

KEWAYWIN CIRCLE ANNUAL REPORT

- 2023 -



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WHO WE ARE

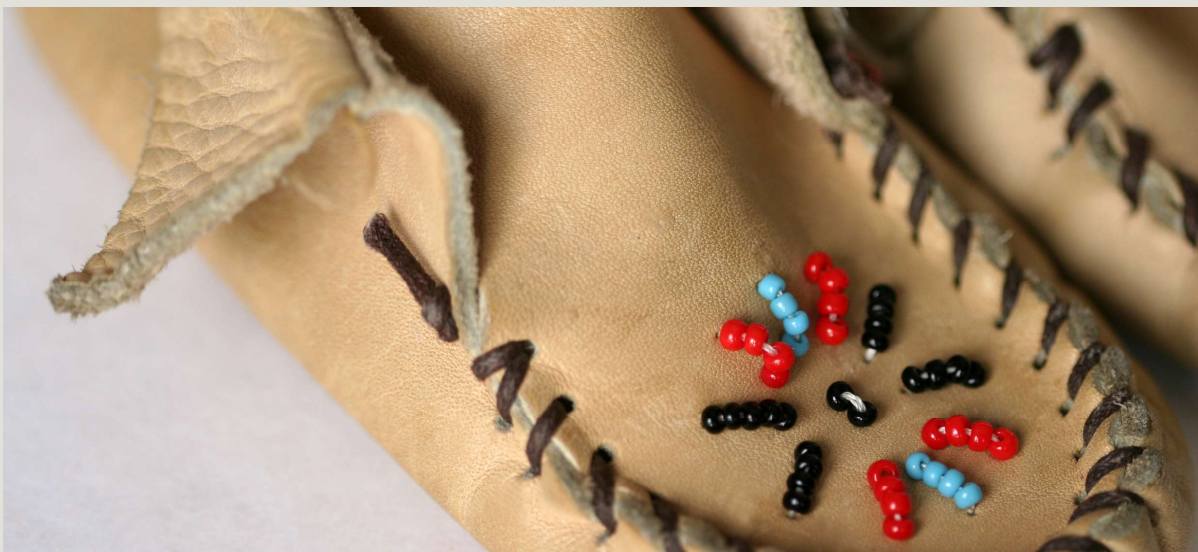
The Kewaywin Circle is an Agency-affiliated advisory group comprised of volunteers from local Indigenous communities, community partners, and agency staff.

Kewaywin is an Eastern Ojibwe Anishinaabe word meaning 'to go home', which outlines the vision of returning Indigenous children and youth home and connecting them with community and culture.

ORIGINS

The Kewaywin Circle was formed in June 2019 with the intent to connect with and seek counsel from Indigenous community members in the KFL&A area regarding how best to (re)build and strengthen relationships between CAS and Indigenous peoples in order to honour the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Agency was also seeking guidance around how to purposefully fulfill changes to the agency's own Strategic Plan (which was implemented in November 2019 and directly aligns with provincial child welfare commitments to working with Indigenous communities).





WHAT WE DO

The Kewaywin Circle provides recommendations from Indigenous-identified perspectives to ensure FACSFLA honours an Indigenous worldview in the work the Agency does with Indigenous children, youth, and families in FACSFLA's jurisdiction. The Circle provides support and consultation regarding organizational practices, protocols, and procedures, and culturally meaningful outreach to children, youth, families, Agency staff, and the Board of Directors.

VISION

To reignite and ground children, youth, and families indigenous to Turtle Island in their culture, connections, and opportunities for sharing knowledge, while ensuring that those children and youth grow up healthy and integrated within their families, cultures, and communities.

GOAL

To reignite and ground children, youth, and families indigenous to Turtle Island in their culture, connections, and opportunities for sharing knowledge, while ensuring that those children and youth grow up healthy and integrated within their families, cultures, and communities.



A MESSAGE FROM SARAH SPENCER

FACSFLA'S DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL SERVICES

“Every child comes from a unique cultural context, which shapes their worldview, values, and responses to support systems. Recognizing and honouring the cultural backgrounds of FACSFLA's service recipients not only fosters trust but also shapes effective and sustainable joint planning with families and communities which meets their unique needs. It is imperative that the child welfare sector recognizes the profound importance of adhering to the Calls to Action for Truth and Reconciliation; they represent a critical framework for acknowledging historical injustices and working towards healing and reconciliation within Indigenous communities and beyond.

