

Final Report

**Project #1442121: Scaling the Success of Homeward Bound
through Shared Measurement and a Community of Practice**

April 2019

Prepared by:

WoodGreen Community Services

&

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres



WOODGREEN

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OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

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Homelessness.*

Introduction

Over the past year (2018-2019), **WoodGreen Community Services** (WoodGreen) and the **Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres** (OFIFC) embarked on a journey to build a Community of Practice to support the growth of Homeward Bound and Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound programs across Ontario – this work served to develop resources and best practices to improve program delivery and efficacy, improve ongoing knowledge transfer between program sites, develop methods for coordinating evaluation across sites, and conduct in-depth research into the process of design, development and implementation of programs to uncover key learnings and practices.

Project History

Homeward Bound

In 2004, WoodGreen created the Homeward Bound program in Toronto to support female-led, lone-parent, low-income families in achieving stability and financial independence through a four-year, wraparound support model leading to sustainable employment at a living wage.

In 2012, interest began to grow in bringing the Homeward Bound program model to other regions in Ontario that shared the struggle of providing solutions for female-led families in poverty and precarious housing situations. Over the next seven years, WoodGreen worked in partnership with a number of local agencies across Ontario to assess program feasibility and develop regional adaptations of the Homeward Bound program.

Across Ontario, four agencies have embarked on the process of launching Homeward Bound programs in their local communities: **Home Suite Hope** in Oakville and Halton Region; **the Employment and Education Centre** in Brockville and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; **Peterborough Housing Corporation** in Peterborough and Peterborough Country, and; the **Brant Skills Centre** in Brantford and Brant County.

Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound

The OFIFC and WoodGreen began visioning Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound (UIHB) in 2012 when alignment between WoodGreen's Homeward Bound (HB) program model and the wrap-around, culture-based services delivered by Friendship Centres was recognized.

Initial partnership activities in 2014 included a three-year UIHB Feasibility Project which culminated in the development of the UIHB Continuum, a culturally and contextually adapted UIHB program model.

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. **Nogojwanong 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.

Community of Practice

Building on the momentum of these local community implementations and recognizing the important connections between the HB and UIHB programs, the OFIFC and WoodGreen collaborated to convene a Community of Practice (COP) comprising all Friendship Centres and local agencies implementing HB and UIHB programs.

WoodGreen and the OFIFC jointly developed the COP throughout 2018-19, providing information, support and technical program development assistance to HB and UIHB sites, in addition to facilitation connection and collaboration between partners.

Simultaneously, WoodGreen and the OFIFC embarked on a year-long research project to understand the nature and development process of each HB and UIHB implementation. This work has culminated in this report, including detailed case studies community profiles of each HB and UIHB site, as well as program evaluation reports including lessons learned for adapting each program to community specific needs.

Relationship Between WoodGreen and the OFIFC

The relationship between WoodGreen and the OFIFC began in 2012, when interest began to develop in a culturally-adapted Homeward Bound model that would be operated by Friendship Centres to leverage their existing services and expertise to support Indigenous lone-parent families.

After a number of years of relationship development, trust-building, and demonstrated accountability between WoodGreen and the OFIFC, the Counselling Foundation of Canada provided funding in 2014 to support a feasibility study of the Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound model, led by Friendship Centres.

A significant and fundamental aspect of the relationship between these two organizations has been the sharing of resources and commitment to joint leadership for shared work, while respecting the knowledge and autonomy of each group in their respective domains. The current funding, provided by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy – Innovative Solutions to Homelessness was shared between WoodGreen and the OFIFC, reflecting the critical role that each organization plays in guiding the future of this work.

The continuously evolving relationship between WoodGreen and the OFIFC is one of mutual respect and partnership, grounded in listening and learning, and a commitment to the principles of Truth and Reconciliation.

Current Project – Scaling the Success of Homeward Bound

Through the funding provided by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), WoodGreen completed the following activities:

- Development of HB evaluation tools to document design, development, and adaptation of programs to local conditions, including assets, challenges, and lessons learned;
- Conducted two rounds of field visits to HB partner sites to discuss and document HB implementation and deliver capacity building supports, as needed;
- Conducted program evaluation for HB implementation including the development of case studies for each HB partner;
- Conducted process evaluation for the COP, documenting and examining the extent and impact of capacity development and relationship building activities;
- Development of a Theory of Change model that demonstrates how the HB program and the COP can improve employment and housing outcomes for female-led, lone-parent families in Canada;
- Conducted needs assessments to identify priority development areas for HB sites;
- In collaboration with the OFIFC, developed and launched an Online Hub for the COP to share HB and UIHB tools, resources, and data, in addition to facilitating the development of collaboration between program sites;
- In collaboration with the OFIFC, designed and facilitated webinars and teleconferences for COP members on a variety of topics based on emerging programmatic needs;
- In collaboration with the OFIFC, coordinated and delivered a two-day capacity building event for all COP member organizations;
- In collaboration with the OFIFC, presented on HB and UIHB program activities at various and regional conferences, including the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (Hamilton, ON).

Through the funding provided by ESDC through HPS, the OFIFC completed the following activities:

- Development of UIHB evaluation tools to document adaptation, design, identification of service strengths and gaps and to capture project learnings;
- Conducted needs assessments to identify priority development areas for UIHB sites.
- Documented and shared initial project learnings (September 2018);
- Conducted two rounds of Field Visits to UIHB Friendship Centres to discuss and document UIHB implementation and deliver capacity supports as required;
- Collaboratively designed and facilitated webinars and teleconferences with WoodGreen for COP on topics including intake, case management, COP updates and next steps;
- Conducted program evaluation for UIHB implementation including the development of case studies for each UIHB Friendship Centre;
- In collaboration with WoodGreen, coordinated and delivered a two-day capacity building event for all COP members organizations; and,
- Presented UIHB program activities at various national and regional conferences, including the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (Hamilton, ON).

Additional Supports and Funding

In addition to the generous support of ESDC, the OFIFC and WoodGreen also received funding from the Counselling Foundation of Canada to support UIHB and COP activities.

The major project activities that were supported by additional funding included the development of a twelve-week life skills curriculum for UIHB participants and a Gathering of all Community of Practice members in Ottawa, ON for a 2-day capacity development and relationship building event.

Where We Are Now

WoodGreen and the OFIFC continue to provide support to organizations implementing UIHB/HB and are working together to advocate for sustained and long-term funding for the programs.

Homeward Bound

In addition to operating the original Homeward Bound program in Toronto, WoodGreen is actively supporting Homeward Bound programs in four cities across Ontario. Over 50 mother-led families have entered into new HB programs and are accessing wraparound supports, like childcare, housing, and education, on their way to long-term, sustainable employment at a living wage. HB programs across Ontario have been supported by strong partnerships between local service delivery agencies and the philanthropy and volunteerism of community members and organizations. New HB sites have been successful in providing participants with all major elements of the HB program model and have been contributing to the body of knowledge about HB best practices. HB participants across Ontario are engaged in all phases of the program, from stabilization to college education to internship and long-term employment, achieving excellent outcomes in each domain and reporting positive employment-based, socioemotional and familial relationship development.

Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound

OFIFC is actively supporting seven Friendship Centres implementing UIHB locally. Across the province, Indigenous sole-parent mothers are enrolled in the program and their children receive wrap-around services and supports. Dedicated transitional housing is under construction in two communities. Other sites have secured rent supplements and subsidized accommodation for participants and are working towards securing dedicated housing with not-for-profit housing partners. UIHB participants are enrolled in academic upgrading or post-secondary education and some have begun apprenticeships and work-placements in conjunction with their education. All participants have access to childcare, housing (in situ stabilization and affordability supports, and dedicated UIHB housing), cultural events and community supports. Early qualitative outcomes for UIHB have been overwhelming positive, especially in the areas of poverty reduction, family reunification and post-secondary enrollment. Friendship Centres also report cross-sector partnerships with post-secondary institutions, municipalities and districts, local not-for-profit housing partners, social service providers, childcare providers and industry stakeholders.

Structure of this Document

This document contains two distinct, yet interrelated reports – 1) the case studies of the four HB programs and HB program evaluation report, developed by WoodGreen, and 2) the process evaluation report developed by the OFIFC inclusive of UIHB community profiles, evaluation findings, lessons learned and recommendations. Each report details program adaptability required for specific community contexts and needs.

The separation of these two reports reflects and respects not only the uniqueness of the HB and UIHB programs and their stories, but also the different culturally-informed approaches to research and knowledge gathering between the two organizations.

The conclusion of this document describes a set of shared learnings across the HB and UIHB programs, and outlines the future of the COP and the continued growth of HB and UIHB.



BUILDING HOMEWARD BOUND

Exploring Four Place-Based Adaptations of
WoodGreen's Homeward Bound Model



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BUILDING HOMEWARD BOUND



Exploring Four Place-Based Adaptations of WoodGreen's Homeward Bound Model

This report looks at the journeys four communities took toward implementing their own locally-adapted Homeward Bound program, between the years of 2014 and 2018.

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CASE STUDIES



INTRODUCTION

WoodGreen created the Homeward Bound program (Homeward Bound) in 2004 to support female-led, lone-parent, low-income families in achieving stability and financial independence. Homeward Bound is a four-year integrated support model that provides stability to single mothers and their children by providing a holistic set

of wrap-around supports. These supports include: housing, childcare, case management, counselling supports, life skills and employment readiness training, post-secondary education, and access to internships and employment opportunities.

WOODGREEN'S HOMEWARD BOUND MODEL

A Four-Year Integrated Support Model	
Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal-oriented case management Guidance, support and accountability in meeting program milestones Focused coordination of wrap-around services and support Parenting support and family counselling Psychotherapy and trauma counselling
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable and suitable two- or three-bedroom units on-site at Homeward Bound campus Four year tenancy during participation in program (ends upon program completion)
Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-site childcare After-school support, including pick-up and drop-off, tutoring Recreational programming
Skills Training and Academic Upgrading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life skills training Computer skills training Financial literacy training Academic upgrading for college entrance and planning Job preparation and employment-related skills training
College Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully funded two-year college program Choice of college programs that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> match labour market needs are likely to lead to family-sustaining wages are compatible with Industry Council needs and opportunities
Internship/ Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from an active Industry Council composed of local employers/ professionals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide insight into local labour markets and help identify relevant post-secondary programs likely to support employment at family-sustaining wages Lead workshops on career opportunities Offer mock interviews with feedback from professionals working in participants' chosen fields Guarantee internships to participants who have completed post-secondary education Connect participants with employment opportunities Support professional advancement of participants through their professional networks



SUCCESSES TO DATE

Over Homeward Bound's 15 years of operation, more than 200 women have successfully completed this rigorous program and have moved toward financial stability and independence for themselves and their families.

Homeward Bound's success as an intervention has been demonstrated through promising participant outcomes over the past five years.

In 2017, WoodGreen engaged external evaluation experts at Constellation Consulting Group to assess the impact of the Homeward Bound program on participants who had graduated within the last five years (since 2012). The following highlights represent just a few of the findings from that evaluation:¹

Housing instability decreased significantly, with 92% of participants who had been living in shelters when admitted to the program having moved into market rentals (77%), subsidized housing (9%), or homes they owned (5%).

Out of the two-thirds (64%) of respondents who had a Grade 12 education or less upon intake to the program, **all graduated with a college**

education in an employable field.

The unemployment rate among survey respondents dropped from 90% upon intake to the program, to 13% up to five years after graduating.

While 84% of survey respondents were accessing income support through Ontario Works (OW) when they entered the program, **only 15% of respondents were still accessing OW up to five years past graduation.**

Ninety-two percent of respondents felt their children had benefitted in some way from their involvement in Homeward Bound, the most commonly cited benefit being increased stability.

Constellation Consulting Group conducted a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis looking at the monetary value to the public system of helping single mothers to exit the shelter system and come off income supports. In this investigation, Homeward Bound was found to **generate a social return of six dollars for each dollar invested in the program.**

¹Miller, Anne. 2017. *Homeward Bound Program Five Year Retrospective Evaluation: Key Findings and Recommendations*. Toronto : WoodGreen Community Services, 2017.

GROWING HOMEWARD BOUND

As Homeward Bound developed a reputation as a promising intervention for single mothers, excitement about the program started to build. Communities from across Ontario recognized similar challenges in their local environments and believed in the potential of the Homeward Bound model to change lives in their cities.

Four Ontario communities – based in Oakville, Brockville, Peterborough and Brantford – connected with WoodGreen and have started to implement local adaptations of the Homeward Bound model in their cities.

In each community, a “Lead Agency” has directed the work of planning, implementing, and operating the local Homeward Bound program. During the early planning and implementation stages, WoodGreen has supported these communities in identifying and engaging key stakeholders and local resources.

In June 2018, WoodGreen launched the Homeward Bound Community of Practice, where Homeward Bound communities convene to exchange and develop their collective expertise, learnings, and wise practices.

Moving forward, this Community of Practice will be a key resource for

communities adapting the Homeward Bound model to their local context, whether they are just starting out or exploring ways to improve their established programs.

In the four communities explored in this case study, each Lead Agency has built on the strengths of its own expertise and leveraged relationships with local actors and organizations to assemble a holistic intervention that encompasses the core pillars of the Homeward Bound model.

At the heart of Homeward Bound is the recognition that low-income single mothers face a host of systemic barriers that perpetuate gender-based and intergenerational poverty.

In each community, these barriers may take on different characteristics and nuances. While the fundamental pillars of the Homeward Bound model are in place at each site, the ways in which elements of the program are delivered do not always replicate the model as it is implemented in WoodGreen’s Homeward Bound program.

Each Lead Agency has a unique story of building their Homeward Bound program that is shaped by the people, organizations and communities involved in the journey.

