First Nation culture celebrated with public daycare [1]

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EXCERPTS

The Alderville First Nation Daycare offers aboriginal cultural teachings daily. It is a public daycare open to all children in the community and surrounding area.

It was a big component that stood out to Krista Skutovich. She is not from the First Nation community, but decided to enroll her son there.

"I'm glad that he was able to participate in other cultural activities and events while he is at school," she said. "We are so fortunate to have these resources."

Twenty years ago, the mission behind Alderville First Nation Daycare was to bring native and non-native children together and eventually create a better understanding between the groups.

"It doesn't matter what race or what your background is. They're friends. There are no barriers here," said Rose Smoke-Montreuil.

She is the cultural teacher at the daycare. Every day Smoke-Montreuil visits each room. The children smudge.

Smudging is a traditional ceremony used by many Aboriginal people across North America. It involves the burning of medicine plants such as sage, to cleanse the mind and body.

Smoke-Montreuil also drums and teaches the children Ojibwa through song.

"They learn the language much better through song," she said.

Bringing a daycare facility to the First Nation community involved many years and many proposals. It was 1993, when the Ministry of Child and Youth Services and the Department of Indian Affairs announced it would fund 80 per cent of the facility. Alderville First Nation would fund the rest. It opened in September 1994.

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