Adhering to the Calls to Action is not just about compliance; it is about fostering meaningful change and restoring trust. It requires a comprehensive approach that involves listening to Indigenous voices, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and implementing concrete measures to address the root causes of injustice. The Kewaywin Circle is an embodiment of this approach, a commitment of our Agency to address the systemic issues that have perpetuated intergenerational trauma and disrupted Indigenous families and communities. This includes acknowledging the harmful legacy of residential schools, ensuring culturally appropriate services, and empowering Indigenous leadership in child welfare decisions. The Circle's conversations and recommendations are guided by what is best for Indigenous children, youth, and families, and decisions are driven by the voices of Indigenous children, youth, families, and community members.

As the Cultural Services Director at FACSFLA, and the Agency's leading Technician in the Kewaywin Circle, I am committed to leading by example and working collaboratively with Indigenous communities to build a child welfare system that is rooted in respect, understanding, and solidarity.”

Sarah Spencer
Director of Culture Services





MEET OUR MEMBERSHIP

The Kewaywin Circle is honoured to include individuals who bring deep commitment and a vast breadth of knowledge, experience, and skill to the Circle's endeavours. The Circle's membership is comprised of a mixture of Indigenous community members, FACSFLA staff (known as 'Technicians' at the Circle level), a FACSFLA Board of Directors Liaison, and community partner representatives. Please see below for the Circle's membership*:

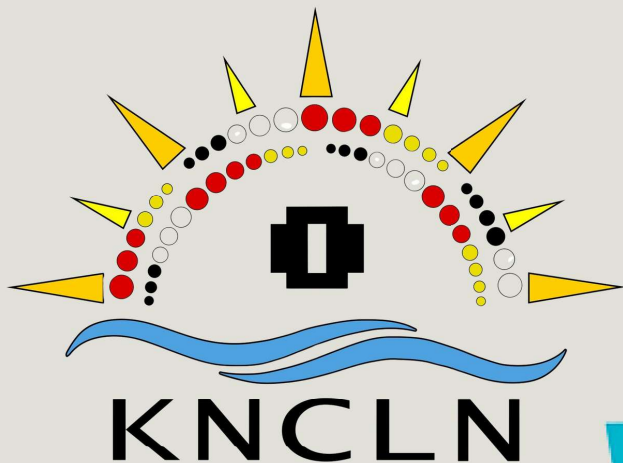
- Amanda Campbell, Senior Administrative Assistant, Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (FACSFLA)
- Andrée Willetts, Family Services Worker, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) Team, FACSFLA
- Angela Maracle, Culture Services Worker, FNIM Team, FACSFLA
- Angela Woodhouse, Manager, Family Connections Team, FACSFLA
- Cedar Brant-Swain, Indigenous Victim Services (IVS), Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (MBQ)/Kenhtè:ke Kanyen'kehá:ka
- Colette Sicard, Children's Services Worker, FNIM Team, FACSFLA
- Emma Dimock, Director of Services, FACSFLA
- Jacob Miller, Adult Programming and Outreach Librarian, Kingston Frontenac Public Library (KFPL)
- Jayme Blondin, Indigenous Counsellor, Sexual Assault Centre Kingston (SACK)
- Kearstie Snary, Intergenerational Strength and Resiliency Coordinator, Kingston Native Centre and Language Nest (KNCLN)
- Kimberley Debassige, Community Member
- Laura Maracle, Culture Coordinator, FACSFLA
- Mandy Wilson, Community Connections Coordinator, KNCLN
- Penni-Dawn Kernot, Community Member/Foster Parent
- Rebecca Lloyd, Culture Services Worker, FNIM Team, FACSFLA
- Sarah Spencer, Director of Cultural Services, FACSFLA
- Shyanne Brant, Victim Services Coordinator, IVS, MBQ/Kenhtè:ke Kanyen'kehá:ka
- Stephanie McIlroy, Placement Student, FNIM Team, FACSFLA
- Sydney Green, First Nations Youth Wellness Outreach Worker, Good Minds/Enyonkwa'nikonhriyo:hake, MBQ/Kenhtè:ke Kanyen'kehá:ka
- Tracy Johnston, Community Member

Honorable mention to:

Théo Paradis, Lynda Gerow, Ray Byrne, Kate Brant, and Mona Rahman

RECOGNITION OF KEWAYWIN CIRCLE'S COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Kewaywin Circle is grateful to the many community partners who not only provide space and time to the Circle's various members to attend the meetings of the Circle on an ongoing basis, but who also lend invaluable support, resources, and sponsorship to many of the Circle's endeavours which aim to engage and honour Indigenous children and families in our community.



