

Kewaywin Circle Annual Report

2024



Logo artwork by Max Paradis



Family and Children's Services of
Frontenac, Lennox and Addington

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kok (Inuktituk for 'river')



a'nó:wara (Mohawk for 'turtle')

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Words from the Kewaywin Circle Lead



Sarah Spencer

Director of Cultural Services,
FACSFLA

I often reflect on the significance of the contributions of the Kewaywin Circle in our work with Indigenous children, youth, and families. The Circle is a powerful and essential part of decolonizing child welfare work. At the core of Indigenous cultures is a deep understanding of community, kinship, and belonging. By engaging with Kewaywin Circle, we ensure that the knowledge, perspectives, and practices of Indigenous peoples inform our work in ways that are respectful, culturally relevant, and restorative. The Circle provides essential guidance on how to approach child welfare cases in a manner that honors Indigenous ways of knowing, healing, and raising children.

The Circle helps us develop culturally appropriate resources, tools, and practices that are grounded in Indigenous wisdom and spirituality. It advocates for the use of restorative justice practices, which focus on healing, accountability, and the restoration of relationships, ensuring that children and families are supported in ways that honor their culture and identity.

The Kewaywin Circle acts as a bridge, fostering dialogue and collaboration between Indigenous communities and the child welfare sector, supporting the rebuilding of trust, which is a vital step in decolonization efforts. The Circle helps educate our staff and communities about the impacts of colonialism and ongoing concerns, such as over-representation of Indigenous children in care. Through this education, we become more equipped to challenge systems of oppression and dismantle harmful policies and practices.

In terms of decolonization, the Kewaywin Circle is a catalyst for change within our organization. Decolonization in child welfare is not just about reforming systems; it is about rethinking and reimagining how we care for children. By listening to the voices of Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and leaders, we begin to undo the harm caused by colonial practices and foster a more inclusive, respectful, and equitable system for Indigenous children and families.

~55%

of the young people in care of FACSFLA who are Indigenous are 16 years of age or older

7%

of Indigenous children and youth receiving service from FACSFLA are in customary care

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.



waskiskiy (Cree for 'pine')

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.

Mission

To positively impact the well-being of every child, youth, and family Indigenous to Turtle Island, who comes into contact with the Agency, by connecting them to a thriving Indigenous community or community group and, in turn, build Indigenous awareness and pride in that child, youth, or family.



What We Do



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).

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.

