

Program Summary

Neyaashiinigiing E'minoyaaig Binojiingyag Formally Nawash Native Child Welfare



Overview (Provide a brief description of the program):

*“To ensure that our children are raised to be strong and healthy and are given the opportunities they need to grow to their full potential. We recognize that the future of our community and our First Nation is dependent upon our children and that our children will grow to become future parents and community leaders. Our families need support to provide protection and care for children and the community holds a shared responsibility to help our children to grow to their full potential.” *Nawash Chief and Council 2009*

Native Child Welfare Core Values:

- Children are sacred and the family unity is important.
- Early child development programs are important interventions for the prevention of child maltreatment,
- Prevention services promote family well-being, and empower members to care for their children.
- Public education and open sharing of information is key to successful community-based programming.
- First Nation’s people benefit from having services delivered from within the community.
- Community service involvement ensures other community programs participate in the management of cases.
- Early intervention and prevention require the creation of safe places for all members to heal from the impact of the traumas experienced through colonization.

Objectives (Outline the main goals of the program and the specific services offered):

To provide Early Intervention, Prevention and Support Services to on reserve Band Members in order to prevent child welfare matters from arising in the community; and to provide voluntary support to on reserve members who are involved in the Child Welfare System.

Services:

Primary Intervention Services:

Early Intervention and prevention of child maltreatment / Child Welfare issues in the community.

- Community capacity building and engagement to achieve E'minoyaaig Binojiingyag and to promote the Nawash Children’s Bill of Rights as the base for the development of Nawash Child Welfare Law.
- Family Supports – Individual, & group supports and community activities
- Youth Supports – Individual & group support for youth ages 13 to 18 and their parents.
- Community Mentorship – Leaders in Training, After School Programming, Peer Mentorship, Volunteer Coordination, Community Support for all ages.

Secondary Intervention Services:

Support for families on reserve who are involved with Child Welfare Agencies, this is a voluntary service, based the consent of the family.

- Family Support Worker – individual, group and community support
- Youth Support Worker – individual, group and community support
- Community Mentor – Leaders in Training, peer mentorship, group support, volunteer coordination and support for community functions.

Tertiary Intervention Services:

In community placements determined by kin, parents and extended families, that ensure children who can no longer live at home can be cared for in the community.

- Customary Kinship Care Support – support groups, training, outings and community capacity building.
- Customary/Kinship Financial Supports - for the care of children who can no longer live at home.
- Outreach and recruitment to meet the future needs of children in the community
- Home Renovation Support – to repair homes where children in need reside on reserve.

Target Audience (Identify the primary audience/population that the program serves):

Children and Youth 0 to 18; Mothers, Fathers, Grandmother, Grandfather, Aunties, Uncles and Cousins of Nawash Band Members residing on reserve who are of all ages.

Recent Developments

In January 2024 the Nawash Chief and Council passed the Nawash Children’s Bill of Rights. This document will be the basis for Nawash to commence creating a Child Welfare Law if the community wishes.

This year the Customary Kinship Care Coordinator position was filled. Regular Kinship Care Support groups have been coordinated. Currently in Nawash we have 20 Kinship Homes providing care for 34 children who can no longer live at home. The Kinship Care Coordinator has taken on the Leaders in Training Program to build an afterschool program which includes nutritional support and tutoring. Parents of the children participating are supporting the program by coming in to prepare a healthy after school meal while the students are engaged with tutors and other supports.

The Family Service Supervisor has been a member of the opioid response team, E’minoyaajig Binojiingyag staff have supported community functions and ceremonies, these have included community fires, community feasts, and capacity building events.

The Green and Inclusive Building renovation will be completed in February 2025. Once complete a grand opening of the new reception area, office space and meeting room will be hosted.

The old SON office is being renovated to make 3 transitional apartments. There is a critical need for housing in the community, we cannot place our children in community if we have no housing. The 3 unit transitional housing complex will be utilized for families with children in need to stay while their existing

residence is being renovated or until they can find housing in the community. The transitional period for this unit will be set at a 2 year limit, families will have 2 years to establish permanent housing.

Recent Limitations *(Describe any challenges or obstacles the program has faced recently):*

The E'minoyaaig Binojinyag Program has not been able to recruit staff. Currently there are 4 vacant positions. The following is a list of the positions.

- Family Services Supervisor; Darlene Ritchie
- Administrative Assistant; Vacant – temporarily filled though a 3-month casual contract
- Family Support Service Worker; Angela Johnston
- 2nd Family Support Worker; vacant
- Youth Support Worker; Shannon Drane
- 2nd Youth Support Worker; vacant
- Community Mentor; vacant
- Customary / Kinship Care Coordinator; Joanne Keeshig
- Receptionist; Vacant

It has been a challenge to run programs with limited staff, best practise is to have 2 staff in attendance for programming. Going forward we will be reaching out to other Nawash programs to build capacity and improve service coordination including case management.

Next Steps *(Outline the next steps or future plans for the program including any important events):*

- Coordinate a meeting with the NCW Committee, E'minoyaaig Binojinyag staff and all other service providers in Nawash to provide an orientation to changes in child welfare legislation, the Children's Bill of Rights and the need to improve service coordination.
- Advocate that the E'minoyaaig Binojinyag Home Renovation Pilot Project Policy, Application Form and Budget be accepted and approved by the Nawash Chief and Council in order to meet the critical need for housing children who can no longer live at home or who are in need in the community.
- Address the need for team building and staff development to prevent burn out
- Recruit staff to complete the staffing schedule

Community Engagement *(Describe how community can access the program or services):*

The E'minoyaaig Binojinyag program and services are based on "self-referral", all programs and services are voluntary. The staff do not have the authority of a child welfare agency. Everyone in Ontario holds the "Duty to Report" child abuse and neglect this includes staff in this program.

The community will be engaged to understand that the Native Child Welfare program name was changed 10 years ago to Neyaashiinigiimig E'minoyaaig Binojinyag, we are the place where children get good care. Further that the program does not carry a mandate to protect children, the mandate to protect children remains with the Bruce Grey Children's Aid Society. The community will be made aware that the mandate for E'minoyaaig Binojinyag is the Early Intervention and Prevention of Child Welfare matters in the community.