Indigenous
Victim Services



Kingston Community
Health Centres

Centres de santé
communautaire de Kingston



Community Foundation
for Kingston & Area



Mohawks of the
Bay of Quinte



SUCCESSSES OF THE CIRCLE HIGHLIGHTS

For four years running, the Circle has continued to generate meaningful conversations, ideas, and opportunities for connection and healing in relation to Indigenous culture and community outreach.

The Kewaywin Circle continued to meet bi-weekly throughout the year to initiate and foster support, guidance, and connections to community and cultural knowledge for families, children, and youth working with the Agency who are Indigenous-identified, caregivers who have Indigenous-identified children/youth living in their homes, Agency staff providing services to Indigenous families, children, and youth, and to the Board of Directors (who hold the agency accountable to commitments made, work being done, and policies/procedures in place). The Circle also continued to offer input via an Indigenous lens regarding services Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (FACSFLA) provides and makes recommendations for change.

JANUARY

Supported the Grandmother's Council's Mid-Winter Gathering for Community

Led both in + outdoor activities for children/youth attending the Gathering, + gifted feast bundles to 20 participants

FEBRUARY

Have a Heart Day Taco Tuesday + Basket Raffle Fundraisers for KCHC Toronto Zoo Trip

Hosted 2 separate fundraising events @ FACSFLA with all proceeds supporting transportation for young people + families

MARCH

Supported the Katarokwi Grandmother's Council's Sweetwater Ceremony

Engaged in helping tasks in support of the ceremony

Supported KCHC in Maple Madness Event

Supplied pancakes + drinks for each attendee participating via KCHC @ Little Cat Creek

Partnered with KILN for Hides to Rattles Workshop

Highly successful March Break learning opportunity for Indigenous youth + families

APRIL

Co-Developed + Co-Delivered MCCSS Mandated Indigenous Training Curriculum

In partnership with FACSFLA staff, drafted + implemented cultural competency training modules for foster parents required by the Ministry in alignment with changes to the Quality Standards Framework regulations

Participated in the KCHC Spring Together Community Fair

Engaged in helping tasks in support of the event

SUCCESSSES OF THE CIRCLE HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

The Circle continued to provide a wide variety of supports and services to young Indigenous people throughout the year with the intent of helping them to identify the gifts they have been given and related ways of being, healing connection to spirit, family, community, and nation, and (re)developing relationships to traditional roles and knowledge.

This included building bundles, offering culturally relevant workshops and opportunities to receive teachings, providing opportunities for exposure to Indigenous languages, practices, and traditions, connecting young people and families to other community services and supports through collaborative efforts of membership, participating in consults with community partners about Indigenous-focused and/or led service provision, programming, and projects and increasing organizational cultural safety, etc,

MAY

Opened Kewaywin Circle Medicine Garden

Opened the garden (located at 817 Division Street in Kingston) with singing and drumming, making the commitment to care for the growing things within

JUNE

Contributed to City-Wide National Indigenous People's Day Event

Provided breakfast sandwiches for participants; remained onsite for any needs of event facilitators, including supporting the First Aid/Lost Cubs tent

Community Building for Indigenous Graduates

Gifted smudge kits and teachings to FNIM graduates receiving service from FACSFLA, & presented the Futures Fund Kewaywin Circle Bursary

Supported FACSFLA's 2SLGBTQ+ Pride Celebrations

Walked in Pride Marches & volunteered at Agency booth at Community Fairs for both Kingston & Napanee events

JULY

Supported KILN's Ribbon Skirt + Shirt Workshop

Supported with purchasing of supplies to facilitate a family-oriented ribbon skirt and/or shirt making workshop hosted by KILN

Welcomed Newly Appointed Organizational Kewaywin Circle Lead

Sarah Spencer stepped into her new role of Director of Cultural Services at FACSFLA (inclusive of oversight of the organizational Technician support for Kewaywin Circle)

AUGUST

Supported Youth to Attend ANCFSAO Camp

Several members acted as chaperones to a handful of young people who attended the ANCFSAO Tim Horton's Cultural Camp with great success

SUCCESSSES OF THE CIRCLE HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)



SEPTEMBER

Observed National Day of Truth & Reconciliation

Hosted an afternoon/evening child-centred event open to community attendance with a sacred fire, teachings, and a potluck feast in honour of lost loved ones

