Tungasuvvingat Inuit

TUNGASUVVINGAT INUIT DESIGNATED AS SERVICE DELIVERY AGENCY FOR ONTARIO INUIT FAMILIES INVOLVED WITH CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

May 9, 2022

OTTAWA, ON – On Friday, April 8, 2022, Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) signed its first ever protocol agreement with a children's aid society. The signing of this document and continuing the partnership with Family and Children Services of Renfrew County will ensure that Inuit have access to culturally specific supports, which are the foundation for healing and wellness.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) has designated Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) as the service delivery agency for families involved with the Child Protective Services in Ontario. ITK is a listed Inuit community under Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017. (CYFSA) This legislation now recognizes Inuit as a distinct Indigenous community in Ontario. ITK has designated Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI) to deliver services to Inuit children, youth, and families and to ensure that Inuit-specific services and connection to culture and community continue to be a priority.

TI's Kamatsiarniq Program's objective is for an early prevention or intervention to limit child welfare intrusive measures. The Kamatsiarniq Program was created in 2020 to respond to the needs of families interacting with the child welfare system. Over the past two years, the Kamatsiarniq Program has been working alongside Family and Children Services of Renfrew County receiving and responding to notifications and improving access to cultural services for Inuit families.

Tauni Sheldon, Case Manager and Cultural Advisor for the Kamatsiarniq Program shared, "With the affects of the histories of child welfare that so many Inuit have endured, this first of its kind protocol agreement between TI and the Family and Children's Services of Renfrew County is ground-breaking. This is the much-needed work to set new precedence with newer structures to address the harms inflicted upon Inuit by child welfare societies. By TI and the child welfare agencies coming together in partnerships, this becomes rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit as well as in the TRC 94 Calls to Action, which strengthens Inuit well-being as a whole."

Amanda Kilabuk, Executive Director of TI stated, "This agreement is the result of a lot of hard work on the part of staff from both organizations. This protocol agreement sets structure to how child welfare agencies work with Inuit in Ontario and provides recourse for issues and disagreements. It is a critical first step in acknowledging and addressing the harms that the child welfare system has inflicted, and continues to inflict, upon Inuit families in Ontario". Another important piece to this protocol is that it will mandate additional training for agency workers and foster or adoptive families about Inuit history and culture."

The protocol is important in that it will allow the Kamatsiarniq Program to commit to working with all child protective service agencies to recognize Inuit children, youth, and families as a distinct Indigenous group in Ontario while building a relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, and co-operation. It will also pave the way for other protocols to strengthen relationships and support the work of prevention focused Indigenous service providers.

In Ontario, there is an overrepresentation of Inuit families involved in the child welfare system and this agreement and all that follow is an early step in the right direction to improving the current approach while respecting and honouring the values and voices of the Inuit Community in this Province.

In the spirit of one of the eight guiding Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Principles, "ᐱᔨᑦᓯᓂᖅ / Pijitsirniq serving and providing for family and/or community", our team at TI and the Kamatsiarniq Program looks forward to implementing the agreements made.

For Ontario Inuit families involved with child protective services that require more information or support, they can reach out by emailing Kamatsiarniq@tiontario.ca.

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For more information contact, Joël Lamoureux, Manager, Communications
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Tungasuvvingat Inuit is a one-stop resource centre to meet the rapidly growing, complex, and evolving needs of Inuit in Ontario and is recognized as a leading advocate for urban Inuit and is prominent within the framework of national Inuit organizations