative initiative that implements the broad coordination of programs and services and community partnerships as critical components that support the program's common objectives.**

Additionally, the adaptations that Friendship Centres have made to implement UIHB are supported by research and are responsive to individual, family and community needs in Indigenous contexts.

A review of policy responses to lone-mother families' experiences has found that issues of economic poverty have been the main focus, however multiple policy investments are required to adequately support sole-parent families including: safe and adequate social housing, childcare provisioning, food

security and meal and nutritional planning (e.g.: communally shared meals as opposed to food banks and gardening), among others (Gurstein & Vilches, 2010). All of these elements are reflected in the UIHB program model. For UIHB to meet the needs of current and future participants, enhancements to structural mechanisms, including administrative capacity support for program delivery is required by federal, provincial and regional policy makers (Sookraj et al., 2010). The opportunities identified for enhanced service delivery should be considered as part of UIHB planning and future developments. Sustained and long-term investments in UIHB have the potential to impact local infrastructure (new housing and childcare developments, transportation), economic opportunities (internships, apprenticeships, job placements), local systems and structures (enhanced coordination of local service delivery), and cultural continuity.



# Conclusion



Social innovation is understood to involve new and novel approaches to social issues that result in improved outcomes (ESDC, 2018). Through this evaluation, it is apparent that the implementation of UIHB in seven Friendship Centre communities across Ontario, and the support of the Community of Practice, is facilitating an urban Indigenous culture-based approach to social innovation in education and employment achievement that is changing Indigenous women's futures. Successful implementation of the UIHB adaptations is reliant upon the connection to the Friendship Centre Movement, where wholistic, culture-based supports are developed and delivered in response to local community needs. Through this evaluation it has been identified that despite initial implementation challenges, there are adaptations and wise practices being incorporated in Friendship Centre communities. This assessment also demonstrates early transformative impacts in participants lives.

At this preliminary stage, site-specific evaluations have identified that cross-sector collaborations have resulted in improved service delivery for UIHB participants. Sectors including post-secondary institutions, regional social service delivery associations, health, employment, social assistance, child welfare, and housing are being engaged to respond in new ways to support UIHB. The results of a collaborative, wraparound

approach have included: more stabilised lifestyles, the acquisition of life skills, and the development of collective supportive networks. At the same time, challenges that threaten the success of the program have been identified including: a lack of sustainable UIHB funding, inadequate program housing options in some sites, costly post-secondary education options, a lack of reliable and affordable transportation for participants, and the need for robust mental health and healing supports. In order to overcome these challenges, Friendship Centres will continue to meaningfully engage with community partners to build collaborations that support program participants and contribute to reconciliation with a lasting effect.

While this evaluation focuses on the processes of UIHB implementation, the experiences shared by the UIHB participants provide the confidence that this program will result in transformative impacts for Indigenous women and their families. The support of UIHB and Friendship Centre staff, as well as community partners, provides participants with improved opportunities, however the journey through the phases takes individual strength, courage and resiliency. Each participant's success demonstrates how commitment to innovative models such UIHB should be supported across all levels of government.



"If it wasn't for the UIHB, I would not have been able to go back to school and leave drugs behind. The program pushes me to be the best I can be for myself and for my children."

-UIHB program participant



# Recommendations



In response to evaluation findings, it is recommended that:

1. Multi-year, sustainable funding is committed by all levels of government in order to strengthen the UIHB program model and Community of Practice, in recognition of the successes the program has demonstrated and the need to act upon the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action #7:

- "We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians."

2. Employment and Skills Development

Canada (ESDC) structures its innovation program to adequately support project continuity and advance innovation initiatives that demonstrate successes.

- To support UIHB beyond its implementation phase, ESDC should coordinate on sustainability opportunities through Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) programming.

3. The federal government co-develops a national urban Indigenous housing strategy with urban Indigenous housing and related service providers that is resourced to support implementation of innovative housing initiatives in addition to addressing the expiry of operating agreements and existing capital repair backlog.

