

Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”)
BETWEEN
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (“OMSSA”)
AND
ONTARIO FEDERATION OF INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES (“OFIFC”)

1.0 PREAMBLE

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships”. It is with this understanding that the OFIFC and OMSSA enter into a formalised partnership agreement to forge new ways of working together in the spirit of reconciliation.

2.0 CONTEXT

In late 2017, the OFIFC and OMSSA began working together in the interest of identifying areas of mutual concern and potential collaboration between our member organizations, both at the provincial and local levels. The OFIFC and OMSSA are collaborating on initiatives that create tangible opportunities for our respective member organizations to engage and work together in local and regional initiatives. It is our common objective that this MOU will build the foundation for an OFIFC-OMSSA relationship for many years to come, with the aim of improving outcomes for our collective memberships and communities across Ontario.

The OFIFC and OMSSA agree that this MOU shall be interpreted in a manner that is respectful of and consistent with the Urban Indigenous Action Plan (UIAP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report and Calls to Action, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the recognition of the self-determining nature of urban Indigenous communities and organizations.

3.0 BACKGROUND

OFIFC

Founded in 1971, OFIFC is a provincial Indigenous organization that represents the collective interests of twenty-eight (28) member Friendship Centres. Its Friendship Centres improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to and participation in Canadian society and which respects Indigenous cultural distinctiveness.

The OFIFC administers several culture-based programs and services which are delivered by local Friendship Centres in areas such as health, poverty reduction, homelessness, ending family violence, justice, family support, and employment and training.

OFIFC member Friendship Centres currently deliver culture-based programs and services in most of these areas, which has had a positive impact on Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities across Ontario through:

- Designing innovative, community-driven programs and services that address the community need;
- Supporting Indigenous people and families' successful transition into urban and rural communities;
- Providing Indigenous cultural competency training to external partners and stakeholders, fostering cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity;
- Participating in community events, boards and committees to enhance the quality and accessibility of services for the urban Indigenous community;
- Advocating to ensure that the views of urban Indigenous people are represented and accommodated in local place-based initiatives; and,
- Creating spaces to gather for Indigenous, and non-Indigenous people alike to celebrate and share in Indigenous cultures in an urban setting.

As such, Friendship Centres are recognized as Indigenous community hubs in the cities and towns in which they are located, providing services in a self-determining, holistic, and integrated manner to local Indigenous people and communities.

OMSSA

Established in 1950, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit organization whose members are the 37 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and 10 District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) across Ontario.

OMSSA members, as representatives of local government, have the responsibility to fund, plan, manage and deliver services in the areas of social and employment assistance, early years and child care, social and affordable housing and homelessness prevention.

As an Association, OMSSA is committed to supporting its membership through the promotion of progressive and locally responsive policy and programs informed by the diverse experience of our members. We do so through strong and transparent

relationships with the provincial government and key sector partners. We understand the significant responsibility of providing services that Ontarians rely on and that doing so effectively requires policies and mechanisms that are sustainable and support people in communities where they live. We also understand that strong partnerships within the municipal sector and across the human services sector is critical to the effectiveness of our membership in working for Ontario's most vulnerable.

4.0 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This MOU is a statement of intent to communicate, work together, and exchange program and policy information to advance the interests of our collective memberships across Ontario. This MOU is also a statement of intent to ground our collaborative work in the vision, principles, and actions of the *Urban Indigenous Action Plan*. Through this MOU, the OFIFC and OMSSA are committed to working together toward reconciliation and in harmony with the principles set out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

5.0 SCOPE OF AGREEMENT

This MOU does not create any binding legal obligations on the parties or any authorities for one party or another.

6.0 SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES: ENGAGEMENT, COLLABORATION and INFORMATION SHARING

The OFIFC and the OMSSA agree to work together in areas where our organizational interests coincide. As such, the OFIFC and the OMSSA agree to engage, work together, and share information with the understanding that our respective mandates are complementary and that fulfilling them in collaboration will have a direct, positive impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples in Ontario.

a) Relationship-Building and Maintenance

The OFIFC and OMSSA commit to engage with one another in legislative, policy, and programmatic areas where we share interests or objectives in a manner that is respectful of the OFIFC-OMSSA relationship but maintains their respective independence. This may include, but is not limited to, subject areas such as social housing and homelessness prevention; early years programming and childcare; transportation services; and income security.

Engagement includes: bi-annual meetings between the OFIFC President and Executive Director, and the OMSSA President and Executive Director, or their delegates; joint advocacy and the mutual endorsement of each organization's policy positions on common priority areas; and engagement with local Friendship Centre and service managers in areas of mutual concern, as necessary. Communication is encouraged to occur between OFIFC and OMSSA prior to engagements separately with Friendship Centres.

c) Information-Sharing

The OFIFC and OMSSA will work towards creating increased opportunities for knowledge exchange between OFIFC and OMSSA staff and our collective membership. This involves sharing relevant program and policy information including data, research, policy papers, reports, and best/wise practices. This also includes invitations to participate at policy tables, promoting selected events of interests to our collective memberships, and identifying speaking opportunities for OMSSA and OFIFC senior management. Information exchange should be considered confidential, unless otherwise specified by the OFIFC and OMSSA.

b) Collaboration

The OFIFC and OMSSA agree to work together across relevant programmatic and policy areas in the interests of our membership. Such activities could include identifying future opportunities for education and training and exploring joint advocacy in the following areas of mutual concern, such as, but not limited to:

Policy Development and Implementation

- Developing the formal recognition amongst service managers of Friendship Centres as urban Indigenous community hubs across Ontario;
- Increasing opportunities between our membership to optimize and integrate service delivery (e.g. situating services within or in partnership with Friendship Centres) to improve the reach and impact of social services in the areas of:
 - Social and affordable housing and homelessness prevention;
 - Income security;
 - Local Indigenous hiring and employment strategies;
 - Early years and childcare programming; and
 - Coordinated community transportation services.

Training and Professional Development

- Building membership capacity to address systemic discrimination at the community level, including facilitating access to formal human rights systems like the provincial Human Rights Code;
- Advancing trauma-informed approaches across the human services sector;
- Promoting the Urban Indigenous Action Plan (UIAP) as a relationship-building tool; and
- Access to professional development training (*in the form of discounts from both parties*).

7.0 DURATION

This MOU takes effect on the date it is signed by both parties, until it is terminated. Both parties shall initiate and cooperate in a full review of this MOU on an annual basis, as part of the bi-annual meetings between OFIFC and OMSSA senior management.

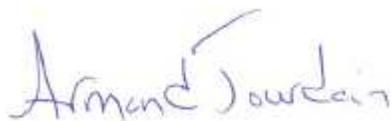
8.0 TERMINATION

Either the OFIFC or OMSSA may terminate this agreement with 90 days written notice to the other party.

9.0 CONCLUSION

In signing this agreement, we, the undersigned agree upon the elements set out in our MOU. It is further agreed that should additional activities and areas of collaboration be identified, they will be included in the spirit and intent of this agreement.

Signed this 3 day of May, 2019.



Armand Jourdain
President, OFIFC



Elaine Baxter-Trahair
President, OMSSA