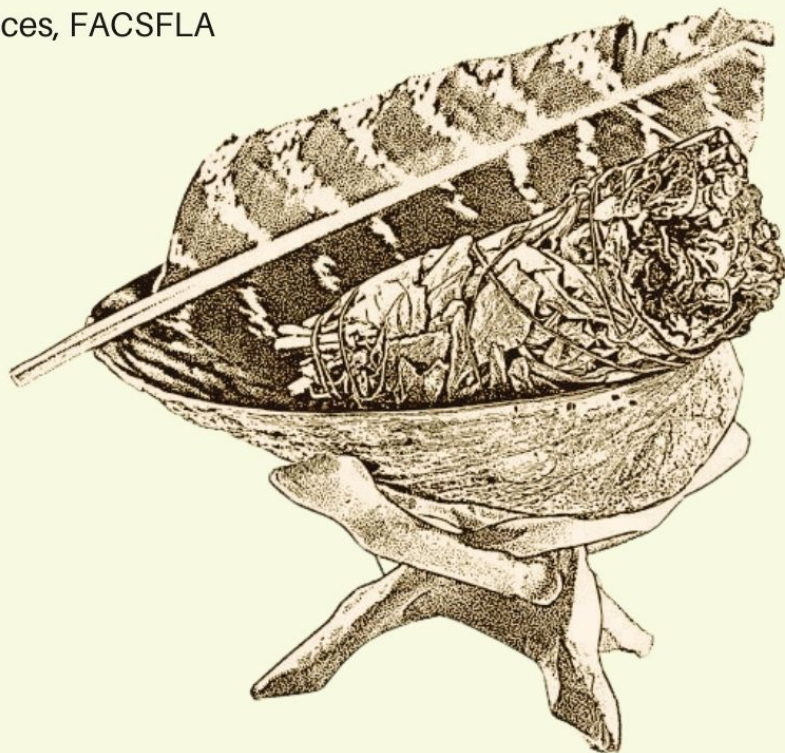
Meet Our Membership

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)
- Amy Reid, Executive Director, Mohawks Bay of Quinte (MBQ)
- Angela Woodhouse, Manager, Family Connections Team, FACSFLA
- Brianne Peters, Children's Outreach Librarian, Kingston Frontenac Public Library (KFPL)
- Emma Dimock, Director of Services, FACSFLA
- Kearstie Snary, Intergenerational Strength and Resiliency Coordinator, Kingston Native Centre and Language Nest (KNCLN)
- Laura Maracle, Culture Coordinator, FACSFLA
- Penni-Dawn Kernot, Community Member/Foster Parent
- Sarah Spencer, Director of Cultural Services, FACSFLA

Honorable mention to:

- Angela Maracle (FACSFLA)
- Jacob Miller (KFPL)
- Jayme Blondin (SACK)
- Kate Brant (KCHC)
- Lynda Gerow (Tipi Moza)
- Mandy Wilson (Community)
- Mona Rahman (FACSFLA Board of Directors Liaison)
- Rebecca Lloyd (FACSFLA)
- Shyanne Brant (MBQ)
- Théo Paradis (Community)
- Tracy Johnston (Community)



enn bookaan (Michif for 'smudge')

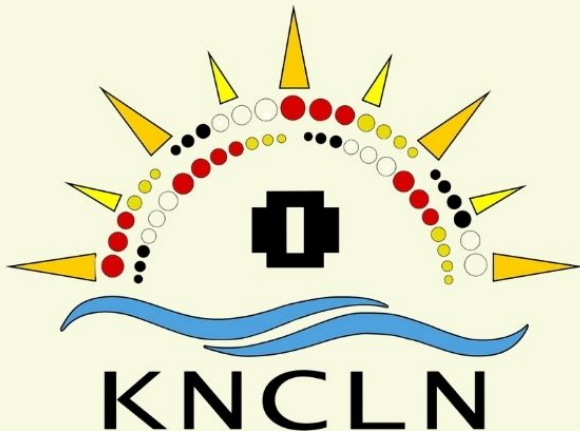
*(As of December 31, 2024, alphabetically by first name)

Recognition of Kewaywin Circle's Community Partners

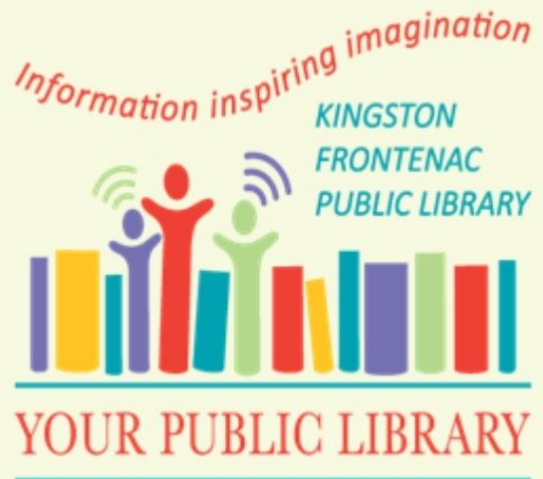
The Kewaywin Circle is grateful to the many community partners who not only provide space and time to the Circle's various members to attend the meetings of the Circle on an ongoing basis, but who also lend invaluable support, resources, and sponsorship to many of the Circle's endeavours which aim to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



Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte



qasgusi (Mi'kmaq for 'cedar')