OCTOBER

Revised Terms of Reference

Made minor adjustments to the Circle's foundational guiding document, the Terms of Reference, with agreement to review on annual basis and make organic revisions

NOVEMBER

Began Building Strategy for 2024

Spent time brainstorming and coordinating approach for the Circle's future endeavours for the coming year, including recruiting additional membership, increasing land stewardship efforts, and observing days of significance to Indigenous communities

Consultation re: FACSFLA New Strategic Plan

Contributed valuable feedback from diverse Indigenous worldviews to FACSFLA's Senior Leadership Team with respect to visioning out the Agency's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan revamp

DECEMBER

Continued Building Strategy for 2024

Ongoing conversation regarding engaging community partners in allyship opportunities, involving youth in an action-oriented ways and continuing to offer opportunities for a diversity of community connection

LANGUAGE SPOTLIGHT



The Kewaywin Circle embeds a variety of Indigenous languages into every aspect of the support they provide to young people and families with Indigenous heritage they work with, making it a cornerstone of connection to community and culture.

Below are some very important words and phrases in various Indigenous languages which are representative of the diversity of Indigenous communities within this territory:

01. **Eh kati'niihtonhak ne onkwa'nikon:ra**

'And now our minds are one'; this is a key phrase repeated throughout the Mohawk Thanksgiving Address (the **Ohenten Kariwatekwen**, or 'the words that are spoken before all others'), which is often spoken as an opening to Kewaywin Circle Meetings, and is a way to join people together in a common goal.

03. **Ni nikamon**

'I want to sing'; this Cree sentiment is something that might be overheard at the Kewaywin Circle's regular drumming socials, where children, youth, families, and community gather together to share beautiful songs, cultural teachings, and delicious meals.

02. **Nanagaadawendimowin**

'Critical consciousness/decolonization'; this Anishnaabemowin word is important to the work that the Circle does within FACSFLA and the local community, 'unsettling the settler' by providing a variety of Indigenous perspectives to inform child protection service delivery and offering ample opportunities for people to build connection with culture in community.

04. **Kewaywin**

'To go home'; this is an Eastern Ojibwe Anishinaabe word which the Circle used to name this dedicated collective, as it outlines the memberships' shared vision of returning Indigenous children and youth home and connecting them with community and culture.

SPOTLIGHT ON DRUMMING SOCIALS

The Kewaywin Circle provides guidance and recommendations around the creation and implementation of accessible and meaningful connections to culture for the children/youth and families receiving service from the Agency.

The Circle continued providing evening drumming socials throughout the year on a biweekly basis, hosted in person in (and often filling to capacity) the three large first floor Community Rooms at FACSFLA's Division Street office. The Socials continued to have consistently good turnout of young people and families. The Socials provided an opportunity for young people and the people who are important to them to (re)connect in community to sing, dance, drum, and engage in teachings and learning. All drumming socials included sharing a meal as a community, often providing opportunities for Indigenous youth to learn alongside Kewaywin Circle members in preparing food to be shared and/or providing opportunities to support local business (some Indigenous-led/owned) via catering in meals to share; this included a special Winter Solstice holiday meal in December, which was prepared by a local Indigenous caterer.

Many FACSFLA staff volunteered to assist in supporting and facilitating various needs associated with the drumming socials alongside community-based Circle membership, including admitting participants to the building after hours, assisting with meal preparations and/or providing homecooked meals, engaging young people and child minding, and clean up.



Evening drumming socials hosted in Napanee at 99 Advance Avenue in the Community Rooms on a monthly basis continued throughout 2023. This regularly scheduled Social began in 2022 in response to overwhelming indication from Indigenous families living in Lennox and Addington County who are also receiving services from FACSFLA that there is a need for opportunities for connection, relationship building, and cultural learning and growth for residents in rural communities.



With much guidance from the Kewaywin Circle, and with grant funding received via the Community Foundation for Kingston & Area, FACSFLA's Cultural Services Team purchased community drums to continue facilitating drumming socials in a more sustainable manner.