4. Resourcing to address urban Indigenous housing and homelessness should proportionally reflect known rates of urban Indigenous homelessness and housing inadequacy.
5. All levels of government and regional service delivery partners support the enhancement and further development of the UIHB program as a response to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls as it is demonstrating positive impacts in the lives of individuals who have experienced violence.
6. National and provincial health agencies commit dedicated health funding toward UIHB, recognising the program's direct impact on improved social determinants of health for Indigenous women and the health, mental health, and addictions supports required of UIHB participants.
7. The provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities work with UIHB-affiliated post-secondary institutions to establish a framework through which institutions can easily support Ontario colleges in sponsoring tuition for UIHB participants.
8. All levels of government work with the OFIFC to establish a network of Indigenous controlled post-secondary education (PSE) programming that is responsive to local community priorities, lands, knowledges, and traditions in urban Indigenous communities across Ontario.
9. All levels of government work with OFIFC to create and support Indigenous child care and child and family programming that is responsive to local communities, lands, knowledges, and traditions in urban communities across Ontario.



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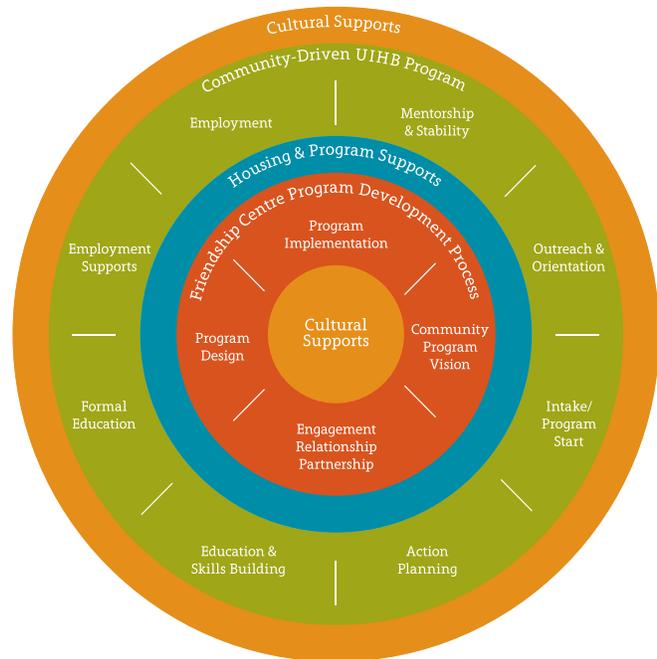
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# Appendix A: Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Program Model

The Continuum's design is informed by Indigenous approaches of expressing concepts as non-linear cyclical processes.

## Orientation to the Continuum

The Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound Continuum is a cycle. Beginning from the centre with **Cultural Supports**, the cycle moves outward in a spiral formation. Each ring of the Continuum starts in the east and reads clockwise. This Continuum represents the **Friendship Centre Program Development Process** as well as the core components of the Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) program. All of these elements are embedded in and based on **Cultural Supports**.



### Cultural Supports

During the *Friendship Centre Program Development Process*, Friendship Centres identify existing *Cultural Supports* at the Friendship Centre and in the community that will support Indigenous people in the UIHB. If *Cultural Supports* do not exist, but are identified as a priority for the UIHB, the Friendship Centre will incorporate the development of *Cultural Supports* into the Program Design, to be implemented during the Program Implementation.

### Housing & Program Supports

During all stages of UIHB, housing and wrap-around supports are provided to participants as they move forward. By coordinating supports for participants, UIHB helps remove barriers that have historically kept mother-led families in poverty and provides stability, support and resources so that families can become independent.