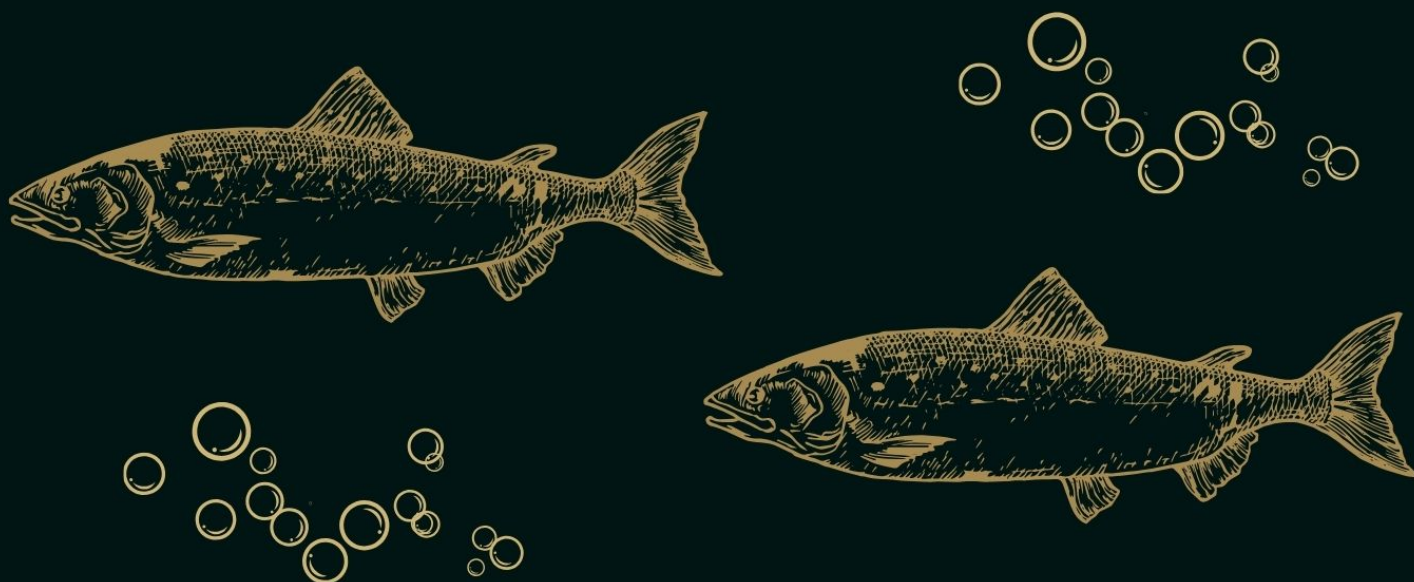
Successes of the Circle

January 2024

- Engaged in conversation regarding disproportionate representation of Indigenous children and youth in the care of the Society, both locally and provincially, and how to address with the KFL&A community at the Circle level.

February 2024

- Participated in continued consultation and contributions to development of FACSFLA's Strategic Planning (2024-2029), particularly with respect to pillars of Truth and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- Supported FACSFLA's Have a Heart Day cookie baking fundraiser, with proceeds going to First Nations Caring Society.
- Engaged in second community-based consultation with Parks Canada regarding revisioning of Bellevue House to provide a more fulsome narrative and share greater truths about historical spaces and experiences of colonization in our community.



ohyé:karon(t) (Mohawk for 'salmon')

Successes of the Circle



March 2024

- Engaged in sustainable recruitment efforts to increase Circle membership (particularly of Indigenous community members) via concentrated social media outreach and networking.
- Placed order for a variety of different sized drums with funds secured via the Community Foundations Grant to be utilized by community at drumming socials.
- Sang Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe songs for the Kingston Indigenous Languages Celebration at Elbow Lake.

April 2024

- Provided support to Kingston and Frontenac Public Library in procuring Indigenous language translation services with respect to their newly developed Solidarity Statement.

May 2024

- Supported a community event at FACSFLA in observation of National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit Peoples.
- Entered into a collaboration with Ontario Native Women's Association to host monthly moon ceremonies for community.

