

# Native childhood education program may begin in fall

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Day-care workers interested in learning how to sing Ring Around the Rosy in Ojibwa may soon be in luck.

A proposal for a native early childhood education program developed by the Union of Ontario Indians is progressing well and may be offered as soon as September of this year.

Carrie Hayward is health director for the union, a lobby group for 43 Ontario First Nations including the Mississaugas of the New Credit. She said the program will offer a lot more than native versions of non-native songs.

"I'm really most pleased with how much the communities and the day-care workers have recognized the role of the day care in enhancing native language and culture.

"We've really tried to incorporate that in the program and I think we've done it."

A number of colleges were interested in offering Canada's first native early childhood education program but Sudbury's Cambrian college was the only one selected.

Ms. Hayward said it had the most innovative, flexible and comprehensive proposal, which complemented other native programs already offered at the school.

## Other programs

She said it usually takes a couple years to fine-tune a new program but if demand is high they might look at expanding to a southern Ontario institution such as Mohawk College.

The program will cover all the basics in the current early childhood education program, with the addition of some courses in native culture and language.

After a final consultation session with native day-care workers, the proposal must receive approval from the Ontario government, which is expected by the end of April.

Among the unique aspects of the program is its flexibility for students who want to stay in their community to study.

"It's not quite correspondence, it's correspondence with assistance," said Ms. Hayward.

Students will have a manual with all the necessary readings. At least twice a month they will be visited by one of four people across the province hired to provide assistance.

Classes which can't be taught at a distance, such as native music, would be offered in three-to-four-week summer sessions at the college.

Ms. Hayward expects the program will accommodate about 25 full-time students, and up to 80 people in a part-time program.

Arliss Skye, the co-ordinator of the Six Nations day-care centre, thinks the program will be beneficial, as long as it includes both native culture and the necessary child development theory.

She also said it may make it easier for students living in isolated areas to obtain their diplomas, since they will have the companionship of other native students at the college.