### Friendship Centre Program Development Process

#### Community Program Vision

Identifies need, interest and vision for UIHB

#### Engagement, Relationship, Partnership

Engages with community to determine fit of UIHB, how it could look, develops relationships for UIHB (i.e. colleges, housing, providers, etc.) and formalizes

partnerships

#### Program Design

Designs UIHB based on community guidance, local culture and context, organizational capacity, and funding opportunities

#### Program Implementation

Implements culturally appropriate wrap-around program aligned to local need, capacity and context

### Community-Driven UIHB Program

#### Outreach & Orientation

The program begins with information sessions for referral partners; individuals submit their applications to the program and attend applicant orientation sessions

#### Intake/Program Start

Upon being accepted into the program, families are welcomed and begin receiving supports

#### Action Planning

Participants access individual case management and service coordination, including personal goal setting

#### Education & Skill Building

Participants receive life skills training, academic upgrading and begin post-secondary applications and preparation

#### Formal Education

Participants begin post-secondary programs geared to the local labour market

#### Employment Supports

Participants access employability skills training, workshops, internships, and job search supports

#### Employment

Once employed, participants continue to receive employment supports as they transition to economic independence

#### Mentorship & Stability

Participants are mentored by employers, families are stable as they transition out of UIHB and former participants mentor the new cohort of women

# Appendix B: UIHB Phases

Development Phase	Phase 1 4-12 Months	Phase 2 8-24 Months	Phase 3 6-12 Months	Phase 4 6-12 Months
6-12 Months	4-12 Months	8-24 Months	6-12 Months	6-12 Months
<p>OFIFC Supports</p> <p>Hire Coordinator</p> <p>Partnership Development</p> <p>Advisory Committee Development</p> <p>Development of core programmatic pieces</p>	<p>Application Processing</p> <p>Intake &amp; Skills Assessment</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Friendship Centre &amp; Cultural Supports</p> <p>Action Plan</p> <p>Skills/Educational Bridging</p> <p>Hire Case Counsellor</p> <p>Living Allowance</p> <p>Transportation</p> <p>Partnership Management</p> <p>Evaluation</p>	<p>Diploma/Certification</p> <p>Skills Enhancements</p> <p>Peer Mentorship</p>	<p>Training Pre-Employment</p>	<p>Placement/Employment</p> <p>Transition</p>



## Appendix C: UIHB Community Profiles and Site Information

UIHB Program Delivery Site	Dryden Native Friendship Centre	Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre	Hamilton Regional Indian Centre	Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie)	N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London)	Niagara Regional Native Centre
<b>Staff</b>	1 Program Coordinator 1 Program Navigator 1 Industry Council Liaison 1 Daycare Coordinator 5 ECEs 1 Daycare Cook 1 Driver	1 Program Coordinator	1 Program Coordinator 1 Case Worker	1 Program Coordinator 1 Case Worker	1 Program Coordinator	1 Program Coordinator 1 Case Worker 1 Cultural Counsellor
<b>Cohort Intakes Complete</b>	2	1	1	0	2	1
<b>Number of Participants</b>	14	6	6	0	5	6
<b>Number of Dependents</b>	36	13	9	0	9	18
<b>Housing Status</b>	Completed 11 units - 2 more offsites in progress	Scattered-site	Scattered-site	Set to open summer/fall 2019	Scattered-site	Scattered-site
<b>Childcare Supports</b>	On-site daycare	Friendship Centre run daycare and local availability	Dependent on local availability	On-site daycare	Dependent on local availability	Dependent on local availability
<b>Total Number of Partnerships</b>	12	7	20	6	2	2

## Appendix D: UIHB Community Profiles

The following pages contain individual case studies for each of the UIHB sites. Below are the sources / citations.