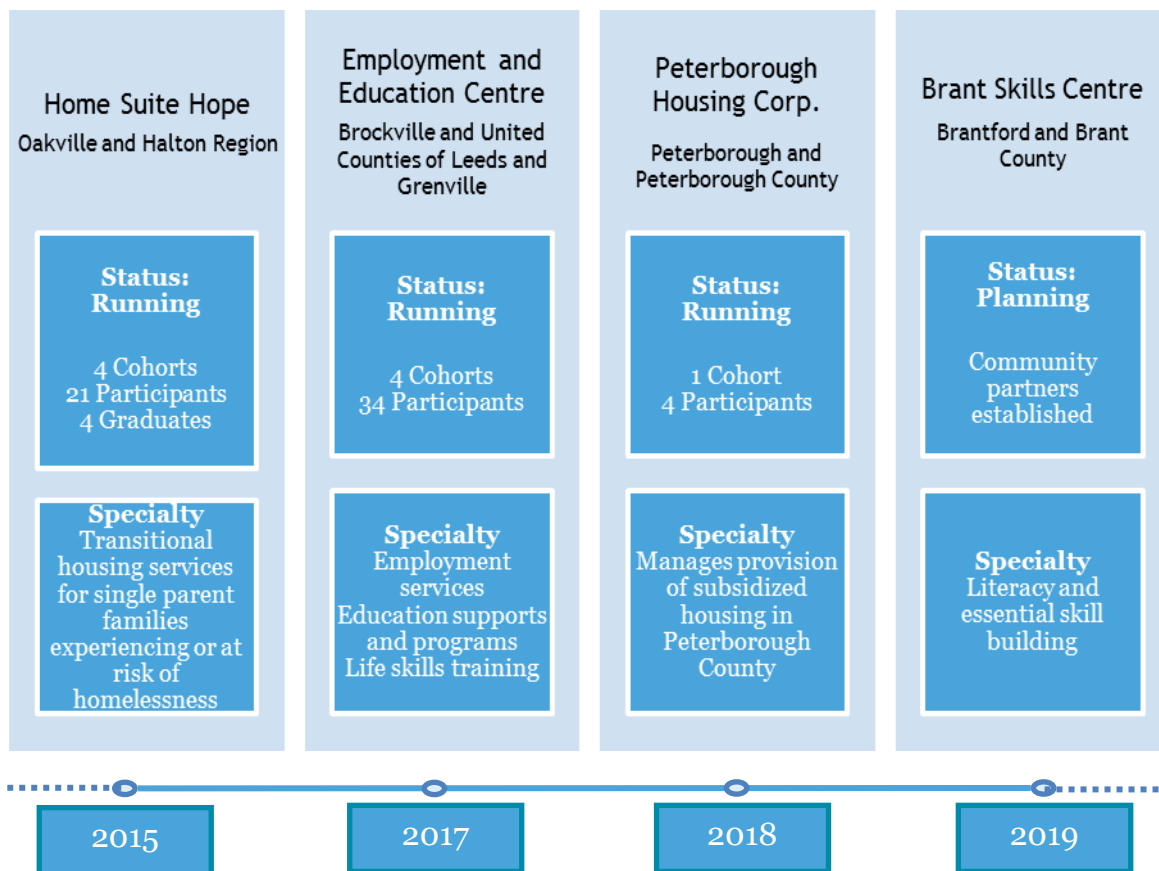
CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The following Case Studies explore the implementation histories of Homeward Bound programs in Oakville, Brockville, Peterborough and Brantford, including a current snapshot of each implementation. The four sites are explored in chronological order of the initiation of their local Homeward Bound.

These stories have been explored through semi-structured in-person interviews and follow-up communication with Lead Agency staff and their community

partners during the summer and early autumn of 2018, and again in the winter of 2019. Interviewees spoke about the planning and implementation history at each site, including the scope of their involvement and their reflections on those early stages. Lead Agency staff discussed the current status and iteration of their Homeward Bound programs, the roles and responsibilities of their active community partners and the next steps that would further the evolution of their Homeward Bound programs.

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR HOMEWARD BOUND SITES²



²Cohort/participant numbers accurate as of August 2018.



HOMeward BOUND CASE STUDIES





HOME SUITE HOPE



SPECIALTY:

Wrap-around services for female-led, lone-parent families experiencing or at risk of homelessness

LOCATION:

Town of Oakville

SERVES

Regional Municipality of Halton (and surrounding areas)

LAUNCHED:

2015

STATUS:

Program is running with 14 participants in four active cohorts



ABOUT HOME SUITE HOPE

Home Suite Hope provides full wrap-around services to homeless, or precariously housed, lone mother-led families in the Halton Region. Along with Homeward Bound, Home Suite Hope runs two employment-only programs, called Step Forward and SOS, which support the stabilization of single mothers accessing income supports.

Their oldest existing program, ReStart, acts as a feeder program for Homeward Bound, Step Forward, and SOS.

Through their programs, Home Suite Hope assists single parent families by providing affordable long-term housing accommodation and support services that enhance a family's capacities for improved social and family functioning.

ABOUT HOMEWARD BOUND HALTON

Home Suite Hope launched Homeward Bound Halton in 2015. As of March 2019, the program has served a total of 21 families through four cohorts, and has had four graduates.

As the Lead Agency for Homeward Bound Halton, Home Suite Hope

employs two part-time case managers dedicated to the program.

Home Suite Hope also facilitates the program's housing supports. Other key wrap-around supports are delivered through community partnerships.

HOME SUITE HOPE'S JOURNEY TO HOMEWARD BOUND

Home Suite Hope was the first Lead Agency to adapt the Homeward Bound model outside of Toronto. After reading client stories from WoodGreen's Homeward Bound, a group of passionate local champions formed a volunteer working group that included key community stakeholders including the Regional Municipality of Halton, United Way, local urban planners, and other community agencies. The working group rallied support for a locally-adapted Homeward Bound in Halton and reached out to WoodGreen for support in building their program.

WoodGreen collaborated with the Halton working group to assess the feasibility of implementing a local Homeward Bound and helped to map stakeholders and identify key program delivery partners, including a local agency that could take on a leadership role and work towards housing and operating Homeward Bound Halton. Home Suite Hope's mandate and expertise made them the ideal choice.

Throughout the first year of development, enthusiasm and commitment were high and many critical relationships were formalized as the program moved towards operationalization. Some essential early partners are still closely involved in Homeward Bound Halton; Home Suite Hope has strong relationships with Sheridan College and the Regional Municipality of Halton who play a

significant role in providing the education and housing components of the program, respectively. They also have a close relationship with the local YMCA, which offers space for program activities and use of their on-site childcare, along with free memberships for Homeward Bound families during their first year in the program.

In 2018, Home Suite Hope began an internal stocktaking of their programs and took a fresh look at Homeward Bound Halton. A number of new staff joined the organization, including a new Executive Director and Homeward Bound Program Director. A Program Manager who had been involved in the early stages of implementing Homeward Bound Halton also returned to the program, bringing an understanding of the program's original mandate and intention to ground and complement a fresh approach with new staff.

Eventually, Home Suite Hope found a way of streamlining their existing programs and adding new education streams to better coordinate their resources in support of driving participant outcomes.

Home Suite Hope has also delineated two streams within Homeward Bound Halton: "Academic Training" for women pursuing a college education, "Jill of all Trades" for women pursuing training and employment in the trades.

HOW DOES HOME SUITE DELIVER HOMEWARD BOUND?

Figure 1 shows a summary of how each of the core elements is delivered and the community partnerships involved.

Case Management and Counselling

Case Management is delivered by dedicated Home Suite Hope staff (two part-time case workers, one of whom also serves as the part-time program coordinator). The Regional Municipality of Halton provides Home Suite Hope with an annual grant dedicated to funding case management positions.

Warm referrals are central to the wrap-around services Home Suite Hope provides to Homeward Bound participants. Staff refer participants to other agencies through existing relationships with providers and take a proactive role in seeing the referral from initial contact to client support.

Home Suite Hope has recently implemented new data tracking tools and processes that support participant assessments and guide ongoing case

management. These tracking tools collect indicators along seven domains that support self-sufficiency, and are based on data reported by participants approximately every six months.

These seven domains are not strictly related to progress along program milestones, such as post-secondary education and employment; they also include indicators that measure overall mental, emotional, physical, and social wellbeing.

Reporting features included in the tools help case workers and participants visualize their progress along the seven domains, and guide case management discussions and decisions around priority areas of need for participants and their families.

Housing

Following the agency's existing model, Homeward Bound Halton participants are accommodated in scattered site market rent units, and provided with rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) subsidies to top-up their Ontario Works (OW) shelter amounts. Through a partnership with OW, Homeward Bound Halton rent subsidies do not count as participant income and therefore are not deducted from their monthly payments. The Regional Municipality of Halton funds up to \$800 in rent subsidies per participant per month.

Even with this additional support, high rental prices in Halton region mean that participants are often unable to find units that fall within this budget and end up needing to use their OW shelter allowances, the Homeward Bound Halton subsidy *and* a top-up from their personal needs amount to cover rent costs in market units.

As housing is accommodated in market rent units, there are no residency term limits associated with participation in the program.



Home Suite Hope Staff

Childcare

Homeward Bound Halton participants can access subsidized childcare through the Regional Municipality of Halton to cover time spent attending classes. Any other childcare needed for other programming events or activities are paid for by Home Suite Hope on an as-needed basis.

Academic Upgrading

During their participation in ReStart for the first year, participants complete Academic Upgrading as a prerequisite for acceptance into Homeward Bound Halton.

Participation in Sheridan College's Academic Upgrading program requires payment of a \$40 fee, which participants are responsible for covering themselves using their OW benefits. Sheridan College submits a letter of recommendation for

each participant to Homeward Bound Halton based on their performance in academic upgrading, including their grades and attendance record.

Designing Academic Upgrading as an aspect of enrolment in this way has enabled Home Suite Hope's education partner, Sheridan College, to be involved in assessing participant readiness before they are formally accepted into the program.

Skills Training

Life skills and job readiness training is provided approximately five times a year through full-day workshops called Professional Development (PD) days.

PD days are full-day skill training events customized to current cohort needs and delivered primarily by Home Suite Hope staff, with content experts and community partners as needed. During the first year of the program,

participants also attend regular life skills training blocks on Tuesday evenings.

Rather than a longer, more intensive skills training program, Homeward Bound Halton employs this lighter, more flexible approach to match the capacity of their relatively small organization. Additionally, this affords Homeward Bound Halton the flexibility to respond to the specific needs of active cohorts.



Education: Post-Secondary and the Trades

Homeward Bound Halton has two streams: Academic Training and Jill of All Trades.

Academic Training includes two years of college education; participants choose from a list of 20 programs identified by Sheridan and Home Suite Hope based on labour market analyses indicating programs that are likely to lead to family-sustaining wages.

The Jill of All Trades stream is focused entirely on the trades, and is currently centred on the Tool and Die Making program, which has a 95% work placement rate.

Education supports are available in both streams by accessing Sheridan's employment support services.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for post-secondary before being accepted into the program, though it is not required.

Home Suite Hope works exclusively with Sheridan College as their education partner. Sheridan College has a close working relationship with Home Suite Hope. Sheridan staff conference with case managers on participant progress from pre-enrolment to graduation from college.

Internships, Employment and Industry Council

At its beginning, Homeward Bound Halton had a volunteer Industry Council made up of for-profit executives that were responsible for connecting participants with internship and employment opportunities.

Over time, attendance and engagement at the Industry Council declined, and Home Suite Hope is currently working to rebuild the council.

Program Matrix

Figure 1 Program Funding and Delivery Model for Homeward Bound Halton

	Program Delivery	Funding
Main Funding Sources and Partners	<p>Key Partners: Sheridan College Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario Works YMCA of Oakville</p>	<p>Primary Funding Sources: Home Suite Hope fundraises through a variety of streams to build a pot of dedicated funding for Homeward Bound Halton Annual grant from the Regional Municipality of Halton pays for two part-time case management roles</p>
Case Management	<p>Home Suite Hope employs one part-time equivalent (PTE) Program Coordinator position, and two PTE case workers.</p>	<p>Home Suite Hope’s Homeward Bound staff are funded primarily through a grant from the Regional Municipality of Halton, which is dedicated for case management, and topped up through general fundraising done by the agency.</p>
Housing	<p>Home Suite Hope pays participants rent subsidies to top-up the shelter allowance they receive from Ontario Works.</p>	<p>Block funding from the Regional Municipality of Halton pays for the rent subsidies.</p>
Childcare	<p>Participants access regular subsidized childcare provided by the Regional Municipality of Halton; Home Suite Hope makes warm referrals. Childcare is also provided on-site by the YMCA of Oakville when programming is run in their facilities.</p>	<p>Home Suite Hope fundraising. In-kind contributions from YMCA of Oakville.</p>

	Program Delivery	Funding
Academic Upgrading	<p>Accessed through Sheridan College's regular programming as part of the program application process.</p>	<p>A \$40 fee for participating in Sheridan College's Academic Upgrading program is paid for by participants up-front; that fee is eligible for coverage by Ontario Works.</p>
Skills Training	<p>Home Suite Hope runs Professional Development (PD) Days five times a year. During each participant's first year, life skills training blocks are attended every Tuesday evening.</p>	<p>Home Suite Hope pot funding for Homeward Bound Halton.</p>
College Education	<p>Sheridan College is Home Suite Hope's sole education partner. Participants can choose from a list of approximately 20 courses approved based on labour market research.</p>	<p>Sheridan College provides scholarships that cover tuition for Homeward Bound participants. Participants are also provided with laptops. Oakville Community Foundation provides funding for extra education costs (childcare, transportation, parking, etc.), as needed.</p>
Internship/ Employment	<p>Homeward Bound Halton's Industry Council has worked with Home Suite Hope staff and Homeward Bound participants to connect participants with internship and employment opportunities. However, it is currently in re-development.</p>	<p>In-kind contributions from their volunteer Industry Council.</p>

LEARNINGS ALONG THE WAY

SUCSESSES

Aligning Agency Programs (ReStart and Homeward Bound)

Previously, Home Suite Hope ran only two major programs, ReStart and Homeward Bound, independently. A key challenge for Home Suite Hope was that these two programs, while distinct, serve similar clientele (single-parent families) and took a similar approach to providing wraparound supports to promote stability and independence.

Unlike Homeward Bound, ReStart does not have an education-to-employment focus, nor the rigorous expectations embedded in the Homeward Bound model.

However, due to staff transitions during the early stages of designing and implementing Homeward Bound Halton, program design was incomplete at launch. As the program was implemented and operationalized, Home Suite Hope staff began to refer to familiar processes and procedures from ReStart, rather than processes and approaches distinct to the mandate of the Homeward Bound program.

Staff have observed that the confusion between programs may have contributed to past challenges in operating Homeward Bound Halton, primarily in encouraging participant accountability and timely completion of milestones.

Furthermore, Home Suite Hope staff shared that external parties sometimes confused the two programs. For instance, potential funders confused

Homeward Bound and ReStart, complicating the agency's work of messaging around funding and donation asks. As well, when referral agencies confused the two programs, staff would struggle to distinguish which of the two programs would be the best fit for referrals.

When the program's mandate and requirements are clearly understood by external referring agencies, the referral process can then be another step in assessing whether or not the program is a good fit for a client; this opportunity to filter potential applicants is missed when inappropriate referrals are made.

As Home Suite Hope did more outreach for ReStart and Homeward Bound, the difference between the two programs eventually became clearer outside of Home Suite Hope. Rather than focusing on separation to delineate between the two programs, Home Suite Hope restructured their programs in early 2019 to add clarity to their model.

ReStart is now a one-year feeder program for three other programs: Step Forward, SOS and Homeward Bound.

Throughout the one-year period spent in ReStart, participants consider whether or not they would move forward with further education, and case workers assess whether or not an intensive education program would be suited to their needs and capacities.

If participants and their caseworkers agree that Homeward Bound Halton is a good fit for them, they finish ReStart as the first year of the four-year Homeward Bound program, which is followed by two years of education, and one year of intensive job searching.

ReStart is a stabilization period during which women work with Home Suite Hope staff to decide which program they would participate in next, depending on which path is a better fit. During ReStart, participants access rent subsidies as they stabilize housing and childcare.

