

PARTNERSHIP THROUGH A CULTURAL LENS

Building Inuksuit

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Why Am I Here Today

- ▣ To share a story of a community. A community that has a history, a future and is filled with beauty and strength.
- ▣ To share my story of the gift that the spirit of the community has brought to me.

Why

In the hope that by telling these stories that you leave today ready to make a commitment to listen to the stories of others and in doing so change the way you work.

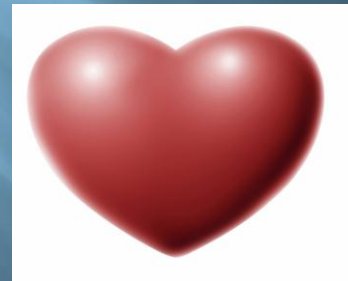
and so the story begins.....

- ▣ 6 years ago a group of parents who were committed to ensuring that their Inuit children would grow up in an Urban environment proud of their Culture created a not-for-profit agency called The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre.
- ▣ 5 years ago the Public Health Agency of Canada signed a contribution agreement with this group and the OICC had it's first program - the Sivummut Head Start program

and....

- ▣ I was hired to be the Executive Director. I had 12 years experience serving the community.
- ▣ Today the OICC now has 7 programs, two buildings, 25 staff and we serve up to 100 children a day as well as their families.

It is a work that has brought great joy - it is a passion not a vocation



The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

THE OTTAWA INUIT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Vision
Strong culture, strong families, strong community

Mission
In partnership with parents and the community the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre fosters strong and proud Inuit children, youth and families

Mandate
The OICC serves Inuit children and youth from birth to 13 years of age and their families. The objects of our organization are: to provide Inuit children and youth with a learning environment that will enhance their overall development; to foster positive parenting through support and education; and to promote the retention of the Inuit culture and language.

Moral of the Story is...

That when a community is committed to provide their children with a place where they can soar and be well magic happens.

A Place and a Community



The Role of Community

- ❑ The leaders in this growth have been our community, the Urban Inuit community.
- ❑ Along the way, we have found partners who see the value in what we do and understand the impact. They are genuine, authentic and understand when working with us, that they need us to take the lead.

Why Partner?

- ❑ In truly wanting to ensure the cultural safety of our children we know that other doors will open and other professionals will be called upon.
- ❑ We want to ensure that those agencies and professional have the understanding of our community - to know the story of the past and of today.

Why

- ❑ We want to ensure that when a door opens that behind it is someone able to serve not just with their skills, but with an authentic, genuine heart.
- ❑ We want them to see our children through the lens of their culture.
- ❑ A culture that is rich, a people that have lived through trauma sometimes at the hands of our very own institutions, governments and policies.

Why

- Because we MUST



Overall

- Combined Responsibility:

That how we act separately and combined will have an impact on a child and families mental wellness

Because we can celebrate together

They are many.....

The OICC has participated on the following committees and network:

- City of Ottawa Aboriginal Working Group
- The Urban Aboriginal Strategy
- Eastern Ontario Children and Youth Health Network
- Ottawa Leadership Table for Children and Youth
- Best Start Aboriginal Working Group and Steering Committee
- Ontario Aboriginal Head Start Association
- Association of Early Childhood Educators Ottawa Chapter Committee
- Ottawa Network for Children Services
- The Ottawa children and Youth Suicide Prevention Network
- The Ottawa Aboriginal Health Network
- Children's Aid Aboriginal Working Group
- Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa Committee
- CHEO, Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Ottawa Carleton District School Board, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

the list goes on with partners for service delivery.....

- The Wabano Aboriginal Health Care Centre
- Minwaashin Lodge
- Tungasuvvingat Inuit
- The Ottawa Libraries
- ALSO
- The Ottawa Police
- The Vanier Early Years Centre
- Ottawa Best Start
- The Public Health Department
- The City of Ottawa
- The Ottawa School of Dance
- The Ottawa School of Art
- Crossroads
- Ashbury Academy
- The Ottawa Carleton District School Board
- The Ottawa Catholic School Board
- ACTUA Science Camps

Why these partners?

- Because we want to partner with organizations and individuals who offer services that will help us meet our Vision.
- Because these agencies have an energy and passion that fits with ours and the community
- Because at the end of the day a child and or family will be impacted in a way that positively affects their well being

Find like energy

How, I asked

- ▣ I would like to see training or information sharing first. To talk about our history. I think if they understand Aboriginal peoples better then they can work with us with a better understanding of why we want and need to do some things a certain way.

And they told me

- ▣ non-Aboriginal partners should learn about the culture and history of Aboriginal people, let Aboriginal people take the lead on the healing practices and education, hire more Aboriginal people to work with children and youth, build capacity of Aboriginal front line staff but never diminish their knowhow, do not assume you know what is best for Aboriginal people.

we need to listen

- ▣ it would be for non-Aboriginal partners to understand that the Inuit community operates in a circular structure, not hierarchical. By that I mean we are all equals in the circle and each partner/individual fulfils a certain role to achieve our purpose for partnering, which, in our circle, is the children. This is very important because sometimes I think government partners may think they are at the top of a hierarchical structure because they are ultimately accountable for the funds. Whereas in a circular structure, they are but one equal player with the role of ultimate accountability.

we need to understand

- ▣ It's simply a matter of working with 'us' not for 'us'. With this simple shift in focus, we all work from a strength-based approach.
- ▣ Come in knowing some background information not just statistics. Know a bit of the stories behind the statistics. Listen with the intend of challenging yourself and the commitment to making a difference.

we need to hear

- ▣ I love it when Mainstream orgs ask for our input and really listen. Then back it up with resources, and always recognizing that we know our community best.

Good examples include OCDSB who ask for input and participation, act on our recommendations and then 'gives' us the monetary resources and trust, to do what is right for our community.

Another good example is CAS.

we need to be authentic

- ❑ A bad example would be the various committees that ask us to plan and develop their programs without the 'two way street'. They seem to want the prestige and or funding dollars attached of working 'with' Aboriginal groups but they don't really respect our knowledge, time or suggestions that are given in good faith.

We need to create real change

- ❑ What also doesn't work is people who go to one cultural workshop and then present themselves as experts.
- ❑ When large mainstream agencies and or institutions apply for funding and then we do the work without authentic gratitude or concrete change in our communities.

we need to share stories

- ❑ I think people who are genuine, ask questions, not in a prying curiosity way but in a way to gather information that will affect their work will be successful. They do it by sitting and speaking to people; they do it in a way that is genuine and authentic. People in the Aboriginal community feel it ; they have an unbelievable ability to know when somebody is being authentic.

In Summary

- ❑ As Canadians everyone of us has a responsibility. We need to take action and be part of the solution under the direction and guidance of our Aboriginal communities.
- ❑ We need to ignite the fire within us.

Together

We need to ensure that our children and communities are seen like Inuksuit across our country. Marking where life is plentiful, rich and in celebration of a strong , beautiful culture and people.

True beauty