June 2024

- Supported the community-wide events in City Park in observation of National Indigenous Peoples Day by hosting a Breakfast with Kokum, offering various breakfast sandwiches and storytelling by an Elder for children and families.
- Contributed culturally-oriented items to gift bags for Indigenous students celebrating education milestones (graduating from Grade 8, Grade 12, or post-secondary) for FACSFLA's annual graduation event for young people in care; and presented the Kewaywin Circle Bursary Award to an Indigenous graduate at the graduation ceremony.



Successes of the Circle

July 2024

- Supported the opening of FACSFLA's onsite medicine garden through ceremony.

August 2024

- Hosted a special Drum Social Fun Day event in Shannon Park for children and families in community, complete with an inflatable slide, food from Loving Spoonful, a variety of children's activities, dancing, and drumming and singing.

September 2024

- Supported City of Kingston's observation of Orange Shirt Day by offering meals for community members in advance of the A Call to Action community walk.
- Supported sweat lodges for (two for community members and one for FACSFLA staff) in partnership with Gould Lake Conservation Area.
- Supported ANCFSAO's annual Cultural Youth Retreat (in partnership with Tim Horton's Summer Camp) by chaperoning participating junior and senior youth.
- *Unveiled a powerful piece of art by Indigenous artist, Max Paradis, which is displayed in the community rooms of FACSFLA's Division Street office (where drumming socials and many other community events are held).





Artwork by: Max Paradis



Photo Credits: Christine Power



“

I made this painting at the beginning of 2024, it was an emotional and long process that took over a month to complete. I used acrylic, gouache, and pens to bring this piece to life. This painting is my interpretation of one of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. I chose Call to Action #77, which reads as follows: *We call upon provincial, territorial, municipal, and community archives to work collaboratively with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to identify and collect copies of all records relevant to the history and legacy of the residential school system, and to provide these to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.*

The painting depicts two elders, a kookum and a mooshum, sitting together by a smudge bowl. The elders light the smudge and let the smoke rise to Skyworld and everyone in it. The hills in the background have unmarked graves and flowers surrounding them, to represent the children who were subjected to residential schools. The flowers show new life and resilience. Even with such sad painting, I use bright colours as a way to show that through sorrow and suffering, there's a brighter future ahead. I also use gold incorporated into the painting to symbolize resilience. All over the painting - the edges, in the grass, and the smoke - lie hundreds of names of real children who never returned home from residential school. Each name is handwritten with care, all of them being real people who were once alive. Overall, this painting is to remember the children who have been taken, the children who have felt the effects of generational trauma and to raise more awareness about Canada's dark history.”

- Max Paradis, Artist

Successes of the Circle

October 2024

- Supported FACSFLA's organizational observation of National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit Peoples (Red Dress Day).

November 2024

- Supported land stewardship efforts at FACSFLA by advocating for and seeing planning come to fruition regarding Landfill decals being added to waste receptacles at Division Street office.
- Collaborated with ONWA to co-host Napanee-based drumming socials.

December 2024

- Delivered holiday themed cookie decorating kits (funded by and in collaboration with Enyonkwa'nikonhriyo:hake (Good Minds) in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory) to Indigenous children and their families, which included a leaflet with various words in several Indigenous languages to assist in inspiring their decorating efforts, with plans to host a cookie decoration contest whereby young people submit photos of their decorated cookies and their names are entered into a draw to win fun prizes.



Drum Social Spotlight

The Circle continued providing evening drumming socials throughout the year in both Kingston and Napanee communities.

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.



madwe' (Ojibwe for 'drum')

In-person, evening drumming socials were hosted in Kingston in the three large first floor Community Rooms at FACSFLA's Division Street office on a bi-weekly basis. In-person, evening drumming socials were hosted in Napanee in the two large first floor Community Rooms at 99 Advance Avenue on a monthly basis, in partnership with ONWA. Socials at both locations continued to have consistently good turnout of young people and families throughout the year.

All drumming socials, both in Kingston and Napanee, include 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 owned) via catering in meals to share. They are also opportunities for children, youth, families, caregivers, Agency employees, and community partners to build connection and relationships with Indigenous community members and supports.



Credit: Elizabeth Peterson

Words from Current* Membership



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.