It is during this year in ReStart that participants decide if they want to move onto Homeward Bound; their readiness for the program is assessed as staff work with them to get a clear understanding of their motivations for participating in the program, and to work with them to ensure they have clear goals that will guide their participation and the support staff are able to provide.

Improving Program Referrals

Using ReStart as a feeder program will also help mitigate the problem of inappropriate referrals to Homeward Bound. Previously, confusion between Homeward Bound and ReStart contributed to Home Suite Hope getting inappropriate referrals to Homeward Bound.

Through a year of stabilization, skills training and academic upgrading, ReStart offers Home Suite Hope staff the opportunity to take the time to work with

Restart also includes mandatory workshops and academic upgrading for women moving on to Homeward Bound. It is through these activities that intensive cohort building is done in the first year.

When this program restructuring happened, Home Suite Hope had an easier time communicating the difference between the programs, and ReStart's role as a stabilizing stage for Homeward Bound made sense.

Moving forward, the first year participants spend in ReStart will be used to work with program participants to identify the best path forward for them, whether it be through post-secondary education in Homeward Bound, or directly to employment supports in Step Forward, or further stabilization on income supports.

participants to clarify their goals, assess their readiness, and triage appropriately.

The Regional Municipality of Halton will use By Name Lists for housing clients and triage lone parents into an application process through the region. Home Suite Hope still has the flexibility to approach the Region when they have a referral for someone who is not in the central database but is still a good fit for the program.

Key Community Partnerships

Since the inception of Homeward Bound Halton, Home Suite Hope has established deep, collaborative relationships that have been pivotal in facilitating the delivery of major program components. Though there are numerous fruitful partnerships that underlie the success of Homeward Bound Halton, three major partners have made key contributions to the ongoing delivery of the program: the Regional Municipality of Halton, the YMCA of Oakville and Sheridan College.

Home Suite Hope's relationship with the Regional Municipality of Halton has enabled them to provide rent subsidies without impacting OW income and has supported program staffing through annual grant funding of one full-time equivalent case manager position (split amongst two part-time staff).

Sheridan College serves a unique role as Home Suite Hope's education partner. Along with being the sole post-secondary institution connected to Homeward Bound Halton, Sheridan College also plays a role in outreach and intake. Originally, there were some challenges in the relationship because of staff turnover at Sheridan, which meant that earlier agreements and understandings of their working relationship were not formalized and maintained. Since then, relationship with Sheridan has strengthened. Homeward Bound participants still access Sheridan's Academic Upgrading programs, and Sheridan staff still work with Home Suite Hope staff to identify post-secondary programs that are more likely to lead participants to earning family-sustaining wages.

Recently, Home Suite Hope's relationship with the YMCA of Oakville

has been renewed. Participating families get free memberships for their first year in ReStart and then access means-tested memberships for the rest of their time in Homeward Bound. The YMCA also provides Home Suite Hope with facility space for life skills and professional development days, and offers free on-site childcare while those activities take place. They have also offered free camp admission for children in the program.

Other key relationships are with the Town of Oakville, the Kerr Street Mission, and Blueberry Fields, a local community garden. From the Town of Oakville, children get \$500 to spend on any town activities, like participating in sports or other recreational activities at community centres. This is a good option for children who live far from a YMCA. Staff from the Town of Oakville also do outreach with Homeward Bound participants to keep them informed about various financial assistance opportunities available for them and their children, and opportunities for free programs and services.

Blueberry Fields and the Kerr Street Mission both supply Homeward Bound families with free food baskets. Blueberry fields provides baskets of fresh produce, while Kerr Street Mission adds bread and other food. Blueberry Fields also have a chef and a nutritionist who do on-site classes based on the contents of the food baskets. These cooking classes have also been an in-road for building mentorship opportunities for graduates; women from the community have volunteered to accompany active participants to cooking classes or go to other events with them in the community.



Redesigned KPI Tracking and Reporting Tools

Home Suite Hope has redesigned the processes and tools they use to track participant data, program process, and key performance indicators. They hired a consultant who developed outcome measurement tools that track data and include reporting templates designed to meet different reporting and programmatic needs.

The data tracking tools capture a broad set of areas of progress for participants across seven domains, each with its own set of assets. These domains were selected based on key performance indicators that demonstrate program impact to both current/potential donors and to participants themselves.

The seven domains cover the following areas: basic needs, children, confidence, connections, health, money, and employability (or “resume”).

Data is tracked through self-evaluation, case management, and milestone tracking within each program. A consistent and common schedule was implemented for monthly in-person case management meetings when KPI measurements are taken. This change introduced mandatory in-person

meetings, which also helped address the disconnection participants reported they felt from program staff, and forced discussions about program progress with participants who may not have actively sought out support from their caseworkers otherwise.

These new data measurement and tracking tools include reporting features and dashboards that support internal case conferencing, external reporting to funders and potential donors, and the conversations case workers have with participants about their progress through the program. The data they collect also helps them understand where to focus their resources in supporting participants based on specific areas of need.

This development of more robust data tracking and monitoring tools was also a response to challenges they faced during periods of staff turnover. Without good data and case notes, it was difficult for staff to transition case work during that period. With the data tools they currently have in place, they anticipate that transitioning case work in the event of staff turnover would be less of a challenge.

Incorporating Research and Participant Feedback

Home Suite Hope is actively incorporating evidence-based practices into the development of Homeward Bound Halton. Since their program launch, Homeward Bound Halton has conducted ongoing evaluations of the program and have designed intentional decision-making processes that include regular and ongoing client feedback.

In 2017, Home Suite Hope collaborated with the Program Evaluation Unit (PEU) at York University to conduct an impact evaluation of Homeward Bound Halton. The evaluation included a review of interim program data and a comparison with data collected from participants in Home Suite Hope's Restart Halton (RH) program. Based on their evaluation, York's PEU came up with a set of actionable recommendations that Home Suite Hope have been implementing, such as planning life skills based on areas of need participants find more useful.

Participants also asked for more transparency around staff changes, staff

roles, and the decisions staff make. In response, Home Suite Hope has more deliberately incorporated participant feedback into decision-making processes, and has been more transparent with participants about how and when they make decisions that impact them. Since incorporating these recommendations, participants have been happy with the changes.

Home Suite Hope continues to purposefully involve participant feedback in their decisions and are making ongoing adjustments to how they run the program.

Home Suite Hope's new Program Director also has a research background in low-income female-led lone-parent families and has specific experience conducting research on Homeward Bound Halton. The Program Director has pushed program policy to include actively seeking and incorporating client feedback in program development.

Cohort Building and Mentorship

Adjustments to attendance requirements and intake scheduling have been made to support more intensive cohort building during the stabilization phase.

The first year in ReStart includes mandatory attendance at workshops, which ensures participants are sharing space and participating in activities together on a regular basis. Intake has also been scheduled to align with bringing in one new cohort of at least

five mothers each year, rather than filling empty spots in the program as they arise.

Home Suite Hope have also been pursuing opportunities for community mentors to work with program participants. For example, mentors have accompanied women to cooking classes and local events to build informal relationships based on mutual interests and shared experiences.



Non-Compliance and Expectations of Staff

Staff had been having challenges addressing non-compliance with program milestones. Prior to collecting participant feedback, staff had been addressing non-compliance on an ad-hoc basis through individual case management. However, during a focus group, it became clear that individual non-compliance was having an impact on perceptions of shared accountability within the group as a whole.

Based on this feedback, Home Suite Hope staff developed a new non-compliance policy with formal and consistent processes. Through involving participants in the search for alternatives, Home Suite Hope was able to arrive at a potential solution to a persistent challenge in program delivery.

In earlier participant feedback collected through the York University PEU study, changes in program staffing came up as a common concern.

Since then, Home Suite Hope has been more open and consistent about staff roles and responsibilities, and how case management is done.

These changes have helped manage participant expectations around staff roles which may have been unrealistic or unclear, making it easier for participants to understand the decisions that impact them and what responsibilities and recourses they have as program participants.

CHALLENGES

Re-Building an Industry Council

Though Homeward Bound Halton originally had an active volunteer Industry Council at its inception, it has since dissolved.

When the Council was established, women in the first cohorts were still going through the early stages of the program, and the need for Industry Council members' involvement was minimal as it was focused solely on connecting women with internships and employment opportunities. Due to inactivity, attendance at Industry Council meetings dropped and eventually membership waned.

Currently participants access employment services at Sheridan.

However, without an Industry Council, they are struggling to connect women with meaningful employment opportunities.

Home Suite Hope staff avoid encouraging participants to pursue post-secondary education in fields where they lack relationships with employers that could lead to placements. This means they have not included promising programs in fields such as Information Technology on the 20 course menu they offer women in the Academic Upgrading stream.

Transitions During Program Launch

In the early stages of implementation, Home Suite Hope experienced a high level of turnover among their Board members, working group members, and program staff. As Homeward Bound Halton was in a nascent stage of development, this led to a loss of process and formalized working relationships.

As a result, program development was incomplete at the time of program launch. While the program was successfully operationalized to support the initial cohorts, the interruptions to early implementation lead to difficulties in further development and operation of Homeward Bound Halton.

Funding and Sustainability

Home Suite Hope's relationships with the Regional Municipality of Halton, the YMCA of Oakville, and Sheridan College are significant boons to their ability to provide major components of the program over the long term. However,

they still need to fund staff positions. Typically they have relied to a significant extent on short-term grants but are looking towards establishing more sustainable funding.

KEY NEXT STEPS

Sustainability Models

Homeward Bound Halton is investing in their long-term success by developing a sustainability model. Their hope is that this model will include more diverse and longer-term funding options that tap into multi-year grants and funds available through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

The former is being built with support of a fundraising committee they have built with substantial engagement and commitment from their board members.

Alumni Program

Home Suite Hope hopes to implement an alumni program in Homeward Bound Halton. During the impact evaluation conducted by York's PEU, some of the feedback clients provided spoke to a

desire for mentorship based on shared experience in addition to the employment-based mentorship they already receive from the Industry Council.

Growing the Program

Home Suite Hope hopes to further expand Homeward Bound Halton through community partnerships and other stakeholder engagement strategies. Staff are looking for opportunities to develop more communications tools to help them build relationships with new partners and donors.

They are considering digital storytelling and other tools that will help share women's experiences with the program, in their own words.

They also hope to develop messaging based on a cost analysis of program impacts to support their outreach to potential funders and donors.



EMPLOYMENT + EDUCATION CENTRE

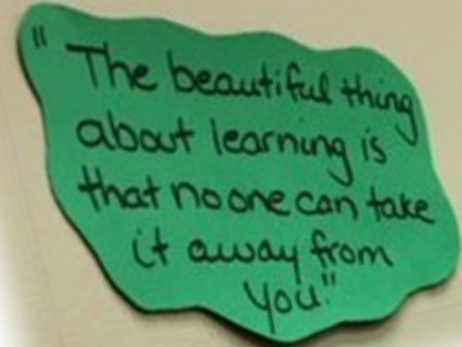
SPECIALTY: Employment services and skills training

LOCATION: City of Brockville

SERVES: United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

LAUNCHED: 2017

STATUS: Program is running with 21 participants in three active cohorts



ABOUT THE EMPLOYMENT + EDUCATION CENTRE

Founded in 1985 and based in Brockville, the Employment + Education Centre is an employment and life skills services centre serving Brockville and the surrounding United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. They support their clients in realizing their potential through

skills development, employment, and financial counselling.

The Employment + Education Centre is a charity funded primarily by the federal and provincial governments; their services are available free of charge.³

ABOUT HOMEWARD BOUND BROCKVILLE

Homeward Bound Brockville launched in 2017. The program has served a total of 21 participants and continues to expand. The Employment + Education Centre is able to provide employment-related programming in-house through their main services and programs.

Homeward Bound Brockville staff provide case management and counselling, facilitate skill-building sessions, and support participants in accessing housing and other related services available through existing community sources.

Other key wrap-around supports are provided through partnership with other community agencies.

Brockville's Homeward Bound has two streams within their program: a college-to-employment stream and a direct-to-employment stream. Participation is open to participants who have not completed high school or an equivalent certificate; for those participants, high school is completed through participation in the program.

³<https://www.eecentre.com/about.php>

BROCKVILLE'S JOURNEY TO HOMEWARD BOUND

In 2015, the Employment + Education Centre's current Executive Director (then Assistant Director) sat on a panel alongside WoodGreen's Senior Manager of Partnership who spoke about WoodGreen's Homeward Bound. Not long after, the Employment + Education Centre approached WoodGreen to talk about bringing the Homeward Bound model to Brockville, and their now Executive Director quickly became a vocal and enthusiastic champion for a local Homeward Bound in Brockville.

WoodGreen started working with the Employment + Education Centre to do pre-implementation work on the ground in Brockville. Their Executive Director had strong relationships with other service providers and a good sense of which potential partners were around, and she brought the Homeward Bound discussion to agencies and community leaders at every table at which she sat.

By championing a local Homeward Bound program across the region, she succeeded in establishing broad buy-in early on. Key partners started contributing to implementation, such as the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville (through their Housing and Social Services Division) and T.R. Leger, a local adult and alternative education school. She also identified other champions in the community who connected the Employment + Education Centre with additional partners in the community.

By bringing the Homeward Bound conversation to the many tables she participated in, the Employment + Education Centre's Executive Director has kept Homeward Bound Brockville grounded in the local landscape.

This approach has helped the program emerge as a community-owned program, where resources are leveraged effectively because partners are focused on where they have capacity and expertise within their immediate context, without replicating what is already being done by other local providers.

As an organization, the Employment + Education Centre has been positioned to deliver key aspects of the program in-house, which helped them move forward in assembling Homeward Bound Brockville, which is currently in operation with over 20 participants in three active cohorts.

Their current focus is on growing the program into Prescott and Kemptville within the United Counties through their partnership with T.R. Leger. They are also looking at strategies to expand the academic programs that participants pursue, beyond what is limited to the Brockville area. As a member of the Community of Practice, they are looking forward to the additional support as their program goes through these transitions, and are excited to offer their experience and expertise as an employment agency operating a growing Homeward Bound program.

HOW DOES EEC DELIVER HOMEWARD BOUND?

Figure 2 summarizes how each of the main elements of Homeward Bound Brockville are delivered, including which community partners are involved and how shared service-delivery is coordinated between them.

Program Streams

The Employment + Education Centre runs the Homeward Bound Brockville program through two streams: a direct-to-employment stream, and a college-to-employment stream. As participants move through the job readiness, goal

setting, life skills, and career decision-making of the first phase of the program, they start to make a plan for themselves and decide which of the two streams they want to pursue.

Case Management and Counselling

Case management is provided by Homeward Bound Brockville staff employed by the Employment + Education Centre when possible. Participants continue to access counselling they are already utilizing

upon program entry. For participants who are not accessing a counsellor or other mental health supports, they are connected with Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Addictions and Mental Health.

