



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Parry Sound Friendship Centre and Parry Sound DSSAB Sign Relationship Protocol to Strengthen Indigenous-Led Early Learning and Child Care

Parry Sound, Ontario | September 10, 2026

The Parry Sound Friendship Centre and the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB), with support from the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), are excited to jointly announce a new Relationship Protocol that strengthens collaboration in the delivery of Indigenous-led Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) services in Parry Sound.

The protocol establishes shared commitments to culturally grounded service delivery, respectful communication, coordinated planning, and Indigenous data sovereignty. The protocol supports a service model that enables urban Indigenous families to access child care, cultural programming, and family supports in one place: the Friendship Centre.

The signing will take place on Thursday, September 10 at 10am at the Parry Sound Friendship Centre, 25 Church Street, Parry Sound, ON. Media and members of the public are welcome to attend.

A Strengthened Partnership for Indigenous Children and Families

The Relationship Protocol is grounded in Indigenous self-determination, cultural safety and humility, mutual accountability, transparency, and collaboration. It reflects a shared commitment to reconciliation through meaningful partnership and service delivery that is responsive to community needs, rooted in culture, and guided by strong relationships.

The protocol also affirms Indigenous data sovereignty. The Friendship Centre retains authority over Indigenous-specific data and the DSSAB accesses only what is required for legal and regulatory reporting. Respecting Indigenous ownership, control, access, and stewardship of Indigenous information is an important expression of self-determination.

Why Indigenous-Led Early Learning and Child Care Matters

Indigenous-led ELCC is reconciliation in action.

It helps restore what colonial systems sought to disrupt: belonging, identity, pride, cultural continuity, and the right of Indigenous children to grow up in environments that reflect, celebrate, and nurture who they are.

Research and community experience consistently demonstrate that culturally grounded Indigenous early learning programs support positive outcomes for children and families – strengthening children’s sense of identity and belonging; deepening connections to language, culture and community, increasing family engagement, and supporting children’s healthy development and readiness for learning.^[1]

Quotes

Sean Longboat, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

"Indigenous-led early learning and child care is a pathway to healing. When children grow up connected to their culture, community, and identity, they build the foundation they need to thrive. This partnership demonstrates what is possible when Indigenous organizations and service system partners work together to advance Indigenous self-determination and create better outcomes for children and families."

Tracey Pawis-McCans, Chief Executive Officer, Parry Sound Friendship Centre

"Indigenous-led child care comes from our teachings and our relationships with families. This protocol recognizes that and helps us move forward in a way that honours our community."

Tammy MacKenzie, Chief Administrative Officer, District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board

"This protocol represents a new beginning for our organizations. When we come to the table willing to listen, learn from each other, and stay focused on the communities we serve, there is so much we can accomplish together. We are optimistic about what lies ahead and the positive impact this renewed collaboration will have for Indigenous children and families in Parry Sound."

About the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and Friendship Centres

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) represents the collective interests of 31 Friendship Centres located in cities and towns across Ontario. Friendship Centres are community hubs where Indigenous people living in urban communities can gather, connect, and access culturally based programs and services.

Friendship Centres improve the quality of life for urban Indigenous people by supporting self-determined activities that encourage equal access to and participation in Canadian society while respecting and celebrating Indigenous cultural distinctiveness.

About Parry Sound Friendship Centre

The Parry Sound Friendship Centre is one of the original six Friendship Centres in Ontario, founded in 1966. The Centre is also one of the founding members of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, which was incorporated in 1971.

The Parry Sound Friendship Centre has a longstanding and important place in the Parry Sound community where it offers programs that respect aboriginal cultural distinctiveness and promote and deliver programs and activities to build healthier lifestyles, families and communities. The Centre offers opportunities for connection, community building and a commitment to urban Indigenous families and children.

About the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board

The District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) is responsible for planning, funding, and delivering a range of human services across the Parry Sound district, including child care and early years services, housing, income support, homelessness prevention and Violence against Women programs. The DSSAB works with community partners to ensure residents have access to responsive and effective services that support individual and community well-being.

Media Contacts

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