STORYTELLING SPOTLIGHT

LAURA MARACLE, CULTURAL COORDINATOR, FACSFLA

“My name is Teyoronhyayentere’s. I sit with the Bear clan. My English name is Laura Maracle. My name roughly translates to “she recognizes two skies.” This name speaks to the qualities and strengths that I carry. I am a mixed-race woman who has made the conscious decision to live my life according to Haudenosaunee tradition. My biological father was an Anishinabek man and my mother is of French/Irish descent. The father who raised me is Haudenosaunee (Mohawk) and that is how I know Tyendinaga as my home today. I was born and raised in Toronto, where I spent the first twenty-two years of my life. Thereafter, I moved to Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, one hour west of Kingston.

I have lived in the Dish with One Spoon wampum treaty/agreement for my entire life. I am a strong and proud Indigenous woman, daughter, mother, niece, sister, auntie, and friend. I walk in two worlds always and help others to do so. I am humbled to live with Indigenous culture and within my responsibilities to all of creation.

Kewaywin drum circle is an opportunity for community to gather, for children to create relationships with peers and family members and community in both Kingston and Napanee. Local community singers are invited to share their gifts, songs and stories. It is truly quite magical. This is a chance for youth to share their songs, learn to lead, to learn ceremony and protocol, and the opportunity to lead in their unique and individual styles.

Personally, my family use it as their “gramma night” together. It was initially a time for my children and their cousins to have family time together during a time they didn’t see each other often. Even though Wednesday evenings are their one night a week to spend it together with their gramma, they chose to drive one hour and use drum night as their venue. It really has brought them closer at a time when they couldn’t be. Currently, even though circumstances have changed, and they see their first cousins more often, they still choose to continue to attend on their gramma night and have been doing so for a few years now.”



STORYTELLING SPOTLIGHT

Kewaywin Circle members share in their own words what being a part of this advisory group means to them.



Rebecca Lloyd

Cultural Support Worker,
FACSFLA

“My favourite aspect of being a member of Kewaywin is seeing both the familiar and new smiling faces at Drum Socials. It is so important to me to be a member of a committee that provides such an inclusive, safe, positive and welcoming space for people/ families.”



Kearstie Snary

Intergenerational Strength &
Resiliency Coordinator, KNCLN

“Having an opportunity to sit on the Kewaywin Circle is another way of supporting families, parents, and youth who are navigating challenging times by creating safe spaces and opportunities for learning, healing, and connection to community. I feel grateful to sit and help provide support from the Kingston Native Centre and Language Nest in continuing the work and healing between Indigenous community and families involved in the child welfare system.”



STORYTELLING SPOTLIGHT

Kewaywin Circle members share in their own words what being a part of this advisory group means to them.



Angela Maracle

Cultural Support Worker,
FACSFLA

“As a Haudenosaunee (Mohawk) woman, I am incredibly fulfilled by the positive impacts the Kewaywin Circle brings to the Indigenous community here in Kingston. Our Circle plays a crucial role in creating change and fostering opportunities for youth and families who participate in our socials and events. Through initiatives, we cultivate a sense of belonging and unity among those who attend. It's especially gratifying to witness the joy of children receiving awards upon graduation, knowing our efforts contributed to their successes. What excites me most is our ongoing commitment to innovation, constantly seeking new ways to engage Indigenous community members and ensure their voices are heard. This collective effort not only supports our Indigenous community, but also initiates the necessary changes for a stronger, more supported future for the Indigenous community.”



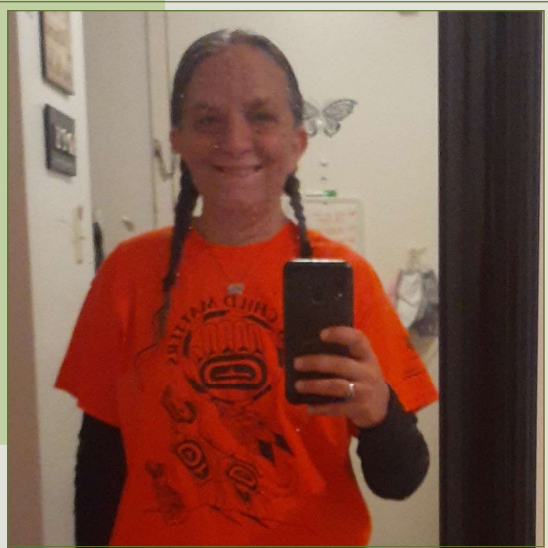
Emma Dimock

Director of Services, FACSFLA

“Participating in Kewaywin Circle has facilitated both important personal learning as a non-Indigenous woman, and also in my development as a leader at FACSFLA. The work of Kewaywin has brought forward opportunities for awareness and change within the services provided to children and their families. By participating in Kewaywin, I have firsthand been able to see and support events that highlight the strengths and beauty of Indigenous peoples locally. The voices of Kewaywin members have informed decision making within FACSFLA from resource allocation to individual planning with families and their children. While our organization continues to have much work ahead, the contributions of the Kewaywin Circle resonate throughout FACSFLA. I am thankful for the continued opportunities that the Kewaywin Circle provides, and their partnership with our organization is an important gift.”