Housing

The housing situation in Brockville is unique among Homeward Bound partners. Homeward Bound staff at the Employment + Education Centre work

closely with participants and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville to assist with housing needs.

Childcare

Participants are matched with licensed home childcare providers managed through the Brockville and Area YMCA Children's Services department. This childcare is subsidized by the United

Counties. Participants are also connected with a Triple P Parenting program offered through a local provider, where they receive parenting skill building, counselling and support.

Skills Training and Academic Upgrading

As an employment and skills training agency, the Employment + Education Centre is well-equipped to do a majority of skills training in-house. Academic

Upgrading is provided by a local adult and alternative education school, T. R. Leger, through their regular programming.

Education

The Employment + Education Centre works closely with the local St. Lawrence College campus, the primary post-secondary institution in the area. Currently, Homeward Bound Brockville participants in the college stream of the program are only attending post-secondary at St. Lawrence College.

Homeward Bound Brockville participants apply for post-secondary through St. Lawrence College's

mainstream application process, but receive a specific orientation session and individualized support working on applications to the college and to OSAP as a group.

Tuitions are largely covered by OSAP grants, and scholarships funded by local donors who, as a group, are key program partners and play an integral role in supporting this element of the program.

Internships, Employment and Industry Council

Homeward Bound Brockville participants have access to the Employment + Education Centre's regular, core-funded employment programming. Participants in the college-to-employment stream access employment supports as they are preparing to transition out of their post-secondary studies and into employment. Participants in the straight-to-employment stream access employment supports after they have stabilized and completed any necessary skill building.

The Employment + Education Centre leverage existing industry and employer relationships to fulfil the roles of an Industry Council. Currently, Brockville is experiencing a labour shortage across industries, and Employment + Education Centre's approaches to addressing this include skill building among local job seekers along with preparing employers with the skills and knowledge they need to attract employees. Through existing connections with local employers, Employment + Education Centre is able to equip their clients with the specific skill sets that are in demand and are able to pair participants with potential mentors who may support their professional development and job

readiness, and may be able to offer paid positions. The Employment + Education Centre uses two structured mentorship programs that match mentors and clients based on mutual need; across the two mentorship programs, there has been a 10% rate of employment by placement employers.

Employment + Education Centre's approach to supporting all their clients, including Homeward Bound participants, along the road to employment involves placing clients in paid positions only; internships are not facilitated or encouraged. Rather than unpaid internships, clients are able to access paid placements through the agency's employment services. Job trials last about two weeks, wherein employees are given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform well in a position. Skills assessments last 6 weeks, and involve a focus on specific skills sets where a need for improvement was identified. If within those 6 weeks, skill deficits are either bridged or manageable within the role, long-term employment may result. If the skill deficits are great enough that further intervention is required, additional skill building is pursued.

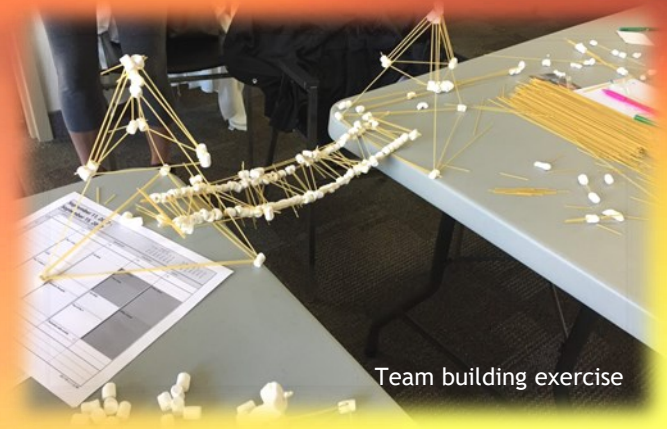
Program Matrix

Figure 2 Program Delivery Matrix for Homeward Bound Brockville

	Program Delivery	Funding
Key Partners and Main Funding Sources and Partners	<p>Key Partners: T.R. Leger YMCA Interval House United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit</p>	<p>Main Funding Sources: Ontario Trillium Fund (OTF) Grant In-kind contributions from community partners</p>
Case Management	<p>Employment + Education Centre staff One project manager One program facilitator Employment services staff Participants are connected with Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Addictions and Mental Health if they are not already accessing other counselling or mental health supports.</p>	<p>Employment + Education Centre staff funded through OTF grant (employment staff are core funded).</p>
Housing	<p>Participants are connected with existing housing stock and supportive services available through the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville during their onboarding and ongoing case management.</p>	<p>The housing supports clients access are already publicly available through existing providers in the community.</p>
Childcare	<p>Licensed home childcare providers managed through Brockville and Area YMCA Children’s Services. Parenting skill building and counselling available through Triple P Parenting program offered by Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.</p>	<p>Childcare subsidized through the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville.</p>

Program Matrix (cont'd)

	Program Delivery	Funding
Academic Upgrading	Accessed through T.R. Leger's regular programming.	Provided in-kind by T.R. Leger , who also provides participants with small bursaries to HB graduates at graduation.
Skills Training	Life skills training provided by the Employment + Education Centre staff.	Employment + Education Centre staff funded through OTF grant.
College Education	Post-secondary education currently accessed at St. Lawrence College , including in-class and online programs.	Tuitions are covered by OSAP grants and some scholarships that the Employment + Education Centre fundraises for through individual donations. The Brockville Women's Network also raises money for scholarships and has funded at least one per cohort. Scholarships are also available from St. Lawrence College .
Internship/ Employment	Employment services provided through the Employment + Education Centre's regular programming.	Employment + Education Centre's core funding



LEARNINGS ALONG THE WAY

SUCSESSES

Community Champions and Partnerships

Since the early ideation and community engagement stages, community champions have led the work of building a Homeward Bound program serving Brockville and the surrounding county areas. The Employment + Education Centre's current Executive Director demonstrated her ability to leverage opportunity and build strategic and mutually beneficial relationships based on a shared vision by establishing strong community support early on.

She was also effective in identifying other community champions; key community members who may not be positioned to contribute to the delivery of an Homeward Bound program, but are instrumental in assembling the key players, leveraging essential resources, and building community capacity overall during the early planning and implementation stages.

In Brockville, a local police officer championed the Homeward Bound model and helped build broad community support, connecting the Employment + Education Centre with partners who were not necessarily involved in direct service delivery, but were important in expanding their financial support and community endorsements.

Through these new connections, the agency had access to philanthropic networks, new connections with community agencies, and widespread community support.

Since implementation, local donors have been key partners who have been particularly integral to helping support the post-secondary education element of the program, by funding scholarships for participants.

Graduation

Epic marshmallow bridge
365 Lessons handed in to Jenn
100% pass of all Computer Training
Awesome team work and life skills

Broad Community Support

Thanks to the early work of enthusiastic community champions, an active network of service-delivery partners, donors, and other supportive agencies and community members emerged to help carry out the implementation of Homeward Bound Brockville.

The Employment + Education Centre's approach to forming partnerships based on mutual benefit and a shared vision, rather than on altruism alone, has been instrumental in establishing broad community buy-in and leveraging local capacity to resource and sustain Homeward Bound Brockville.

Staff also emphasized the importance of positioning the Employment + Education Centre as "a pillar of the community without duplicating." Program planning and delivery was

approached with a focus on working with community agencies who are already providing services that would be included in the wrap-around supports of a Homeward Bound program, and filling in gaps in the community where appropriate.

At the Employment + Education Centre, the vision is to provide as much of the program as possible through local in-kind contributions and fundraising, sharing over-head and funding needs across the community. This approach is meant to encourage collaboration and sustainability without introducing competition by preserving local resources, honouring existing expertise and good work, and establishing partnerships upon a foundation of mutual respect.

In-House Employment Services

As an employment service agency, the Employment + Education Centre has the expertise, programming, systems and processes to direct their focus on driving participant outcomes towards employment. As an agency, they also have the capacity to improve their practice and build organizational knowledge through ongoing professional development. As such, they are regularly adapting and evolving their Homeward

Bound curriculum to align with best practices and internal expertise.

The Employment + Education Centre has systems and processes in place to track employment outcome data at three, six and 12 months past graduation. This positions the Employment + Education Centre to collect useful data on client outcomes and make data-driven decisions about ongoing program delivery and improvement.

Successfully Expanding the Program

In 2018, Employment + Education Centre successfully scaled Homeward Bound Brockville into Prescott through their partnership with TR Leger and a local childcare centre.

As they are supporting a small first cohort, they are quickly adapting to their learnings along the way and look forward to supporting more families in the area in future cohorts.

Marketing Plan

Employment + Education Centre were successful in applying for a free marketing plan development service offered by SPARK, a marketing company run by students at St. Lawrence college. Employment + Education Centre staff attended a working session with three participants who shared their stories

with a class of 40 students. Those students broke into groups and each group developed a marketing plan. Employment + Education Centre staff were able to choose the winning marketing plan that they plan to work from in the future.

CHALLENGES

Funding

Homeward Bound Brockville is currently funded by a three-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Though they fundraise for the program and receive in-kind contributions, they rely on the grant to fund their program staff and keep Homeward Bound Brockville running. Currently, the

Employment + Education Centre's strategy is to pursue a business model that relies on in-kind service delivery contributions from community partners, in addition to local periodic fundraising and annual funding commitments from at least 10 community partners, including non-government agencies and local municipalities.

Small Cohorts

Since their start, Homeward Bound Brockville has been working with small cohorts of under 10 participants, and as small as two. Though this lean approach has helped them adjust the way they work the program as they go along, it has presented unique challenges regarding group dynamics.

In small groups, dynamics become easier to reinforce and harder to shift. For

example, if two people are feeling negatively about their progress in the program, they could make up at least 50% of a small cohort. Without a bigger and more diverse group of participants, there is less of a balance of perspectives, and it is difficult to model and cultivate perspectives best suited to success in the program.

Family-Sustaining Wages

Homeward Bound Brockville staff shared that they struggle to direct participants to career streams that lead to more family sustaining wages, and identified some factors they felt contributed to this challenge.

Regarding participant motivations, staff found that participants are generally drawn to social work fields that result in lower salaries. They identified two main factors that contribute to this.

The first is that clients gravitate to work they are somewhat familiar with; as an employment agency, this is something they have observed among all of their clients. And so, since most of their Homeward Bound participants have navigated social service systems and had

some positive experiences working with a social worker, they feel drawn to social work. Beyond familiarity, an impulse to “give back” out of gratitude and appreciation for their experiences also drives them toward this field.

A second challenge is that the local St. Lawrence College campus – the only college in Brockville – offers a relatively short list of programs, of which social work programs are predominant. Furthermore, participation in the program does not currently come with any strict regulations around the education/employment stream participants choose, which is at least partly influenced by the limited post-secondary options in the area.

Initial Enrolment

Employment + Education Centre also struggled to reach the target enrolment numbers they had initially planned for their first cohort. They had set their goals

based on local needs, but found that readiness played a significant factor in keeping cohort sizes small early on.

Expanding into Prescott and Kemptville

Though partners indicated high need in the area, Employment + Education Centre didn't get a high number of referrals and ended up with a small initial cohort.

With the new cohorts, they tried a staffing model that split two case workers between two cohorts in Brockville and Prescott, based on facilitator expertise.

Unfortunately, this structure did not work out as hoped: relationship building among staff and cohorts suffered, and consistency was not well developed within the group. With unique challenges presented by each cohort, the extent to which this staffing approach contributed is not entirely clear, but is a key learning moving forward.

KEY NEXT STEPS

Program Expansion

Employment + Education Centre is currently expanding their Homeward Bound program into two other local municipalities: Prescott and Kemptville. They expanded into Prescott with their September 2018 cohort, and are planning to expand into Kemptville with their March 2019 cohort. In Prescott,

they are working with T.R. Leger School, their partner in providing academic upgrading and skill building. T.R. Leger has campuses in both Prescott and Kemptville, where skills training and employment preparation (STEP) programs are available.

Expanding Career Horizons

In Brockville, post-secondary options are limited to St. Lawrence College's local campus. This limits the options available to Homeward Bound participants, and further encourages their tendency to gravitate toward social work without considering other fields that are more likely to lead them to family-sustaining wages. One of the Employment + Education Centre's current focuses is broadening post-secondary opportunities for their Homeward

Bound participants, and encouraging them to consider career paths that lead to more family-sustaining wages.

Their strategies include encouraging online schooling in other areas of employment, and bringing in mentors from different employment sectors. They are also encouraging participants to consider schooling in Kingston and Ottawa, where post-secondary options are more plentiful and diverse.

Pursuing Sustainable Funding

Currently, Homeward Bound Brockville is funded largely through a three-year Ontario Trillium Fund grant.

Through broad community support and key local partnerships, the Employment + Education Centre has been able to leverage local resources to support the implementation of the program. Their current approach to ensuring the sustainability of the program is to build on and leverage the community's enthusiasm and support for the program

to pursue a more sustainable community-based funding model.

Such a model would be driven by partnerships based on mutual benefit, which has been the framing through which key partnerships have been developed so far. They are currently working towards having community partners, including municipal partners, commit to funding the program through their yearly budgets.



PETERBOROUGH HOUSING CORPORATION

SPECIALTY:

Manages provision of subsidized housing in Peterborough County

LOCATION:

City of Peterborough

SERVES:

Peterborough County

LAUNCHED:

2018

STATUS:

Program is running with four participants in one active cohort



ABOUT PETERBOROUGH HOUSING CORPORATION

The Peterborough Housing Corporation is a social housing provider that operates as an independent corporation of the City of Peterborough.

The corporation owns and manages 1,036 units of senior, single and family units throughout the City and County of

Peterborough providing rent geared to income and affordable housing. Peterborough Housing Corporation also manages the centralized waiting list for all social housing providers within the City and County of Peterborough, and leads the development of new affordable housing projects.⁴

ABOUT HOMEWARD BOUND PETERBOROUGH

Peterborough Housing Corporation launched Homeward Bound Peterborough in 2018. The program is currently serving four participants in their first cohort.

As a property manager for subsidized housing in Peterborough, and in

partnership with the local YWCA, Peterborough Housing Corporation supports participants' housing and provides case management. The remaining elements of the program are provided through community partnerships.

⁴City of Peterborough. 2018. Peterborough Housing Corporation. The City of Peterborough Web Site. [Online] August 22, 2018. http://www.peterborough.ca/Living/City_Services/Housing_Division/Peterborough_Housing_Corporation.htm.

PETERBOROUGH'S JOURNEY TO HOMEWARD BOUND

WoodGreen's Homeward Bound has been on Peterborough Housing Corporation's radar since its early successes in Toronto, and there has been a lot of enthusiasm around building a Homeward Bound program in Peterborough ever since. There was broad community engagement and buy-in early on, with committed key partners coming together. When Peterborough Housing Corporation was able to secure funding for dedicated Homeward Bound staff, the process of implementing Homeward Bound Peterborough began.

Peterborough Housing Corporation stepped forward at the onset with a commitment to be the lead agency for a Homeward Bound Peterborough program. The pre-implementation stage included stakeholder mapping workshops and information sessions with WoodGreen, and multiple bus trips from Peterborough to Toronto for Homeward Bound tours.

