

# Lakehead University Nanabijou Childcare Centre officially open

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## EXCERPTS

The Nanabijou Childcare Centre officially opened its doors during the grand opening of its new building located along Oliver Road on the grounds of Lakehead University.

Several dignitaries and government officials attended and spoke at the event that featured a tour of the 8,200-square foot facility, and an overview of the many services available to the University and local community.

Funding for the new childcare centre came from several sources, including \$1 million from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and the Lakehead University Student Union (LUSU). Further in-kind support came from Lakehead University's Financial Services Department and Physical Plant, which helped Nanabijou throughout the building process, and the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board.

"The NOHFC's contribution of \$1 million to the Nanabijou Childcare Centre is an investment in our future," said Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Chair of the NOHFC. "It offers childcare and a new infant care program, and prepares the workforce by providing training for students. We congratulate the supporters of the centre for making this project a reality."

Bill Mauro, MPP, Thunder Bay-Atikokan, congratulated the Nanabijou Childcare Centre for its creation of a new infant care program. "This facility enhances the social and cognitive development of children in a safe and healthy environment - and it has also generated new employment and training opportunities within this sector. I'm pleased that our government was able to contribute funding through NOHFC. Best wishes for continued success," said Mauro.

"Our dream became a plan. That plan became a drawing. And the drawing became our new Nanabijou Childcare Centre," said Nanabijou Childcare Centre Director Sheila Wilhelm. "Our new building on Lakehead University's campus is as beautiful as the smiles on the faces of parents and children when they come here."

Lakehead University President & Vice-Chancellor Dr. Brian Stevenson said the new childcare centre represents the exceptional work of the Nanabijou Board of Directors, local government representatives, and the Lakehead University community. "This new facility was built by members of our community for our community to support more parents with their daily balancing of work, school, and childcare, as well as the advancement of early childcare education."

"Thanks to the support of Ministers Gravelle and Mauro, and Lakehead University's Student Union, more of our University and Thunder Bay community members have a state of the art childcare facility to call their own," added Dr. Stevenson.

Ian Kaufman, President of LUSU, stated that Lakehead students are proud to support the new on-campus childcare centre so that students and faculty, as well as other community members, can now access more spots in a beautiful, modern space.

"Students voted to support this new centre because we wanted to make sure everyone studying at Lakehead has the resources to succeed here," Kaufman added. "Lakehead's students are increasingly diverse and that brings with it diverse needs. On-campus childcare plays an important role in meeting those expanding needs."

"This is what happens when a group of volunteers like our Board of Directors dedicate their minds, talents, time to a good idea," said Tammy Squitti, Nanabijou Board Chair. "We are very proud to offer an affordable, accessible, licensed, quality choice for families seeking childcare in Thunder Bay."

Completed in September 2014, the new Nanabijou Childcare Centre added 38 daycare spots, created eight new full-time jobs, established a new infant care program, and enhanced access to post-secondary training opportunities for early childhood educators.

Squitti added, "I would like to thank Bridgman Collaborative Architecture, which did a wonderful job of turning dreams into drawings, and

DRD Construction Services, which was an exceptional contractor who did the job well, on time, and on budget."

An Open House for the general public will happen later today (December 16) from 5:00 - 7:00 pm. Free parking will be available at the adjacent Lakehead University Fieldhouse lot.

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

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