STORYTELLING SPOTLIGHT

Kewaywin Circle members share in their own words what being a part of this advisory group means to them.



Penni-Dawn Kernot

Community Member/Foster Parent

“Being part of the Kewaywin Circle has been an amazing experience, talking about issues that Indigenous Peoples face in their lives and creating a positive impact on the community. From planning and running events for the community and children who are involved with the Agency to discussing solutions to problems, the Kewaywin Circle has allowed more voices to enter the discussion and create a brighter future for all those involved. The Kewaywin Circle builds strength and resiliency for the community and those who participate.”



Dr. Mona Rahman

FACSFLA Board of Directors
Kewaywin Circle Liaison

“My role as the Board Liaison began in March of 2022. As a settler born to immigrant parents on these lands, I believe my role is that of a visitor to the Circle and I am grateful for this rich opportunity to observe and learn from our Indigenous hosts. By being aware of the achievements and concerns of the members of Kewaywin Circle, my intention is to increase my understanding so that I can attempt to relay those perspectives through our discussions on relevant issues at the Board level, as well as relay perspectives from the Board when relevant to discussions in the Circle. I am very aware that there is still much for me to learn regarding Indigenous ways of knowing and I am very appreciative of this opportunity to broaden my knowledge and perspective through serving as a witness within Kewaywin Circle and, hopefully, being part of the bridge between the members of Kewaywin Circle and the FACSFLA Board.”





FUTURE VENTURES

Over the past year, the Kewaywin Circle has continued to make great progress in their work. The Circle looks forward to continued partnership with FACSFLA and further successes in engagement of Indigenous families, children, and youth receiving services from the agency, as well as agency staff and the large KFL&A community moving forward.

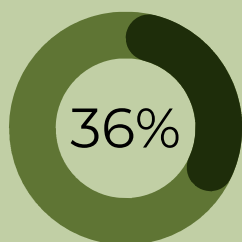
The Circle plans to connect and engage with Indigenous youth further in the year ahead, including developing ongoing youth-centred drumming socials, seeking out increased youth participation amongst Circle membership, and offering increased opportunities for youth skill building via community mentorship through social and learning events, as well as ceremonies in honour of important dates for Indigenous communities.

The Circle also plans to seek out further opportunities for connection and collaboration with community partners offering services with Indigenous worldviews to better meet the needs of Indigenous children, youth, and caregivers and to support FACSFLA in trauma-informed admission prevention and strengthening culturally safe service delivery efforts.

The Circle also hopes to increase opportunities for engagement, accountability, action, and allyship building amongst non-Indigenous FACSFLA staff and shareholders at the Agency and in the community with respect to Truth and Reconciliation via a learning passport project.

Many changes to the delivery of child welfare services to Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities are expected given impending changes to legislature and ongoing advocacy and grassroots efforts by Indigenous leaders to pursue sovereign oversight of culturally safe and responsive child wellbeing services by Indigenous communities throughout the province.

The Kewaywin Circle will continue facilitating community engagement and learning opportunities throughout the coming year (such as drumming socials, culturally based workshops, and youth programming), as levels of participation and the differing needs of Indigenous families, children, and youth working with the agency, as well as agency staff, developed over time. These opportunities strengthen support networks and community wellness, as well as allow young people and families to express their cultural identities in meaningful ways.

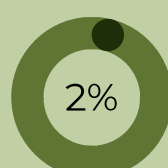


Indigenous children and youth in care of FACSFLA*

Of these Indigenous children/youth in care of FACSFLA*:



Identify as First Nations



Identify as Inuit



Identify as Métis



MORE **ABOUT US**

Kewaywin Circle welcomes the opportunity to connect with the KFL&A community. Please feel free to reach out!



Phone

613-545-3227



Email*

go@kewaywin.ca



Website

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100090169321221>



Office Address

**817 Division Street, Kingston,
ON**

*Please note that this email address is monitored by the members of the Circle who are from the local Indigenous community, not by Agency staff or community partners who sit in the Circle.