Partners started bringing their resources to the table and important relationships were built, including the Dean of Trades and Technology at Fleming College, the Director of Planning and Housing Services at the City of Peterborough, local banks and employment tables.

Peterborough Housing Corporation developed a particularly close relationship with the local YWCA, whose own Board of Directors also had WoodGreen's Homeward Bound on their radar. While stakeholders were convening around the Homeward Bound Peterborough project, a clear opportunity arose for the YWCA and Peterborough Housing Corporation to work closely together.

The YWCA was already serving a key client base for the program: single-mothers accessing YWCA services and living in their transitional units could be potential participant candidates. Furthermore, YWCA staff had been working closely enough with these participants that staff were well positioned to speak to their clients' readiness for the Homeward Bound Peterborough program.

Working closely with the YWCA could mean the Peterborough Housing Corporation would have a pool of candidates without having to rely solely on outreach and referrals while building awareness about a new program and could partner with an agency that was already providing services along a spectrum of support.

The YWCA also saw an opportunity to introduce a supportive program with limited-term housing to better support the single mothers living in their transitional units toward being able to afford market rent.

Importantly, the YWCA has charitable status, while the Peterborough Housing Corporation does not; as a charity, the YWCA is eligible for more funding opportunities than a non-profit corporation like the Peterborough Housing Corporation. Thus, the YWCA and Peterborough Housing Corporation saw the mutual benefit and potential for client impacts and became partners in delivering the program, with Peterborough Housing Corporation at the lead. This partnership has been crucial in bringing in the first cohort and securing programmatic funding.

Peterborough's Journey to Homeward Bound (cont'd)

Today, Homeward Bound Peterborough is running a small first cohort. They are waiting for the completion of the McRae building to bring on a new cohort planned for 2019. And they are currently working closely with the Dean at Fleming College to build an Industry Council and seeking to expand their

partnerships to further round out and grow the program.

Moving forward, they are looking forward to taking on new cohorts and growing their program with the support of the Community of Practice.

HOW DOES PHC DELIVER HOMEWARD BOUND?

Figure 4 summarizes how each of the core elements of Homeward Bound Peterborough are delivered, and the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency and the community partners involved.

Housing

Peterborough Housing Corporation's current Homeward Bound cohort lives in existing units managed by the YWCA. Participants live within those units on four-year residency term limits, tied to their participation in Homeward Bound Peterborough.

The four-year term limits imposed by Homeward Bound presented the YWCA with an opportunity to further support their tenants, and increase turnover in units that are intended to be used for transitional housing. They have struggled with supporting residents in moving on to market rent; for various reasons, tenants have remained in these units at length, leaving them unavailable for new clients transitioning out of the shelter system.

Also, though they had been able to stabilize women in these units, the YWCA did not have a program within which they could support tenants to taking steps toward prosperity. The Homeward Bound program presented an opportunity to impose limits on tenancy tied to participation in a program that could move women along a career path toward financial stability and independence. It was through this

opportunity that a partnership developed between the Peterborough Housing Corporation and the YWCA, who came together to deliver Homeward Bound Peterborough as a community program.

Currently, the Peterborough Housing Corporation has a capital build project underway that will result in eight dedicated units for Homeward Bound participants. In 2014, Peterborough Housing Corporation acquired the McRae building from Fleming College; the building is being updated to include eight dedicated Homeward Bound units, and provide on-site childcare available to the community as well as Homeward Bound kids.

The units in McRae would be managed by Peterborough Housing Corporation, while the units currently occupied by Homeward Bound participants would still be managed by the YWCA. While eligibility for the Special Priority Program housing subsidy is required for residency in the units managed by the YWCA, no such requirement will be in place for residents at Peterborough Housing Corporation's McRae units.

Childcare

Participants access childcare through a local agency, Compass Early Learning and Care. While they are receiving OW, those benefits cover their childcare costs. However, as they pursue full-time post-secondary, this childcare is no longer covered by OW. Subsidies are still available if a family's childcare costs are below \$20,000, but if subsidies are not available, participants are expected to

use OSAP grant money to continue accessing the services through Compass.

Peterborough Housing Corporation has not yet decided how childcare will be financed for Homeward Bound participants at the McRae building. The current arrangement is that Compass will provide on-site childcare at the McRae building.

Case Management

Case management is done primarily by Peterborough Housing Corporation's Homeward Bound Program Manager. The housing manager at YWCA's Homeward Bound residences supports case management through conferencing

with Peterborough Housing Corporation Program Manager. A social worker is also available on-site at Homeward Bound residences for the four Homeward Bound Peterborough participants who currently live there.

Skills Training and Academic Upgrading

Skills training and academic upgrading is accessed through an existing program available at local employment centre, Fleming CREW. Participation in this program is available to the public free of charge.

conduct case conferences and discuss participant progress.

Peterborough Housing Corporation staff work closely with Fleming CREW as a partner; the Homeward Bound Program manager meets every two weeks with the Student Advisor from Fleming CREW to

Life skills programming is currently being provided by the Peterborough Housing Corporation program manager; this element of the program may be expanded through new partnerships or evolutions in the partnership between Peterborough Housing Corporation and the YWCA.

Education

Currently, Fleming College is the sole post-secondary partner involved in Homeward Bound Peterborough.

Participants are guaranteed spots in the trades program of their choice at Fleming's Trades Centre.

Internships, Employment and Industry Council

Some employment related skills are currently being provided by community partners. Fleming CREW also provides employment services, and their employment counsellors support Homeward Bound participants with their career planning and market research. The employment services are co-located with the academic upgrading

program, so they are easily accessible by participants.

Peterborough Housing Corporation is working with the Dean of Trades and Technology at Fleming College to develop an Industry Council that will connect women with internships and employment opportunities.

Program Matrix

Figure 3 Program Delivery Matrix for Homeward Bound Peterborough

	Program Delivery	Funding
Funding Sources and Partners	<p>Key Partners: YWCA Fleming CREW Fleming College Local Donors</p>	<p>Funding Sources: Core funding from Peterborough Housing Corporation Core funding from the YWCA (Status of Women Grant) Small donations from a number of community sources</p>
Case Management	<p>Peterborough Housing Corporation staff lead and conduct most of the case management.</p> <p>The Housing Manager at YWCA's Homeward Bound residences supports case management through conferencing with Peterborough Housing Corporation's Program Manager. A social worker is also available on-site at YWCA's Homeward</p>	<p>Peterborough Housing Corporation staff funded by agency's core funding.</p> <p>YWCA staff funded by agency's core funding.</p>
Housing	<p>Current cohort resides in units at YWCA's Homeward Bound residences under a four-year restricted lease.</p> <p>Forthcoming: eight dedicated Homeward Bound units at McRae Campus.</p>	<p>Existing Homeward Bound residences units available through in-kind contribution by YWCA.</p> <p>McRae building purchased from the city at discount</p> <p>Trinity United Church currently fundraising about \$46K to purchase furniture for</p>
Childcare	<p>Accessed through regular programming at Compass Early Learning and Care.</p> <p>Forthcoming: on-site childcare provided by Compass Early Learning and Care at McRae</p>	<p>Participants can access subsidized childcare in the community using OW allowances. As they transition off OW, they use OSAP grant money to continue accessing childcare.</p>

Program Matrix (cont'd)

	Program Delivery	Funding
Academic Upgrading	Accessed through regular programming at Fleming CREW .	Free community program
College Education	Participants are guaranteed spots in the trade program of their choosing at Fleming College .	Tuition is covered by OSAP grants.
Internship/ Employment	Peterborough Housing Corporation is in the process of establishing an Homeward Bound Industry Council. The local Employment Planning Council has been involved in employment-related skill building, resume building, and will be involved in later stage of preparing employment readiness.	Not applicable.

LEARNINGS ALONG THE WAY

SUCSESSES

Community Champions and Partnerships

Peterborough Housing Corporation's Board of Directors took the lead in championing the cause of building a Homeward Bound program in Peterborough at the very start. The implementation of Homeward Bound Peterborough has been significantly aided through the support of key community champions, including members of the Peterborough Housing Corporation Board of Directors, the previous Director of Planning and Housing Services at the City of Peterborough, and the Dean of Fleming College.

The Director of Planning and Housing Services at the City of Peterborough in 2013 proved to be an effective champion for a local Homeward Bound program. He was instrumental in connecting Peterborough Housing Corporation with Fleming College.

Another key relationship has been with the Dean of Trades and Technology at Fleming College's state-of-the-art trades school. The Dean's mandate has been to increase the presence of women in the trades, and Homeward Bound Peterborough presented the opportunity to further this mandate by connecting women in the program with opportunities in the trades. To that end, the Dean has committed to guarantee Homeward Bound participants

enrolment in the trades program of their choosing. She has also been leveraging her existing relationships across industries and employers to help form an Homeward Bound Peterborough Industry Council.

The Dean's commitment to the vision and purpose of Homeward Bound Peterborough, and her own focus on improving trades employment participation among women, has made her an invaluable community champion who has been crucial in moving the program along.

Since implementation, local donors have been key partners who have been integral to the ongoing operation of the program. Key local donors include: the local Rotary Club, Trinity United Church, All Saints Anglican Church, Bouchard Masonry, The Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough, Kawartha Pine Ridge Elementary, and other local agencies and groups. These local donors are often also valuable advocates for the program in the community.

Peterborough Housing Corporation and the YWCA will also be receiving shared funding from the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), previously Status of Women Canada.

CHALLENGES

Shifting Relationships with Ontario Works

Participants in Homeward Bound Peterborough share a case worker at Ontario Works and have been able to access supportive case management at Ontario Works in the past. However, as decisions about how OW policies and benefits are applied are to an extent up to the discretion of OW staff, turnover in the department can result in shifts in those supports.

Changes in Homeward Bound participants' case workers have resulted in challenges and additional costs when

decisions about benefits have been effectively reversed when new staff disagree with previous decisions.

Though staff turnover has presented challenges, Peterborough Housing Corporation has a working relationship with the Social Services department at the City of Peterborough. Social Services has introduced more consistency around the way benefits are applied to Homeward Bound participants, and they maintain frequent communication with Peterborough Housing Corporation staff.

Funding

As with other sites, sustainable funding is a challenge for Homeward Bound Peterborough. However, Peterborough Housing Corporation is in a unique position. As they do not currently have charity status, the funding opportunities for which they qualify are limited.

This means they must rely on their partner, the local YWCA, which does

have charitable status. Though they have been able to secure funds for the program through this partnership, this reliance may have played a role in complicating the work flow between the two agencies, by dividing the distribution of key decision-making around program resources between Peterborough Housing Corporation and the YWCA.

KEY NEXT STEPS

Preparing for the Next Cohort

Peterborough Housing Corporation plans to welcome a second cohort of eight

families in 2019, who will move into dedicated units at the McRae building.

Refining Program Processes

PHC is working with a group of college students to set up a new database that will help them collect data that supports running the program, as well as

reporting on program outputs and telling a story about the impact on Homeward Bound participants.

Industry Council

Currently, the development of an Industry Council for Homeward Bound Peterborough is underway. Through their partnership with the Dean of Fleming College and the Fleming CREW employment centre, Peterborough Housing Corporation has begun to identify potential Industry Council members, and representatives from some agencies and industries have expressed an interest in volunteering on the council.

However, they are waiting until participants are closer to internships and employment, and to further develop the parameters around the council's involvement, before moving forward with a formalized group and regular meetings. Participants access employment supports and mentorship through Fleming CREW's employment services in the meantime.

Improving Partnership with YWCA

Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of both the Peterborough Housing Corporation and the YWCA is a priority for Homeward Bound Peterborough staff. As of the writing of this report, Peterborough Housing Corporation staff were in the process of establishing and formalizing an understanding of the division of work according to clearly articulated roles and responsibilities.

At the time, the YWCA was responsible for property management for the original four units and for providing on-site counselling at those same units. They have also worked with Peterborough Housing Corporation staff to establish the leases participants sign at the YWCA's four units and have been involved in recruitment. Moving

forward, one of their staff will be primarily responsible for delivering the life skills building components.

Both agencies play a major role in running Homeward Bound Peterborough. However, as program resources are split between the two organizations, the distribution of roles and responsibilities among staff within a single program but employed across two agencies has been complicated and unclear.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been established between the two agencies, and they continue to work together to arrive at a solution for sharing the work of running Homeward Bound Peterborough.

Building New Partnerships

With the funding currently in place and a relatively small first cohort, Peterborough Housing Corporation is running a lean Homeward Bound program. As part of their strategy to leverage resources that will sustain the program, Peterborough Housing

Corporation is looking toward expanding awareness about the program in the community and building new partnerships with other community agencies that will contribute to the ongoing implementation and operation of Homeward Bound Peterborough.



BRANT SKILLS CENTRE

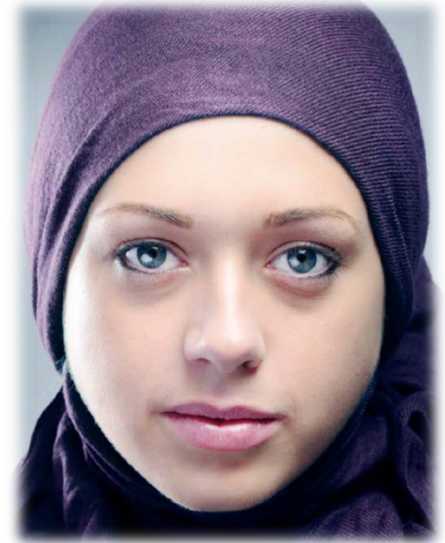
SPECIALTY: Literacy and essential skill building

LOCATION: City of Brantford

SERVES: Brant County

LAUNCHED: Planned for 2019

STATUS: Planning - Lead agency is establishing key community partnerships in preparation for program planning and implementation



ABOUT BRANT SKILLS CENTRE

Formed in 1986 as the Literacy Council of Brantford and District, the Brant Skills Centre (Brant Skills Centre), as it is now called, is a registered charity serving the City of Brantford and Brant County. They provide confidential and

free services to adults who wish to improve their literacy and essential skills so that they may increase their independence, pursue further education and training, or secure employment.⁵

ABOUT HOMEWARD BOUND BRANTFORD-BRANT

Brant Skills Centre is still in the early stages of building a Homeward Bound program in Brant County.

As an agency that offers literacy, essential skill building, and some employment services, Brant Skills Centre will be able to provide case management, skill building, and academic upgrading in-house. Employment-related supports and services will be provided in partnership with St. Leonard's Community Services.

Much of their essential skill programming is designed and delivered with a focus on employment preparation, and they plan on incorporating skill building into the employment

component of their local Homeward Bound early on in the program phases. Notably, they plan on coaching program participants in conducting their own labour market research to make a case for the education-to-employment path they plan to take through Homeward Bound.

Brant Skills Centre currently trains other clients in doing this research through their targeted training programs. They also have a partnership with a local workforce planning board that provides them with the updated data clients use to conduct their own labour market analyses that inform the career paths they choose to pursue.