Mikayla Storms

Family Service Coordinator, MBQ

Kewaywin Circle offers culturally safe spaces for members to gather, collaborate, and connect through bi-weekly talking and drum circles. These circles strengthen our cultural values of community and traditions of community-centered approaches. Kewaywin Circle promotes cultural awareness and inclusion of traditional knowledge. I can see the values embedded in decision-making processes.

I see room for more inclusion of languages, although I recognize that many of us are working on reclaiming this in our communities. Perhaps we can work towards offering language lessons and make the language more present in the programming that is being offered to children, youth, and their families.

Kewaywin Circle is ensuring that Indigenous perspectives are ever present in planning, decision making, and delivery of programs for Indigenous families.



*Membership as of January 2025

Words from Current Membership



Elizabeth Peterson

Cultural Support Worker, FACSFLA

I have been an active member of the Kewaywin Circle since August 2024, when I entered into my role as Cultural Support Worker at FACSFLA. Becoming a member and a participant of the Kewaywin Circle has given me connections to community that I did not think possible, even after working in this field with families for 15 years. Being able to sit in a space with like-minded individuals and discuss ways to meet the needs of our community and families has been extremely rewarding. I am able to bring creative ideas to the group, share the needs and voices of the families, and plan programming with the support of the Circle and the community. I believe these important community partnerships have allowed us to better reach community members, and repair relationships with families who have intergenerational trauma related to the child welfare system. Building on these relationships with families, children, and community has allowed us to further demonstrate our commitment to Truth & Reconciliation by amplifying Indigenous voices and turning it into action.



Brianne Peters

Librarian - Children's Services, KFPL

As a representative of the KFPL, I was warmly welcomed into the Kewaywin Circle, providing me with a valuable opportunity to deepen my cultural understanding and actively contribute to positively impacting the lives of Indigenous children, youth, and families. Through our involvement, KFPL has strengthened its dedication to providing inclusive, culturally-informed programming and services while supporting the continued work of Truth and Reconciliation. We are particularly grateful to learn from other Indigenous organizations in the group, whose insights and knowledge have been instrumental in shaping our approach. This experience has highlighted that building stronger, more meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations relies on a foundation of respect, understanding, active listening, and a long-term commitment to collaboration.



Words from Current Membership



Emma Dimock

Director of Services, FACSFLA

Engaging with the Kewaywin Circle has been pivotal for my growth as a non-Indigenous woman and leader at FACSFLA. I am appreciative of all members and their contributions.

This partnership has enhanced awareness, informed decision-making, and supported events celebrating Indigenous communities, contributing significantly to our services.

I enjoy attending drum socials regularly and supporting community events through the provision and preparation of meals for all who attend. I am grateful for Kewaywin's ongoing collaboration.



Angela Woodhouse

Manager - Family Connections, FACSFLA

I have been a member of Kewaywin since its inception. The Kewaywin Circle is a unique and community focused approach to advocate for and support children, youth, and families, both those who are involved with the child welfare system and those who are not. The meaning of Kewaywin - 'to come home' - never leaves me, as it is my responsibility to ensure this is the experience of those who are impacted by child welfare.

My experience over the years as a member has been very rewarding. I have seen firsthand the support provided to youth, children, and families, including community connections that have been made for children, youth, foster parents, and other caregivers with cultural events supported by Kewaywin; the focus on providing opportunities for children/youth and their families to know and experience their culture; and commitments from other organizations to help with better outcomes for community.