### Sources for Case Studies

- <sup>i</sup> Statistics Canada, Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census – Dryden <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3560027&TOPIC=9>
- <sup>ii</sup> City of Dryden. (2017) 'City of Dryden Community Profile.' 8. Retrieved from: <https://www.dryden.ca/en/business/resources/Documents/Community-Development/2017-Community-Profile-for-the-Municipality-of-Dryden-Finals.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> Statistics Canada, Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census – Fort Erie <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3526003&TOPIC=9>
- <sup>iv</sup> Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census – Fort Erie <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-CSD-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=9&LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3526003>
- <sup>v</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census.
- <sup>vi</sup> Hamilton Economic Development. 'Quick Facts.' Retrieved from: <https://spatialsolutions.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Map-Journal/index.html?appid=097ebd5eaca94d78b3c22f14065b8acf>
- <sup>vii</sup> City of Hamilton. (2016). 'Economic Development Action Plan 2016-2020.' Retrieved from: <https://www.investinhamilton.ca/key-industries/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3557061&TOPIC=9>
- <sup>ix</sup> Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation. 'Major Employers and Local Industry.' Retrieved from: <https://www.sault-canada.com/en/investlocateexpand/majoremployerslocalindustry.asp>
- <sup>x</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census.
- <sup>xi</sup> Local Employment Planning Council. '20/20: Bringing Clarity to the Local Labour Market.' 15. Retrieved from: <http://www.localemploymentplanning.ca/news/community-labour-market-plan-released>
- <sup>xii</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census. Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=539&TOPIC=9>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census – Fort Erie <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-CSD-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=9&LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3526003>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-csd-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CSD&GC=3515014&TOPIC=9>
- <sup>xv</sup> Workforce Development Board – Local Employment Planning Council. (2018). 'Community Labour Market Plan 18/19.' Retrieved from: <http://lindsayadvocate.ca/new-study-shows-major-job-and-income-challenges-for-kawartha-lakes/>

# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Dryden Native Friendship Centre



## Demographics of Dryden <sup>i</sup>

The City of Dryden's total population is 7,580. According to 2016 Census data, 1,470 Indigenous people call Dryden home.

1 in 5 people self-identify as Indigenous.

The average age of the Indigenous population in Dryden is 31 years, 15 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Dryden Native Friendship Centre (DNFC) was incorporated on November 13, 1984 and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) on October 22, 1988.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at DNFC

DNFC began discussions about implementing UIHB in Dryden in September 2015. Design and development for the program took place in 2016-17, with the first and second cohorts going through the intake process in 2018. A third cohort will begin intake in Spring 2019. In February 2019, the UIHB building, inclusive of residential units, on-site daycare, programming space and office space opened.

## Key Program Partners

Kenora District Social Services Board  
Dryden Literacy Association  
Confederation College  
City of Dryden  
Ministry of Training,  
Colleges and Universities  
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

## Labour Market <sup>ii</sup>

The largest local public sector employers in Dryden are:  
(1) MNR District Fire Centre;  
(2) Keewatin-Patricia District School Board in Dryden;  
(3) Dryden Regional Health Centre;  
(4) Provincial Government;  
(5) City of Dryden.

## DNFC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by DNFC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Justice

## Contact Information

For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
74 Queen Street  
Dryden, ON P8N 1A4

**Telephone:**  
(807) 223-4180



# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre



## Demographics of Fort Erie <sup>iii</sup>

The City of Fort Erie's total population is 30,275. According to 2016 Census data, 1,400 Indigenous people call Fort Erie home.

4.6 % of Fort Erie's total population is Indigenous (compared to 2.8 % provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in Fort Erie is 34.3 years, 11.8 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC) was incorporated on February 17, 1983 and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in 1984.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at FENFC

In 2016, after listening to rural Indigenous women in Fort Erie discuss anxieties of navigating city life, FENFC in partnership with the Niagara Chapter of Native Women, decided to create a rural stream of UIHB called Indigenous Homeward Bound Fort Erie. A key adaptation for FENFC was to support an additional year for participants to re-focus and settle into their new life with culturally relevant supports in place. This first cohort joined the program in the Fall of 2017, and FENFC is set to launch a second cohort in the Spring of 2019.

## Key Program Partners

Niagara Chapter of Native Women  
Niagara College  
Grand River Employment and Training  
Niagara Regional Housing  
Brock University  
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

## Labour Market <sup>iv</sup>

Micro-businesses (establishments that employ between one and four individuals) represent more than half of all employers in the Niagara region.

## FENFC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by FENFC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Justice

## Contact Information

For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
796 Buffalo Road  
Fort Erie, ON L2A 5H2

**Telephone:**  
(905) 871-8931



# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Hamilton Regional Indian Centre



## Demographics of Hamilton v

The City of Hamilton's total population is 527,930. According to 2016 Census data, 12,135 Indigenous people call Hamilton home.