⁵<https://www.brantskillscentre.org/about-us/>

About Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant (cont'd)

Regarding the other program elements, Brant Skills Centre is planning to support housing, childcare and additional employment supports through partnerships with other community agencies. Some of those relationships are long-standing, and

others have been recently developed to coordinate the delivery of Homeward Bound. They have also started to connect with education partners in the area, and hope to work closely with existing and emerging post-secondary institutions in the county.

BRANTFORD'S JOURNEY TO HOMEWARD BOUND

In Brantford, it was a city councillor who planted the seed for a local Homeward Bound. Having heard the Director of Homeward Bound present at a conference, the idea for a locally adapted Homeward Bound was brought before Brantford's City Council by a councillor who proposed the city undertake a feasibility study. City Council agreed and decided to reach out to the community and assess local appetite for the program.

In 2016 the city's Director of Strategic Planning reached out to community organizations to invite them to an information session about WoodGreen's Homeward Bound model. The agencies who attended the information session were enthusiastic about seeing a locally adapted Homeward Bound program come to fruition, and the City began its search for a lead agency. Brant Skills Centre leadership came to the realization that they already did a lot of the work involved in running a Homeward Bound program, and saw that it fit with the work they were doing and their organizational expertise. Their Board of Directors agreed, and they stepped forward to lead the work of building Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant.

Since then, Brant Skills Centre has been working to build relationships with

providers in the community, and leverage new and existing resources to start the work of implementing an Homeward Bound program. While they explored funding opportunities in 2017 and 2018, they conducted more extensive community consultations and identified key community partners, including St. Leonard's employment services and staff at the City of Brantford's Ontario Works office. With these and other partners, Brant Skills Centre has started to map out the different elements of Homeward Bound Brantford across the city and region.

In March 2019, it was announced that Brant Skills Centre had been granted three years of funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. They have hired a program coordinator and have begun the work of building a program ready to welcome its first cohort.

As an agency just starting out with implementation, Brant Skills Centre will have access to the additional support of a formally coordinated Community of Practice. They have started building relationships with other Homeward Bound communities, learning from their experiences and expertise as they take their first steps toward Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant.

HOW BRANT SKILLS CENTRE PLANS TO DELIVER HOMEWARD BOUND BRANTFORD-BRANT

While Brant Skills Centre is still in the early stages of building and implementing Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant, they have started to identify how they will likely deliver

Case Management

Currently, Brant Skills Centre plans to manage participant cases in-house through their recently filled Program Coordinator position. Their goal for their first year is to welcome a cohort of five families in September 2019, and continue to develop and fine-tune Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant.

Their approach to delivering the wrap-around supports available to program families will involve coordinating access to existing services through pro-active case management.

Referrals to the program are expected to come largely through the City of Brantford's Ontario Works office, through their existing relationship with The City of Brantford's Social Services

Housing

Brant Skills Centre is still making decisions about how to stabilize their future cohorts in adequate housing.

There are no resources or plans currently in place to build dedicated units for Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant families, but Brant Skills Centre is considering a congregate housing model for the future.

In the meantime, one of their key partners, St. Leonard's Community

certain elements of the program based on the expertise and current program offerings of Brant Skills Centre and their community partners.

department. The City of Brantford's Social Services department has been a key partner intimately involved in the early stages of implementation, and are actively building capacity among their staff to identify promising candidates for Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant and make appropriate referrals.

The City of Brantford's Ontario Works teams use a Post-Secondary Planning package with clients who are considering further education, and the package is being considered as a promising tool for assessing readiness and facilitating appropriate referrals to Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant. There are plans to conduct outreach and identify referral processes for other agencies, as well.

Services, provides transitional and supportive housing supports, and rental subsidies are available through the City of Brantford's Housing Services.

It is likely that stabilized housing for Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant families will be supported through these two partnerships, at least during the earlier stages of the program's operationalization.

Childcare

Brant Skills Centre will expand their relationship with EarlyON Brantford Brant, a childcare centre serving the city and surrounding county, which they may leverage to provide childcare for families in the program. Through case management, access to services for children may be facilitated through

Contact Brant, the lead service coordination agency for children and youth services in Brant County.

Participants may also be encouraged to access childcare through income supports and other existing subsidies.

Skills Training and Academic Upgrading

Brant Skills Centre offers skills assessments and training through their regular programming and would support much of the skills training for Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant participants in-house.

Some areas of expertise for Brant Skills Centre include financial literacy, computer skills, college preparation, and conducting labour market analyses. The latter is a component of some of their post-secondary preparation related programs, and would position participants to make informed decisions

about career paths that lead to viable employment options with family-sustaining wages. Brant Skills Centre would refer participants to other Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs if necessary for addressing specific gaps in participants' skill sets.

Academic Upgrading would be available through Conestoga College, where participants have the opportunity to earn an Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) certificate if they complete the associated course requirements.

Education

Currently, post-secondary education options in the area are somewhat limited since Mohawk College closed its Brantford campus in 2013.

In its place, Six Nations Polytechnic has started to offer a short list of joint-programming in a variety of fields including social work, early childhood education, personal support work,

culinary skills, trades, mental health and addictions, and nursing, among others.

As new post-secondary educational institutions move into the area, Brant Skills Centre plans on building out new relationships to support their Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant moms, and are also looking into online post-secondary programs.



Internships, Employment and Industry Council

Much of the employment supports are expected to be offered by a local agency, St. Leonard's Community Services. St. Leonard's offers employment services and has existing relationships with local employers that they would plan to use to support families in Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant.

Brant Skills Centre is currently working with a delegation of councillors from the City of Brantford and Brant County to begin the early work of assembling a local Industry Council.

Brant Skills Centre and their main partners, The City of Brantford and St. Leonard's Community Services, also sit together on numerous committees that support effective relationships with local educational institutions and employers.

The Education Work Alliance includes secondary and post-secondary education partners, employment service organizations, and others; it has been connecting education and employment services providers across Grand Erie for nearly 10 years.

Their involvement with the Ontario Skilled Trade Alliance connects them with union representatives and local employers, as well; as a space where education-based organizations, local employers, and trades unions are co-located, it is fairly new and a promising space to identify potential opportunities for employment.

OPPORTUNITIES AND EARLY LEARNINGS

OPPORTUNITIES

At this early stage, Brant Skills Centre has begun to establish key service-delivery partnerships and broad community buy-in. They have established leads for the in-kind contribution of major program components, and have a sense of how the program's main elements will be provided, and by whom.

Much of this early success hinges on a pre-existing and consistent relationship between Brant Skills Centre, St. Leonard's Community Services, and The City of Brantford. Through their partnership with Social Services at the City of Brantford, Brant Skills Centre feels well positioned to bring strong candidates into the program; based on the needs of their candidates, they plan to assess whether they need to engage new partners they have yet to reach out

to for other program components or wrap-around supports.

Brant Skills Centre will be launching Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant with the support of a more structured Community of Practice. Through that Community of Practice, they will have avenues to engage with and learn from other Homeward Bound communities who have already launched their programs in communities of comparable size and scale to Brantford and the surrounding Brant County. And while they continue to engage local partners with the early excitement of a community just starting out, the stories (and any marketing materials) available through the Community of Practice could prove to be useful in establishing broad community support.

CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

Sustainable Funding

Currently, the Brant Skills Centre is accessing a single, three-year grant. They are looking toward further funding options to ensure they can support their first cohorts through the full four years of the program, and hopefully ensure the sustainability of the program further on. They do have partners who may be able

to make key in-kind contributions that will ensure key elements of the program are delivered.

As with the other sites, program sustainability is a concern at the onset and would be a key focus during the first two years of implementation.

Funding Tuitions

Brant Skills Centre is currently exploring different options for funding participant tuitions, including OSAP, government income supports, and the Ontario government's Second Career program.

With recent changes to the OSAP program, Brant Skills Centre will be looking to additional fundraising or grants to ensure participants can access post-secondary education through the program.

Education Partners

In the summer of 2013, Brantford lost a major post-secondary institution when Mohawk College closed its Elgin Street Campus. In its place, Six Nations Polytechnic has opened a campus where they offer a smaller selection of program offerings. Another local partner is Conestoga College.

Brant Skills Centre is currently reaching out to build relationships with Six Nations Polytechnic and other post-secondary institutions offering programs in the county and surrounding areas, such as Fanshawe and Mohawk Colleges.

The Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant team is considering expanding their education partnerships to broaden the options that would be available for program participants. Many of the existing programs tend to focus on

careers that may not lead to family-sustaining wages, such as early childhood education or personal support workers. Other program focuses, such as nursing, may lead to shift-work which poses other challenges to lone-parent families.

As new educational institutions emerge and grow in the area, Brant Skills Centre has a number of potential partners to consider and are having early conversations about how those relationships will work. They have been working with the City of Brantford's Workforce Planning Board to identify local demands, and are looking into trades programs as welders and other trades are in high demand. They are also exploring the possibility of introducing web-based post-secondary programs.

Access to Employers

The City of Brantford and surrounding Brant County does not offer a significant list of major employers or sectors where there is demand for work.

Through their relationship with St. Leonard's Community Services'

Employment Services Department, Brant Skills Centre will be looking to bolster and develop new relationships with local employers to support participants' transition into employment in the later stages of the program.



CONCLUSION: CASE STUDIES

Each of the four Homeward Bound communities explored in the case studies above are on unique paths to implementing and operationalizing locally-adapted Homeward Bound communities.

Though they are at different stages of implementation, three of the sites are actively running programs, and a fourth has the resources in place to be operational.

The learnings at each site demonstrate the diversity and complexity of approaches, successes, and challenges involved with adapting a multi-faceted model in different communities of varying scales.

However, some common threads connect each of their stories; the sections below follow those threads and explore common themes in greater detail.



PROGRAM EVALUATION





INTRODUCTION

The following section of the report explores the common themes that arose through the case studies described above. Similarities in the steps and approaches taken, the challenges and successes encountered, and the ways in which different sites adapted the HB model to build their programs were explored while considering the characteristics of each lead agency, and the communities in which they are based.

Each of the four communities is on its own journey towards Homeward Bound, following their own expertise and carving paths within the unique contexts of their locales. However, similarities in their approaches, successes, challenges, and adaptations may point to key factors in the successful implementation of Homeward Bound programs in communities of varying scales. These themes, explored in more detail below, are summarized as follows:

- In-depth understandings of local challenges and barriers help communities identify local assets and potential solutions

- Networks of relationships between local community-based agencies inform place-based approaches to program design and are essential to implementation
- Place-based approaches to model design involve facilitating access to the core supports of the model while being flexible and responsive to local assets and opportunities
- Though community stakeholders have been able to coordinate local resources and systems to assemble Homeward Bound programs, sustainable funding is a present concern at each site

The subsections below expand on the methodology used to develop the case studies and identify notable areas where the four implementation stories overlap, and where they diverge. The section then goes on to explore these common threads in more detail, and concludes with a discussion about how the themes explored through the case studies may identify key considerations when adapting the Homeward Bound model in diverse communities of varying scales.

METHODOLOGY

From May 2018 to March 2019, research was conducted with lead agencies at four Homeward Bound communities in Ontario: Oakville and the region of Halton; the City of Peterborough and surrounding county; Brockville and the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; and Brantford and Brant County.

In this study, lead agencies are defined as community-based organizations who are primarily responsible for implementing and operating a local Homeward Bound program.

The goal of the research conducted with the four Homeward Bound communities was twofold: first, to get a sense of the story behind the development of Homeward Bound programs in four communities across Ontario; and second, to compare and contrast the implementation process each Homeward Bound community has gone through to identify common themes, promising practices, and key learnings.

The research began with site visits to each of the four lead agencies in the summer of 2018. At these visits, semi-structured group interviews were conducted with lead agency staff. Through these discussions, the story behind Homeward Bound in each of the four communities was explored through

a conversation about the history, current program status, and community context at each site.

Taking an iterative approach, the information gathered at the initial site visits was used to inform follow-up phone interviews with agency staff and community partners. These follow-up interviews were conducted to triangulate the findings from the initial site visits with a broad range of stakeholders. When necessary, follow-up questions were also asked over email to clarify or expand on findings done through interviews conducted in-person or over the phone.

In the winter of 2019, a second round of site visits were conducted with the same four lead agencies. During these second site visits, agency staff were asked to provide updates on the previous six to seven months of program implementation (or operationalization, where relevant) through semi-structured group interviews.

Agency staff were also asked to provide feedback on earlier drafts of the case study, to ensure that the implementation history at each site was adequately and faithfully represented.

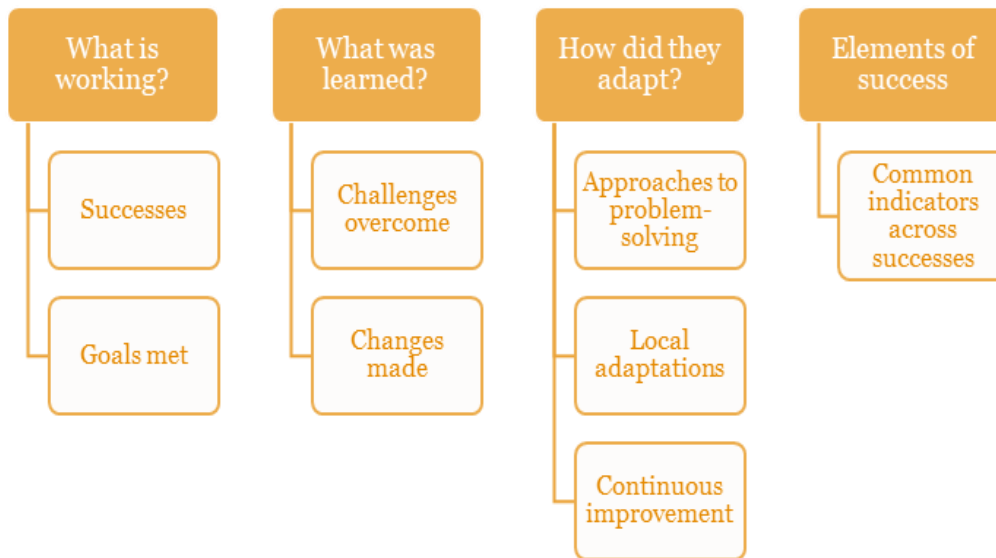
Guiding Research Questions

The semi-structured group interviews, phone interviews, and any follow-up emails were informed by a set of guiding research questions. These questions followed a strengths-based, appreciative inquiry approach to identify some potential elements that may contribute to a community's ability to successfully develop, implement and operationalize a local Homeward Bound program. The research questions that guided this work were developed to highlight:

- Promising practices for implementing Homeward Bound programs, depending on certain local/place-based indicators

- Place-based indicators for needs related to program design, development, implementation, operation and maturation
- Based on stage in the process of building a Homeward Bound Program
- Based on type of locality (rural, urban, etc.)
- Based on any other thematic factors that are observed

The following key guiding questions informed more specific research questions explored through interviews with Lead Agency staff and partners.