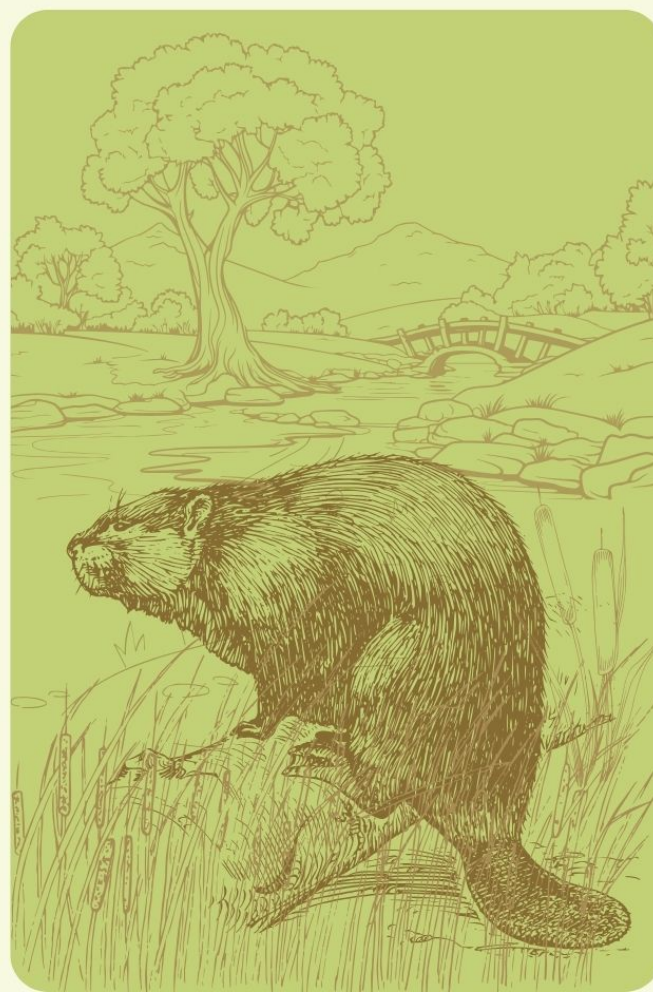
Words from Current Membership



Laura Maracle

Cultural Coordinator, FACSFLA

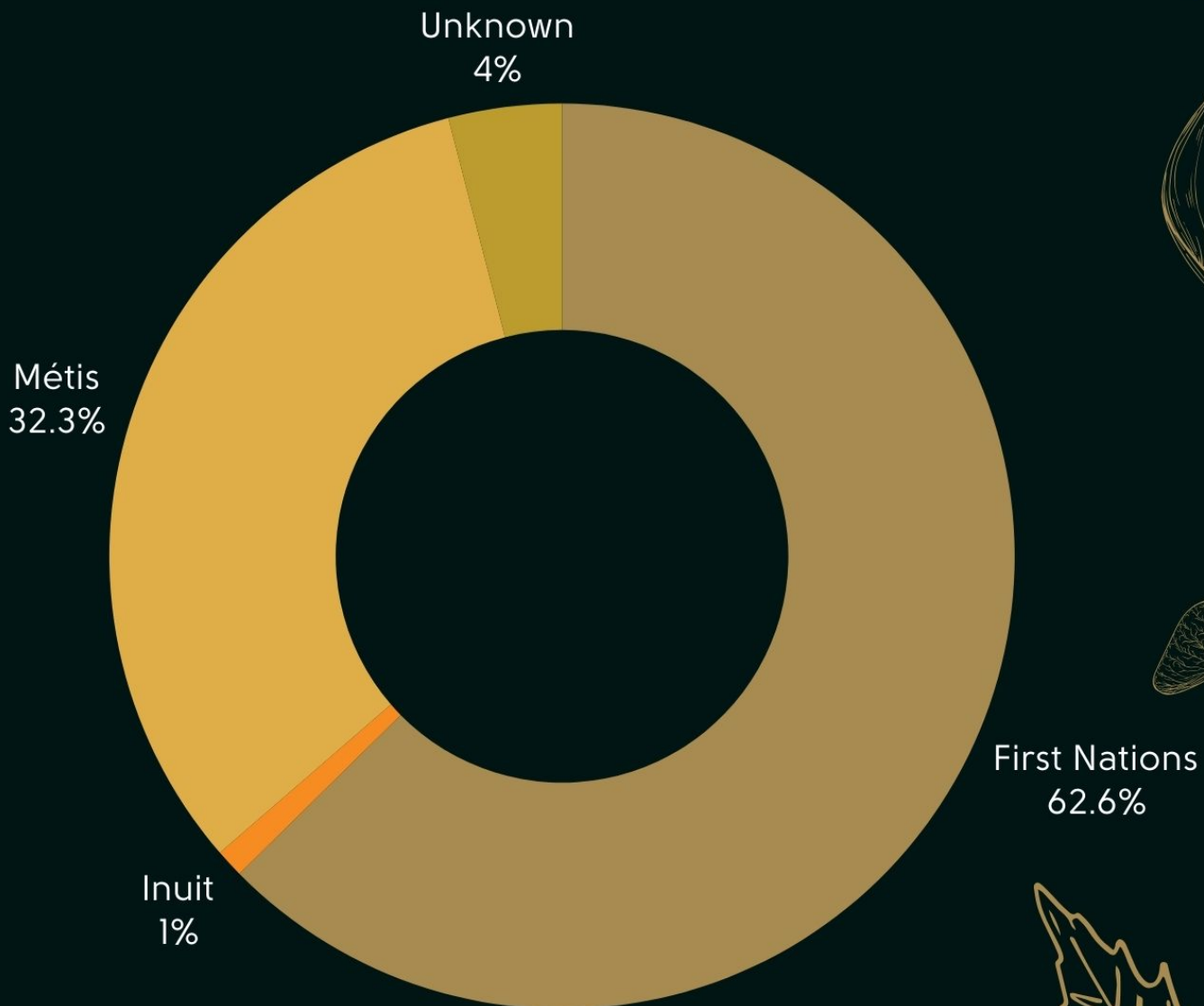
It has been my honour to work with the Kewaywin Circle for the past five years now. I often reflect on the reason I applied to work at FACSFLA. I was seeking to understand more about the mandate of a child welfare agency to better understand why Indigenous children continue to be over-represented in this system. Education has been guiding me as a professional teacher for the past thirty years. Supporting and mentoring youth is a responsibility I live by and take very seriously. It was for these two driving forces that I knew I had to work within this system to learn and be a part of the change; the change being the relationships between Indigenous families, the surrounding community, community collaborators, the people who work in the child welfare agencies, and (most importantly) the youth. To be a part of change, you must change along with it. I have witnessed the plethora of changes between FACSFLA and the Indigenous community of the Dish With One Spoon Treaty area. The Kewaywin Circle has been the driving force of this change, guiding us as we continue to lead with the voices of the Indigenous families and communities of this area. I am honoured to have mentored with the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, educators, trail blazers, and change makers from the past, present, and those who will continue in the future. Relationship building is the secret to life, in my opinion. This is what I have learned in these past five years with Kewaywin Circle, this being the significant change in relationships with the Indigenous families and communities that we work with, leading by listening first, being driven by their voices and their needs.



