

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY JUSTICE PROGRAMS

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As part of Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs, the province supports a variety of programs that help Aboriginal people take responsibility for the administration of justice in their communities.

The province is committed to working with the Aboriginal community to develop an Aboriginal Justice Strategy to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. Aboriginal Community Justice programs, funded by Ontario and the federal government, allow local communities to offer culturally appropriate ways to help Aboriginal people deal with the criminal justice system.

The programs increase Aboriginal involvement in the administration of justice, help to reduce criminal offending and victimization in Aboriginal communities and provide an opportunity for offenders to understand and make amends for the consequences of their behaviour in ways that are appropriate and meaningful.

Ontario currently supports nine Aboriginal community justice programs in 19 communities across the province:

Community Council Program – Toronto

Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto (ALST) operates a Community Council program that offers counseling for adult and youth Aboriginal offenders who live in Toronto. This program takes Aboriginal offenders out of the criminal justice system and makes them accountable to the community. Council members represent a cross-section of Toronto's Aboriginal community, and together they develop plans that allow offenders to take responsibility for their actions, address the root causes of the problem and help them rejoin the community in a positive way. ALST also offers courtworkers to help Aboriginal accused persons, victims and witnesses understand their rights, responsibilities and options under the law and obtain fair, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment from the courts.

Gladue Services – Toronto

Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto provides specialized "Gladue" reports to the court with information on the unique circumstances of Aboriginal offenders. The court can take these reports into account during sentencing. Ontario's support pays for three caseworkers, two aftercare workers, administration and a satellite office in Brantford. Services are offered primarily at courts in the Greater Toronto Area and Brantford. Part of the provincial funding for this program comes from Legal Aid Ontario. Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto also provides courtworkers to help Aboriginal accused persons, victims and witnesses understand their rights, responsibilities and options under the law and obtain fair, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment from the courts.

Biidaaban – The Mnjikaning Community Healing Model - Chippewas of Mnjikaning First Nation, Rama.

Biidaaban is a community-based healing model and restorative justice program for Aboriginal adults and youth charged with crimes such as assault, breaking and entering and impaired driving. Healing circles, which can include the offender and victim, team counsellors, family, supporters and community members help to repair relationships and create a safer community.

Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres Community Justice Programs – Geraldton, Niagara-on-the-Lake and London.

The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres offers community justice programs in several communities. These programs are available to Aboriginal youth and adults in conflict with the law as an alternative to the formal court system. Offenders are given the chance to understand and address the consequences of their actions. There are also courtworkers to help Aboriginal accused persons, victims and witnesses understand their rights, responsibilities and options under the law and obtain fair, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment from the courts.

United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin Justice Program - Manitoulin Island

The United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin (UCCM) provide pre-and post-charge counselling based on the traditional Anishnaabe beliefs of prevention, accountability, making amends and healing. They also offer the three-part Zoongaabwe-od Eshniigjik program for young people aged 12 to 25. This program features teaching circles, workshops and culture and community involvement. The UCCM programs serve a population of over 10,000.

Aboriginal Community Council Program – Thunder Bay

The Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre operates a direct accountability program for youth and adults. Accused individuals enter into a healing and wellness program and must meet culturally appropriate conditions to complete the program. A justice circle is used to bring the accused, the victim and council members together to identify and address the root problems of the actions holistically and realistically.

Saa Sii Tonitiwin - Whitefish Bay

Operating on Whitefish Bay First Nation, the Saa Sii Tonitiwin Justice Program offers an alternative system of resolving conflicts. The program employs a holistic approach to dispute resolution that addresses the unique issues of each individual offender and seeks to help them in the healing process. The program also contributes to community healing by focussing on the relationships between the offender, victim and their families.

Grand Council Treaty #3 - Grassy Narrows, Lac Seul, Naicatchewenin and Onigaming First Nations.

The Treaty #3 Community Justice Project uses a community-driven justice approach to find ways to make the accused accountable for their actions and increase community involvement and safety. This program serves four Treaty #3 First Nations. Its goal is to use counseling before and after charges are laid to reduce the number of its members involved in the criminal justice system while addressing the root causes of their actions.

Mohawk Council of Akwesasne – Akwesasne

The Akwesasne Community Justice Program encourages Mohawk offenders to accept responsibility for their conduct both on and off reserve. It promotes offender accountability and helps to address the underlying problems which may have led to their conflict with the justice system. This program also includes an Akwesasne Courtworker initiative. Courtworkers help to ensure that members of the Mohawks of Akwesasne who are accused, victims or witnesses understand their rights, responsibilities and options under the law and obtain fair, equitable and culturally sensitive treatment from the courts.

Sheamus Murphy, Ministry of the Attorney General, Minister's Office, 416-326-1785

Brendan Crawley, Ministry of the Attorney General, Communications Branch, 416-326-2210

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