Based on these guiding research questions, more specific questions were asked during interviews conducted with lead agency staff and partners. Specific questions were based on approximate stages of implementation and fell under the following broad categories:

- community needs assessment and outreach
- program planning, development and resourcing

- program implementation and
- program maturation and improvement

The interviews conducted took an iterative, conversational approach and involved frequent follow-up to allow the time to clarify, elaborate on and update findings as additional program stakeholders were involved and the stages of implementation carried on at each site.



KEY FINDINGS

Based on the findings of the individual case studies into the four communities, we looked at common themes across the four sites that reflect shared learnings about implementing place-based Homeward Bound programs, and promising practices taken by each of the communities.

The stories behind the journeys to Homeward Bound in Halton, Peterborough, Brockville and Brantford follow the threads of the unique fabrics of each community's social-support networks.

These stories have been as varied and multifaceted as the communities in which they unfold.

There are times when these stories have had much in common, and other times when they highlight the unique character of each site; commonalities and differences alike illustrate how scale, expertise, and context can shape the journey toward building a fulsome Homeward Bound model through the various stages of implementation.

UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Though each of the lead agencies have taken their own paths, their stories share one particular common thread: building buy-in among community partners early on came with little resistance at each site. This buy-in among a breadth of community partners who could lend some form of support to developing a locally-adapted Homeward Bound program may be an important factor in laying the foundation for implementation in communities of varying scale.

Generally, the ease of building buy-in was attributed to a shared belief in the promise of the Homeward Bound model. With the results of the SROI analysis, and the five-year evaluation of WoodGreen's Homeward Bound in Toronto, advocates of the model had the numbers to show that lone-mother-led families in the program were exiting social assistance and finding employment. In each community, enthusiasm about the promise of the model drove the early stages of implementation and brought many key players on-board early on.

Belief in the Homeward Bound model also depends on a belief that, with the right supports in place, single mothers can thrive and live independently with meaningful jobs, earning family-sustaining wages.

This belief is based on the understanding that there are systemic barriers in place that keep single mothers in a cycle of gender-based poverty. Some barriers are roadblocks, while others demand much

of the time, energy, and resources single mothers have. And so, these barriers are not only barriers to education or employment; they also limit capacity to navigate support systems and access opportunities that could lead to financial stability and independence.

In order for women to take on a rigorous program and post-secondary education, they need stability in multiple areas of their lives.

Stemming from the recognition that single mothers face multiple systemic barriers is the understanding that networks of social service providers, educators, employers, and other key players in each community have shared roles in either perpetuating or alleviating those barriers.

The Homeward Bound model is simple in concept, but it is through a deep understanding of what the barriers and potential solutions look like in a particular locale that makes adapting the model into a place-based program possible.

Through effective relationships and a shared commitment to seeing it through, each community has leveraged their collective strengths and assets on the path to building Homeward Bound programs that encompass the main pillars of the program model: supportive case management; stable housing; childcare; skill building; academic upgrading; post-secondary education; and employment.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Relationships that mobilize community players and assets across sectors are essential to the implementation and operationalization of locally adapted Homeward Bound programs.

Some wrap-around supports are feasibly provided through resources or staffing positions already in place, or through coordinating access to existing services or programs, such as childcare. It has generally been through partnerships with agencies who provide existing services or programs in the community that the four lead agencies fulfilled these wrap-around supports. However, certain “core” aspects of the program are more intensive and require more resources to develop and deliver than others, such as case management, housing or covering tuitions for post-secondary education. Each lead agency has the capacity to lead a core aspect of the program based on their area of expertise:

- Home Suite Hope has the experience and relationships to support the stabilization of lone-parent families as they transition out of housing precarity
 - Peterborough Housing Corporation has expertise in supporting the stabilization of low-income tenants transitioning out of housing precarity, and will manage dedicated units for Homeward Bound Peterborough families
 - The Employment and Education Centre is positioned to support skill development and provide employment supports in-house, with strong, existing relationships with local employers
- Brant Skills Centre has the capacity to provide much of the early phases, including skill building and academic upgrading, in-house

However, while each of the four agencies has expertise in a single area of service or program, none has the capacity or expertise to offer each of the main elements of the Homeward Bound model through their existing programs and services. Finding key partners who could support additional core aspects of the program was done early on at each site:

- In Halton, The Regional Municipality of Halton pays for rent subsidies for Homeward Bound Halton; Sheridan College has been working with Home Suite Hope since the beginning to find ways to cover tuitions
- In Peterborough, the YWCA Haliburton had housing units ready to assign to Homeward Bound participants; Fleming College has committed to securing spots in their trades programs for Homeward Bound participants
- In Brockville, the Employment and Education Centre partnered with a local adult education school to provide academic upgrading, and use existing relationships with employers to find placements for participants
- In Brantford, the Brant Skills Centre has existing working relationships with St. Leonard’s Community Services who will provide employment supports, and the City of Brantford’s Ontario Works department, which will likely be the main source of referrals, and where staff can help support coordinated access to services in the community



ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Leveraging Established Working Relationships

In the four communities, existing relationships among local service providers, educators, and key decision-makers seem to be fairly strong. Some agency staff and community partners spoke to how service providers operating in smaller geographies are less likely to be duplicating services or programs offered by other agencies.

Therefore, players from different social-service sectors are more likely to be consistently represented in cross-sectoral groups and spaces, and develop relationships in a breadth of tangential and parallel sectors.

Clear Roles and Consistent Communication

Overall, the lead agencies and partners interviewed expressed that their working relationships with each other were positive and worked well. The common explanation as to why relationships worked well was that relationships were founded on a clear and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner, facilitated through consistent and open communication.

Some of these strong relationships were formalized through inter-agency agreements, while others were more informal and based on relationships formed between individuals.

There was no indication that formalized partnerships were necessary for

successful working relationships. However, where challenges did arise, they were nearly always attributed to a lack of clear communication, and confusion about respective roles and responsibilities.

In some instances, these challenges were apparent throughout the history of the relationship. In other cases, challenges arose later on when staff turnover at one or more of the partner agencies disrupted partnerships that were based on interpersonal relationships between two or more staff, or discretionary decisions made by individual staff, rather than a formally identified and delineated relationship between two agencies.

Community Champions are Key

Though building broad community buy-in was not a struggle in any of the four communities, certain players played pivotal roles in maintaining relationships through the more nascent stages of program implementation and mobilizing resources:

- In Oakville, the Home Suite Hope Board of Directors championed the program early on, and worked within their own networks to bring stakeholders to the table
- In Peterborough, the Peterborough Housing Corporation's Board of Directors, staff in the Housing Services department at the City of Peterborough, and leadership at Fleming College helped establish relationships with key partners who have contributed to the building of dedicated units, and ensuring access to post-secondary education
- In Brockville, the Education and Employment Centre's Executive Director and a local police officer championed the Homeward Bound model at various committees and working groups to bring a host of key partners together
- In Brantford, the Brant Skills Centre has long-standing and consistent relationships with two of its key partners – St. Leonard's Community Services and the City of Brantford's Social Services department; key staff from each of the three agencies are active on a number of local committees, working groups and advisory tables

Research into rural economies has explored how roles and responsibilities across rural institutions are often conflated, meaning individual players in local networks may often take on a multitude of roles and responsibilities. This lends to more integration and collaboration across departments and industries, supporting more innovative approaches to leveraging and combining resources and assets across jurisdictions that might not typically come in larger communities where roles are more likely to be specialized and contained within sectors.

Having the adaptability to reimagine and redeploy local assets in response to local changes and challenges is a hallmark of place-based approaches in rural areas, and facilitates the strategic use of limited resources (Reimer, et al., 2008).

This strategy has also been a hallmark of the journeys the four sites have been taking to implementing local adaptations of the Homeward Bound model.

Local champions were able to facilitate working relationships across sectors; the mobilization of key resources and assets followed those new relationships. During the early stages of implementation at each site – while resources and funding were scarce – local community champions maintained momentum, keeping stakeholders engaged and committed.

PLACE-BASED APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTATION

MODEL DESIGN

None of the four sites embarked on a deliberate process to design a place-based program model from scratch. Rather, early partners in each community used the WoodGreen model as a reference point, and started to identify local assets that fit within the main pillars of that model.

Model design at each site generally followed the paths of existing relationships with complementary service providers and other local

partners. Adapted models emerged gradually and somewhat spontaneously through an approach to covering the main pillars of wrap-around support through coordinated access to services.

The place-based program models that have emerged are largely focused on coordination of access to existing services in the community through case management and designated roles and responsibilities established for key service-delivery partners.

Streaming Homeward Bound

One trend that has emerged through place-based approaches to designing locally-adapted Homeward Bound models has been the introduction of multiple streams within the program. As of the writing of this report, two of the three established programs had added a stream to their adapted program in addition to the typical academic stream focused on post-secondary education:

- Home Suite Hope had introduced a trades-focused stream to Homeward Bound Halton, called “Jill of All Trades”
- Homeward Bound Brockville includes a straight-to-employment stream, bypassing the post-secondary education component
- Though Homeward Bound Halton does not include a straight-to-employment stream, Home Suite Hope does run a number of other stabilizing programs that

participants could stream into if Homeward Bound is not a good fit for them.

When discussing the reasoning behind the streams, staff at each site talked about finding ways to support participants for whom post-secondary education may not be a necessary or appropriate step on an otherwise feasible path to employment.

It is worthwhile to note that the Education and Employment Centre in Brockville is an employment services agency, and a straight-to-employment stream could be facilitated by utilizing existing programs and expertise available in-house.

The introduction of the “Jill of All Trades” stream in Halton is indicative of another key trend in the implementation of Homeward Bound at each of the sites: a focus on the trades.



Women in Trades

Each of the four programs has participants enrolled in a breadth of post-secondary programs. The post-secondary options available to participants at each program may be limited in-part by what is available locally, but they are also based on local labour market needs identified for each site. Some common programs include social work, early childhood education, or personal support work, reflecting the labour market impacts of a growing and aging population.

Although viable employment may be obtainable within these fields, they do not typically lead to wages that could sustain families living on the income of a single parent (Kelegan, 2014; Reiche, 2017).

Employment in the trades has been growing throughout the province, driven largely by a number of significant builds that are either under-way or up-coming (Labour Market and Socio-economic Information (LMSI) Directorate, Service Canada, Ontario, 2019; Government of Ontario, 2019).

This is particularly true in geographies outside of the Greater Toronto Area. In response to this growth in the trades, Homeward Bound programs have

started to focus on encouraging enrolment in trades programs:

- Homeward Bound Halton now includes a second stream, “Jill of All Trades,” devoted exclusively to education and employment in the trades
- Homeward Bound Peterborough is exclusively a trades employment program, working with the local trades school as their sole education partner
- Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant is looking closely at trades programs through potential partnerships with education partners

Focusing on the trades takes advantage of a key opportunity: employment in a well-paying, in-demand sector, where more employers are looking to hire women to address the gendered gap in the industries’ employment practices.

For programs who are looking to encourage participants to pursue paths to family-sustaining wages, education and employment in the trades is a key opportunity for improving the financial wellbeing of Homeward Bound families when they leave the program and pursue their careers.

Engaging Industry

In Homeward Bound Toronto, the Industry Council has been well-established and fulfils particular roles in supporting delivery of the program. Members work closely with program staff to support the skill building and mentorships that helps prepare participants for employment, and ultimately to facilitate opportunities for internships, placements, or possible employment.

The way each of the four sites facilitate the same employment-related supports and opportunities is based very much on local contexts and relationships with employers. Though each of the sites (with one exception), has seemed to aspire to build Industry Councils somewhat similar to Toronto's, the capacity to build and maintain a council with industry partners seems to be an area that agencies struggled with.

- Though Home Suite Hope established an Industry Council early on, they struggled to keep members engaged; as a result, membership gradually dropped.
- Establishing an Industry Council has been slow-going in Peterborough and is one of Peterborough Housing Corporation's next steps. They have relied on their contacts at the local trades college to help establish initial relationships; however, they have been cautioned to wait until there are more opportunities to actively and regularly engage members before assembling a council.

However, two sites have taken place-based approaches to engaging industries and employers through existing employment supports. In Brockville, the Education and Employment Centre, as an employment services agency, has established active relationships with local employers that are able to fulfil many of the functions intended by an industry council, as conceptualized within the Homeward Bound model. Through their core services and programs, Homeward Bound participants are connected with employers and can access opportunities for paid placements.

In Brantford, the Brant Skills Centre has an established relationship with St. Leonard's Community Services, which has an employment services department. Representatives from Brant Skills Centre, St. Leonard's Community Services, and the City of Brantford are also active on two local committees that connect social services with local employment services and representatives: the Education Works Alliance, and the Skilled Trades Alliance. Program partners are considering the establishment of a formal Industry Council for Homeward Bound Brantford -Brant. However, there are pathways through their relationships with other agencies providing existing services and supports that could support employment readiness, mentorship, and opportunities for participants.

Housing

The approach each site has taken to stabilizing Homeward Bound families in adequate housing has been quite different, and based largely on resources available in the community, and the state of the local housing market.

- Home Suite Hope is a relatively small agency, operating in a region where the cost of living is among the highest rates in the country. Affordable housing is in short supply, as it is in much of the Greater Toronto and surrounding areas. In Halton, rent is subsidized for Homeward Bound participants who live in scattered, market-rent units across the region.
- Affordable housing is also in short supply in Peterborough, where the students attending major post-secondary education institutions in the area compete with local residents for affordable units. Homeward Bound Peterborough families are able to live in designated units managed by the Peterborough Housing Corporation's primary partner, the YWCA of Haliburton. As property managers, the PHC is also building a new site that will include eight units dedicated to participants in the Homeward Bound program.
- Participants of Homeward Bound Brockville access existing housing services in the community; though housing is an issue in Brockville, when compared to the urban centres of the other four communities, the area has higher vacancy rates, more affordable housing options, and fewer units in core housing need (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2019).

- At the time of writing this report, Brant Skills Centre did not have access to any resources that could support designated units for participants in Homeward Bound Brantford-Brant; their immediate plans are to coordinate access to existing housing services through case management.

With each approach taken, a distinct philosophy about how to stabilize housing for participating families has followed.

In Halton and Brockville, where housing is accessed through existing stock in the community, agency staff reported that participants who already had access to housing units would be destabilized if they had to relocate to temporary, designated units; a dedicated build is not being pursued by either agency at this time.

In Peterborough, participants have four-year leases – similar to the Homeward Bound model in Toronto. Their philosophy is that participants should be able to access market rent independently once they have successfully completed the program and secured adequate employment. Notably, through Homeward Bound Peterborough, YWCA Haliburton introduced four-year leases in units that were previously transitional housing units where no fixed tenancy terms were enforced. Though this meant existing tenants could no longer rely on their tenancy in those units indefinitely, the agency saw the program as an opportunity to help tenants move toward financial independence, and to open up transitional units to new tenants waiting and in need.

