LEARN MORE

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This brochure highlights our agency's commitment to culturally safe practices and does not claim ownership of the HEART and SPIRIT program.

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton integrated the HEART and SPIRIT program into our services with the guidance of ANCFSAO along with staff from The Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, The Ontario Native Women's Association, NIWASA, De dwa da dehs nye >s (Aboriginal Health Center of Hamilton), and Elder Renee Thomas-Hill from Six Nations of the Grand River.

We gratefully recognize the financial commitment RBC has made to the Heart & Spirit Program.

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Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton
Société d'aide à l'enfance catholique de Hamilton

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Heart & Spirit

Caregivers

Our Commitment

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CCASH) is committed to fostering culturally safe and respectful practices when working with Indigenous families, children, and communities. We aim to ensure that every child and family we serve is supported in a way that honours their cultural identity and traditions. By integrating Indigenous perspectives and practices into our work, we strive to build stronger, more respectful partnerships with Indigenous caregivers and families.

Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario

What is Heart & Spirit?

The HEART and SPIRIT Program, created by ANCFSAO*, provides a culturally respectful and effective approach for caregivers ready to care for Indigenous children and youth in the Hamilton area.

Rooted in Indigenous family teachings, this program honors the values and traditions that guide the care of children and youth. It is designed to deepen caregivers' understanding of these traditions, while also addressing the impacts of historical events that have disrupted them. The program empowers caregivers to nurture and respect the cultural identities of Indigenous children and youth.

How the Program Supports Indigenous Caregivers

- Recognizes and respects the unique learning styles of Indigenous peoples.
- Tailors training to be relevant and applicable within the diverse cultural contexts of the Indigenous community.
- Fosters a partnership with caregivers based on mutual respect, understanding, and shared goals.
- Provides ongoing support to help caregivers understand the effects of historical trauma and its impact on the children in their care.

The **Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) is a provincial organization that supports and advocates for **Indigenous child and family well-being** in Ontario. It works with Indigenous child welfare agencies to promote **culturally appropriate services, policies, and training** that reflect Indigenous values and traditions.

PROCESS FOR CAREGIVERS

The journey to becoming a caregiver through the HEART and SPIRIT program is a meaningful and transformative process. The following phases guide you through each step, honouring your commitment to providing a safe, nurturing, and culturally grounded home for Indigenous children.

Phase 1: Contact CCASH

The first step is to contact our Reconciliation Lead at CCASH to start the process where we'll work with you to assess whether alternative care (fostering) is the right fit for you and our program.
Reconciliation Lead: 905-525-2012 ext. 3113 | joshua.dockstator@hamiltonccas.on.ca.

Phase 2: Home Visit

A dedicated worker will visit and guide you through the process, assist with completing any required forms, and provide clarity on the next steps in your journey.

Phase 3: HEART Engagements (assessment) HEART is a seven-step home study to assess a caregiver's home and their readiness to care for Indigenous children. This process highlights strengths and areas for growth, establishes a good match between caregiver and child, and helps to ensure caregivers have the tools and understanding needed to support the children in a way that respects and nurtures their cultures, heritages, and identities.

- Engagement 1: Bravery
- Engagement 2: Truth
- Engagement 3: Humility
- Engagement 4: Wisdom
- Engagement 5: Respect (SPIRIT Sessions)
- Engagement 6: Honesty
- Engagement 7: Love

Phase 4: SPIRIT Sessions (training)

SPIRIT involves 10 group training sessions that engage, prepare, and develop participants to become Caregivers for Indigenous children and youth.

- Intro to SPIRIT Sessions: Importance of Being a Resource Parent
- Session 1: Role of the Creation Story
- Session 2: Traditional Indigenous Family Systems
- Session 3: Disruption of Indigenous Family Systems
- Session 4: My Family System Part 1
- Session 5: My Family System Part 2
- Session 6: The Life Path
- Session 7: Meeting the Needs of Indigenous Children and Youth
- Session 8: Dealing with Disruptive Behavior
- Session 9: Planning for Change – Extending one's Home
- Session 10: Making the Decision to Extend My Family

Phase 5: Decision

Upon completion of the HEART and SPIRIT program, a final Circle is held to assess the caregiver's readiness to provide care, and recommendations are made regarding their continued participation.

Phase 6: Become an Alternative Care Provider

At this stage, you take the final steps toward becoming an approved Alternative Care Provider with CCASH. This involves working closely with our team to complete any remaining requirements, finalize the approval process, and ensure you are fully prepared to welcome a child into your home.