amikwag (Anishinaabe for 'beaver')

Did You Know?

56%
of children and youth in care of
FACSFLA are Indigenous*



*Indigenous Commitments, Eastern Zone Progress Report, October 27, 2023

sismo'kan (Mi'kmaq for 'sugar maple')



Future Ventures

Up Next in 2025

- Healing Blanket Workshop for Youth (January 2025)
- Have a Heart Day Cookie Decorating Contest (February 2025)
- Hide Processing Workshop for Youth (March 2025)
- Zero-Waste Drum Social (March 2025)
- Kingston Indigenous Languages Day (April 2025)
- National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit Peoples (May 2025)
- National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 2025)
- Orange Shirt Day (September 2025)
- Red Dress Day (October 2025)
- Drum Making Workshop for Youth (TBD)
- Moon Ceremonies (monthly throughout 2025)
- Drumming Socials (Kingston and Napanee, throughout 2025)

Do you have suggestions for the Circle to consider in their 2025 planning?

The Kewaywin Circle welcomes your feedback and ideas!

Please review our *Contact Us* page at the end of this report to see how you can reach out.



okwáho (Mohawk for 'wolf')

Contact Us

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



otêhimin (Cree for
'strawberry')



kîgutanginnak (Inuktituk
for 'blueberry')



miskomin (Ojibwe for
'raspberry')

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.

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