FUNDING

In each site, place-based approaches to adapting the Homeward Bound model have involved identifying and leveraging local assets across traditional sectors and industry boundaries. Champions and key partners in each community took innovative and collaborative approaches to supporting a multifaceted program using a diverse constellation of resources, including grants, local donations, subsidies, and in-kind contributions.

Each of the four sites has been able to secure at least one multi-year grant during the early stages of implementation, which helped lay the groundwork for each program.

However, sustainable funding for each of the programs is a present concern for each community. While the three communities with established programs have found ways to keep them in operation, and a fourth has just begun to implement with a multi-year grant, all lead agencies have identified sustainable funding strategies as among their current priorities.

The approaches each site is planning to take vary. One site is actively pursuing a

community-based funding model, while the others vary in the degree to which they are considering the same approach. Other focuses include diversifying funding sources to include more corporate contributions, and looking for additional multi-year grants.

The demands of delivering a program with core elements such as housing and post-secondary education, in addition to a host of wrap-around supports, can be significant; and where in-kind contributions are not available or confirmed, the cost of running such a program is high.

Under the previous structure of the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP), some Homeward Bound participants could access the grant portion of the fund, meaning that agencies did not have to secure funds to support the high expense of this program component. However, recent changes by the Province of Ontario lowered the grant portion of OSAP and introduced new restrictions, which means agencies may have to seek additional funding to deliver this core component of the program.



CONCLUSION: CASE STUDY THEMES

Each of the four sites took approaches to designing and implementing Homeward Bound programs that followed the threads of the unique fabric in each community, navigating through new and established relationships with key players around a common goal, and adapting in response to local assets and opportunities. Community champions galvanized key players in each community, and effective relationships built on a shared vision and clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities have driven the work of developing and implementing locally-adapted models.

Leveraging local assets allowed each community to adapt the ways they delivered core elements of the program, including education, employment, and housing.

The Homeward Bound programs in Oakville, Peterborough, Brockville, and soon in Brantford are emerging as community-based programs that knit together the key wrap-around supports that make up the pillars of the Homeward Bound model.

Through effective relationship building and the ability to identify and mobilize local assets such as community service providers, referring agencies, regional advocates, donors, volunteers, employers, and other stakeholders, each of these communities found creative and effective ways to assemble a complicated program in diverse communities, regardless of scale. Their successes in implementing local Homeward Bound programs highlight the importance of working within the unique fabric of a community to identify promising solutions to complex problems.

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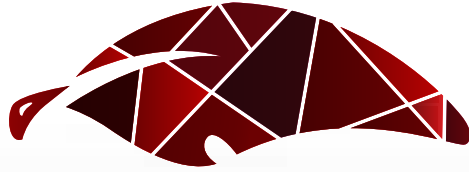
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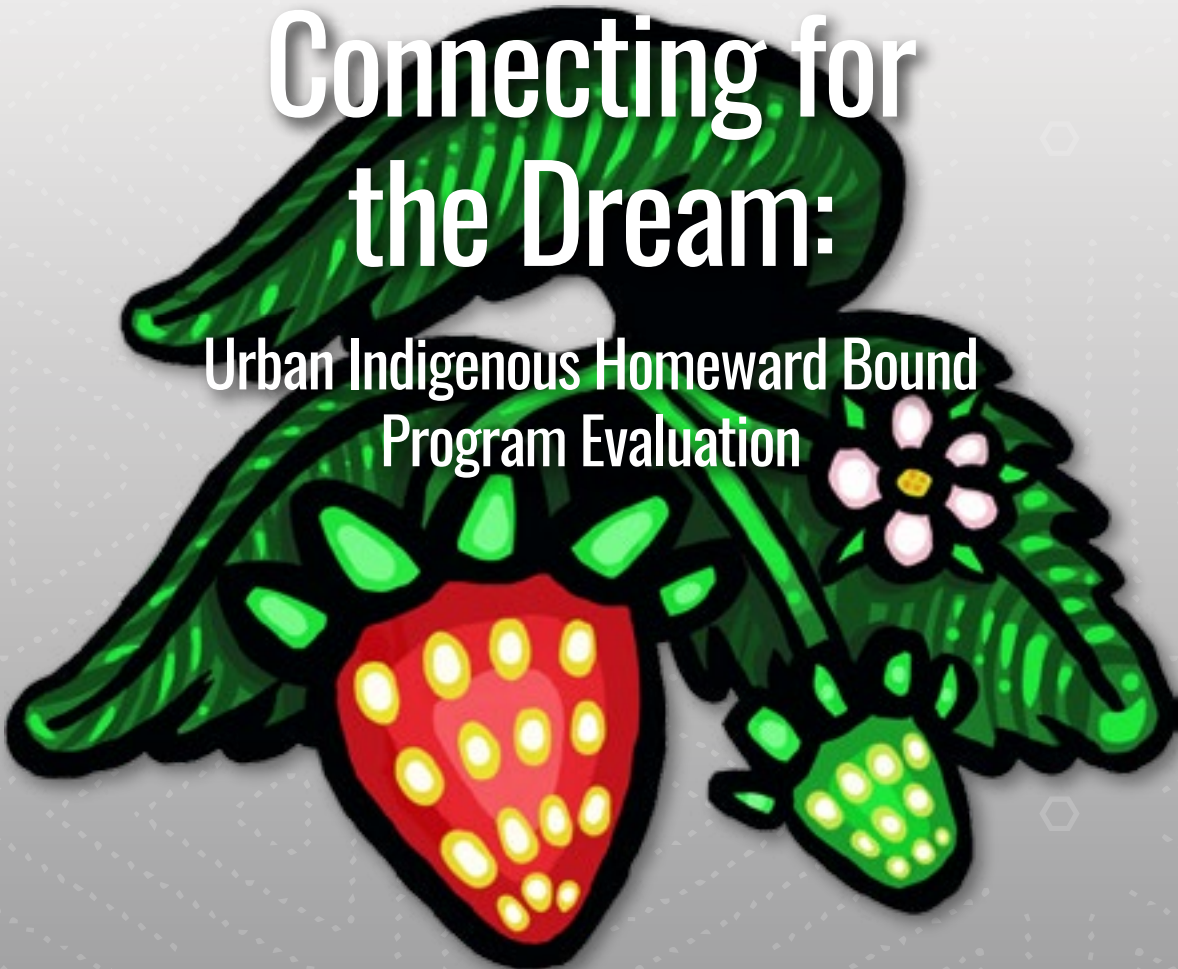


OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

Connecting for the Dream:

Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound
Program Evaluation



April 2019

OFIFC Evaluation Series, Volume 3

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.

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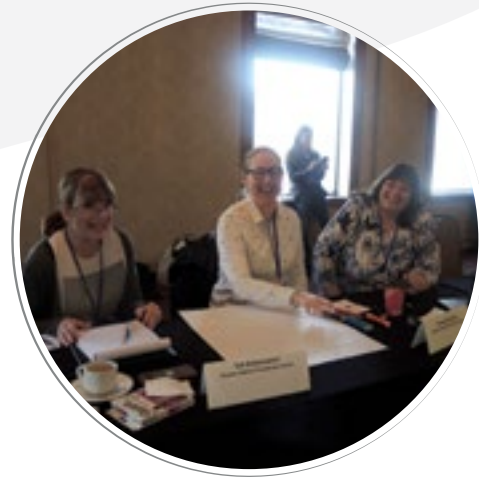
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About the Cover

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 OFIFC 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 OFIFC 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-adapted 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 holistic, 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 as 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 addiction 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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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	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
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 & Skills Assessment</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Friendship Centre & 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
Staff	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
Cohort Intakes Complete	2	1	1	0	2	1
Number of Participants	14	6	6	0	5	6
Number of Dependents	36	13	9	0	9	18
Housing Status	Completed 11 units - 2 more offsites in progress	Scattered-site	Scattered-site	Set to open summer/fall 2019	Scattered-site	Scattered-site
Childcare Supports	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
Total Number of Partnerships	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

- ⁱ 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>
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- ^{xiv} 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>
- ^{xv} 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 ⁱ

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 ⁱⁱ

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 ⁱⁱⁱ

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 ^{iv}

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.^{vi} Hamilton benefits from having a "wide variety of businesses of varying sizes and scopes" across a high number of sectors.^{vii} 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

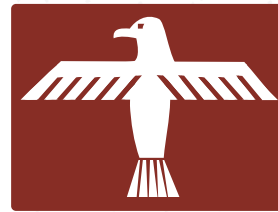
For interested partners and participants

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 ^x

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 ^{xi}

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

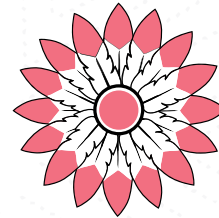
For interested partners and participants

Address:
26 Colbourne St
London, ON N6B 2S6

Telephone:
(519) 672-0131



Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound: Niagara Regional Native Centre



Demographics of Niagara ^{xii}

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 ^{xiii}

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 ^{xiv}

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 ^{xv}

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 ^{viii}

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 ^{ix}

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:

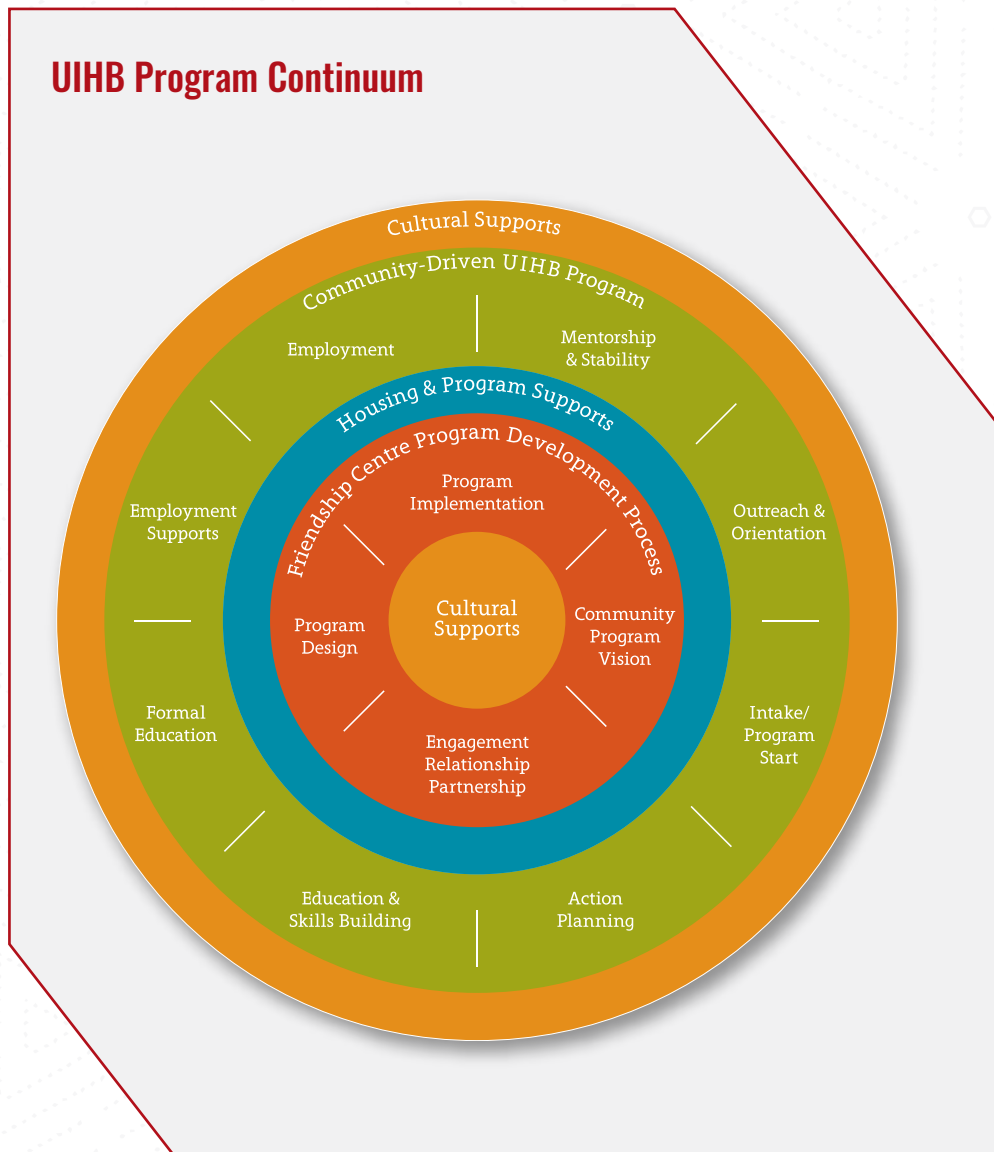
UIHB is a four-year initiative that aims to systemically address the barriers sole-parenting Indigenous women face when trying to find meaningful employment, enhanced wellbeing and prosperity for themselves and their children. UIHB is founded on the provision of coordination of key supports such as housing,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

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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.

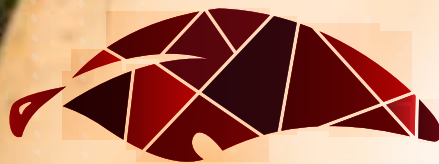
UIHB Coordinators Meeting March 5, 2019

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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Conclusion

Future of the Community of Practice

Throughout this year, WoodGreen and the OFIFC have been gathering knowledge through surveys, interviews and informal interactions about the usefulness and impact of the COP UIHB/HB programs across the province.

The utility and importance of the COP has been reinforced through these learnings, as UIHB/HB practitioners have expressed that:

- Educational activities and resources accessed through the COP have provided knowledge, skills, and resources that have been (or are likely to be) useful to the development and operation of their program;
- Opportunities to receive on-demand, 1:1 support was highly valued by UIHB/HB practitioners and described as impactful to their ongoing work;
- Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other COP members, either in-person or online, was a source of practical and emotional support;

WoodGreen and the OFIFC will continue to work collaboratively with organizations implementing UIHB/HB programs, providing ongoing 1:1 support, group capacity building activities, development and distribution of resources, and maintaining the Online Hub.

As well, WoodGreen and the OFIFC will enable the continued growth of the HB and UIHB programs to new locations by engaging in conversations with interested organizations, facilitating feasibility assessments and community engagement, and building on the ongoing work of developing program infrastructure, creating program resources, and working to achieve sustainable funding for UIHB/HB programs.

Call to Action

The support and resources that ESDC has provided through the Innovative Solutions to Homelessness funding stream have been instrumental in enabling WoodGreen and the OFIFC to pilot a Community of Practice and build infrastructure to help bolster the capacity of Friendship Centres and agencies across Ontario to make a meaningful impact on the poverty and homelessness experienced by female-led, lone-parent families facing barriers to education and employment.

We call on all levels of government to provide multi-year, sustainable funding in order to strengthen UIHB/HB program delivery, support the COP, enable programs to continue their growth and development, and allow new geographies to benefit from the incredible impacts of Homeward Bound and Urban Indigenous Homeward Bound.