2.3 % of Hamilton's total population is Indigenous (compared to 2.8 % provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in Hamilton is 33.2 years, 7.7 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) was formally incorporated on June 19, 1973 and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in 1973.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at HRIC

HRIC's design of the UIHB program was deeply supported by other Friendship Centres also undertaking the process, including DNFC, N'Amerind and NRNC. A coordinator was hired in Fall 2017 with intensive community consultation and implementations taking place through 2018. Through these engagements, HRIC launched their program in June 2018, with community guidance to support program success. The first cohort completed intake processes in September 2018. A second cohort intake will take place in 2019.

## Key Program Partners

Ontario Works  
City of Hamilton  
Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board  
Metis Nation of Ontario  
Service Canada  
Niwasa  
Mohawk college  
Workforce planning Hamilton  
Youthcan  
Industry Education Council of Hamilton  
Hamilton Housing Help Centre  
Hamilton Wentworth District School Board  
YWCA

## Labour Market

Hamilton is known to have "Canada's most diversified economy" and the fastest growing economy in Ontario.<sup>vi</sup> Hamilton benefits from having a "wide variety of businesses of varying sizes and scopes" across a high number of sectors.<sup>vii</sup> Furthermore, unlike many communities that struggle to retain young professionals and families, Hamilton boasts a high 'millennial population' accounting for 28 percent of the city's total population.

## HRIC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by HRIC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Justice

## Contact Information

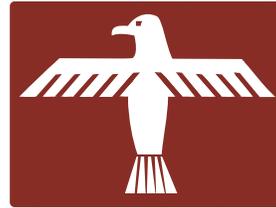
For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
34 Ottawa St N  
Hamilton, ON L8H 3Y7

**Telephone:**  
(905) 548-9593



# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London)



## Demographics of London <sup>x</sup>

The City of London's total population is 378,040. According to 2016 Census data, 9,725 Indigenous people call London home.

The proportion of Indigenous people residing in London is 2.6 percent (compared to 2.8 percent provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in London is 30.9 years, 9.4 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The N'Amerind Friendship Centre (N'Amerind) is one of the "original six" Friendship Centres in Ontario, founded in 1965 and incorporated on April 20, 1967. The N'Amerind Friendship Centre was also one of the founding members of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) which was incorporated in 1971.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at N'Amerind

N'Amerind has been engaged with UIHB for four years. Early activities included meetings with OFIFC, WCS and site visits to WCS's HB site in Toronto. Several focus group sessions took place to help envision UIHB in London, as well as an event with 40 local service providers where the program opportunities were discussed, and many early and pivotal partnerships were formed. The first intake took place in 2017, and the second intake in 2018. A third cohort will begin in September 2019. N'Amerind is utilizing a scattered housing and daycare models, while actively pursuing more long-term housing opportunities. All participants are in education upgrading or post-secondary enrollment.

## Key Program Partners

Fanshawe College  
City of London

## Labour Market <sup>xi</sup>

In the London Economic Region, the working age population has increased by 9.6 percent, however there has been an overall downward trend in labour market participation among working-age residents. A study of this trend in 2016 found that up to 2,500 of the individuals who are not participating in the labour market are Indigenous, the majority of whom live off-reserve, in London. Factors such as a lack of transportation and affordable child care, discrimination, and not being able to connect with employers were often reported as barriers to participation.

## N'Amerind Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by N'Amerind, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Justice

## Contact Information

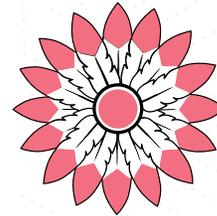
For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
26 Colbourne St  
London, ON N6B 2S6

**Telephone:**  
(519) 672-0131



# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Niagara Regional Native Centre



## Demographics of Niagara <sup>xii</sup>

The St. Catharines-Niagara total population is 396,865. According to 2016 Census data, 11,640 Indigenous people call St. Catharines-Niagara CMA home.

The proportion of Indigenous people residing in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA is 2.9 percent, or 11,640 people who self-identify as Indigenous (compared to 2.8 percent provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in St. Catharines-Niagara CMA is 34.5 years, 9.1 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC) was incorporated on October 9, 1974 and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in 1975.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at NRNC

Initial meetings concerning UIHB in Niagara began in June 2015, where twenty local agencies across sectors (shelters, housing, children's services etc.) created a service map to support the local adaptation of Homeward Bound. During 2016, NRNC engaged with OFIFC and WCS in development of the UIHB Continuum Model. UIHB staff began in Winter 2017 to support the design of the program and community consultations were also completed. NRNC has met consistently with OFIFC and WCS and engaged with Elders who guided the development of UIHB specific policies, procedures and curriculum for the program. The first cohort began in Fall 2018, and all are housed through a scattered-site housing model. A second intake will happen in Fall 2019.

## Key Program Partners

Niagara College  
YMCA  
Niagara Credit Counselling  
United Way

## Labour Market <sup>xiii</sup>

Micro-businesses (establishments that employ between one and four individuals) represent more than half of all employers in the Niagara region.

## NRNC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by NRNC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Housing



Justice

## Contact Information

For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
382 Airport Road RR4  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON  
L0S 1J0

**Telephone:**  
(905) 688-6484



# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Nogojwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough)



## Demographics of Peterborough <sup>xiv</sup>

The City of Peterborough's total population is 78,530. According to 2016 Census data, 3,270 Indigenous people call Peterborough home.

The proportion of Indigenous people residing in Peterborough is higher than that of the province of Ontario - 4.2 percent of Peterborough's total population is Indigenous (compared to 2.8 percent provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in Peterborough is 32.3 years, 10.7 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Nogojwanong Friendship Centre (NFC) was incorporated on February 29, 2008 and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) on October 24, 2009. The NFC is one of the OFIFC's newest members to come aboard and has been core funded since January 2010. They offer a wide range of culture based services, supporting individuals and families of all ages using a wholistic, wraparound approach.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at NFC

NFC began a feasibility study regarding UIHB program implementation in Peterborough in January 2019. This process included a series of focus groups with sole-parent mother-led families, sole-parent father-led families and Friendship Centre staff. A survey was also sent out to local service providers. The recommendation from the feasibility study is for the Friendship Centre to implement the UIHB program.

## Key Program Partners

Peterborough Housing Corporation  
Trent University  
Fleming College  
Kagita Mikam  
Peterborough Native Learning Program  
City of Peterborough  
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services  
Curve Lake First Nation  
Hiawatha Frist Nation  
Fourcast  
Kinark Child and Family Services  
Peterborough Local Employment Planning Council

## Labour Market <sup>xv</sup>

The Region's 2018-2019 Community Labour Market Plan notes that individual employment income for residents in the area is 22% lower than the provincial average. In a focus group with local residents, the need for experiential learning opportunities and barriers to employment such as transportation, affordable housing, and employment stability were highlighted.

## NFC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by NFC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Justice

## Contact Information

For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
580 Cameron Street  
Peterborough, ON  
K9J 3Z5

**Telephone:**  
(705) 775-0387

# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie)



## Demographics of Sault Ste. Marie <sup>viii</sup>

The City of Sault Ste. Marie's total population is 71,880.

According to 2016 Census data, 8,120 Indigenous people call Sault Ste. Marie home.

Over one in ten people in Sault Ste. Marie self-identify as Indigenous (11.3 % of total population, compared to 2.8 % provincially).

The average age of the Indigenous population in Sault Ste. Marie is 34.8 years, 10.3 years younger than that of the general population.

## Friendship Centre History:

The Indian Friendship Centre (IFC) in Sault Ste. Marie was incorporated on March 29, 1972, and became a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) on February 25, 1973.

## Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) at IFC

IFC joined the original six Friendship Centres implementing the UIHB program in 2018. UIHB staff began in Winter 2019 and the design and implementation of the program is currently being developed. The first cohort of participants is set to begin in Spring 2019. Through partnerships with OAHS and the City of Sault Ste. Marie, a surplus school property, house and triplex are being retrofitted for UIHB. The school site will include 11 residential units, on-site daycare and programming space.

## Key Program Partners

Waabinnong Head Start  
Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig  
Algoma University  
Sault College  
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services  
City of Sault Ste Marie

## Labour Market <sup>ix</sup>

In addition to the steel sector, Sault Ste. Marie has experienced increased economic diversification. Major employers include: Canadian Bank Note Company; JD Aero Technical (aircraft maintenance); Heliene Canada (photovoltaic solar panels); ARAUCO (producer of composite wood products); Ellsin Environmental (tire recycling); and Sutherland Global Services.

## IFC Programs

OFIFC administers several wholistic, culture-based programs and initiatives delivered by IFC, including programs that span:



Children & Youth



Cultural Programming



Family Support



Education & Employment



Healing & Wellness



Health



Housing



Justice

## Contact Information

For interested partners and participants

**Address:**  
122 East Street  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON  
P6A 3C6

**Telephone:**  
(705) 256-5634

# Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound

## Ontario Numbers at a Glance

Program Participants: 37

Children/Dependents: 85

Partnerships: 43

## Program Goal:

To generate intergenerational wellbeing and prosperity by systemically addressing the barriers sole-parenting Indigenous mothers face when trying to enter the workforce.

## Program Description:

UIHB is a four-year initiative that aims to systemically address the barriers sole-parenting Indigenous women face when trying to find meaningful employment, enhanced wellbeing and prosperity for themselves and their children. UIHB is founded on the provision of coordination of key supports such as housing, access to culture, childcare, education and life-skills, transportation, case coordination, health access and mental health supports.

## Program Locations:

- 📍 **Dryden Native Friendship Centre** (Dryden, ON)
- 📍 **Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre** (Fort Erie, ON)
- 📍 **Indian Friendship Centre** (Sault Ste. Marie, ON)
- 📍 **Hamilton Regional Indian Centre** (Hamilton, ON)
- 📍 **N'Amerind Friendship Centre** (London, ON)
- 📍 **Niagara Regional Native Centre** (Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON)
- 📍 **Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre** (Peterborough, ON)

## Program Supports:

The UIHB **Advisory Committee** is comprised of community partners and leaders who support program development, implementation and ongoing strategic initiatives. The UIHB **Industry Council** provides insight into local labour market conditions, supports job-readiness mentorship and training and most importantly, guarantees internships to UIHB participants who have completed a two-year college diploma.



**OFIFC**

Ontario Federation of  
Indigenous Friendship Centres

[www.ofifc.org](http://www.ofifc.org) • Email: [reception@ofifc.org](mailto:reception@ofifc.org) • Toll Free: 1-800-772-9291

# Appendix E: Key Evaluation Questions

## Process:

1. What can be learned about implementing the UIHB program?
2. How do cultural supports affect program design and implementation?
3. How does the UIHB program support Indigenous women?

## Questionnaire Guide

1. What is working well in relation to the implementation of the program in your Friendship Centre?
  - 1.0 To what extent is the program meeting its objectives?
  - 1.1 Are resources for implementation available as needed?
2. Are there challenges in implementing the program in the Friendship Centre?
  - 2.1 If so, what are the innovations or adaptations that the Friendship Centre is utilising to overcome these challenges?
3. What is needed to develop and maintain partnerships with external partners? Why?
4. Are there specific culturally-relevant activities and/or approaches used in the implementation of the program?
  - 4.1. If so, how do they contribute to program delivery?
5. What does the program mean to you? (for women participants)

# Appendix F: UIHB Event Summaries

## Community of Practice Gathering January 30-31, 2019 Ottawa, ON

The OFIFC and WCS held a gathering for the Community of Practice, which is a network of organisations including Friendship Centres and WoodGreen supported organisations implementing UIHB and HB in Ottawa, Ontario.

The member agencies of the HB / UIHB Community of Practice were invited to come together for a two-day event focused on capacity building, knowledge sharing, and relationship development to support their ongoing implementation of Homeward Bound and UIHB programs in their local communities. The gathering included a variety of sessions, including opportunities for mutual support, education on research and evaluation, and guest speakers on a range of HB / UIHB related topics.

Key Objectives of the Gathering:

1. To promote relationship building and strengthening of connections between members of the Community of Practice;
2. To enable and encourage collaboration between Community of Practice members to address common program challenges and share learnings; and
3. To facilitate capacity building for Community of Practice partners, based on initial assessment of partner needs and key growth areas.

In total, 37 people attended the gathering, representing 14 agencies:

- Brant Skills Centre (Brantford)
- Dryden Native Friendship Centre
- Employment and Education Centre (Brockville)
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Home Suite Hope (Halton)
- Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie)
- N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London)
- Niagara Regional Native Centre
- Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough)
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

- Peterborough Housing Corporation
- WoodGreen Community Services
- YWCA Peterborough

## **Art-based Group Evaluation Activity**

### *Telling your UIHB/HB Story*

OFIFC Research staff presented on OFIFC's USAI Research Framework (2012). OFIFC staff also spoke about community-led evaluation practices in alignment with the USAI Framework. In an effort to dynamically share the stories of UIHB / HB programs, participants formed small groups and were supported to design the cover page of a local newspaper or magazine that told the story of their programs locally. This included quotes, photos, common themes etc.

## **Attendee Feedback**

Feedback was collected from the gathering and respondents agreed that the event was worthwhile, enjoyable, well-managed, and offered learnings that could support the work each were doing in their respective UIHB and HB programs.

Overall, respondents listed the 'Breakout Sessions' and the 'Wise Crowds' activities as their top two highlights from the event. A few respondents shared appreciation for the opportunity to hear about others' challenges/solutions and for the opportunity to connect with everyone over an informal dinner.

Respondents identified the following four elements of the Gathering as most valuable:

1. Getting Support;
2. Having Opportunities to Learn;
3. Sharing Experiences; and
4. Connecting with Others.

## **Key Recommendations from the Community of Practice Gathering**

Through the feedback survey and informal discussions with attendees and staff, a number of recommendations have been collected to inform future Community of Practice (COP) events. They include recommendations to:

1. Extend the time frames of future gathering events (e.g., two to three full days) to allow more time allotted to group discussion and to avoid attendees feeling rushed during activities.
2. Continue to create semi-structured opportunities for attendee interaction on program goals and challenges, enabling COP partners to discuss details of program implementation and creative solutions to emerging issues.

3. Continue to create opportunities for informal interaction between COP members (e.g., Community Dinner at the Lord Elgin Hotel) to focus on relationship building and connection.
4. Continue to balance activities that include both HB and UIHB programs with those that enable groups to meet independently, acknowledging the value of bridging learnings across the whole community while respecting the need for conversations and supports that are specific to each context.
5. Brief and prepare guest speakers to ensure that their content applies to a diversity of contexts/geographies across the COP and to communicate those connections to program development and implementation.
6. Provide a range of capacity building opportunities to the COP to address the diverse needs of communities with younger programs, as well as those with more mature implementations of HB/UIHB.

### **UIHB Coordinators Meeting March 5, 2019**

On March 5, 2019, UIHB staff gathered in Toronto to participate in consultations regarding the twelve-week culturally-informed life-skills curriculum being developed for the program. UIHB staff met and collectively provided feedback to ensure that the curriculum that will be developed is reflective of the needs identified through the first year of implementations locally. Areas of focus included goal setting, confidence, financial literacy, problem solving and decision making, self-care, communication and career options.

In total, 13 people attended the March 5 meeting, representing seven Friendship Centres and OFIFC:

- Dryden Native Friendship Centre;
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre;
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre;
- Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie);
- N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London);
- Niagara Regional Native Centre;
- Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough); and
- OFIFC.

Each Friendship Centre also provided an update regarding their local program delivery.



**OFIFC**

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