

# EARLY LEARNING & CARE CENTRE

Niwasa Early Learning and Care Centre  
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Parent Guide  
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## **Niwasa Program Statement**

NIWASA believes that children are gifts from the Creator. We support a holistic approach to well being, education and health that includes the child, family and community. NIWASA is built on 6 components: Culture and Language, Nutrition, Social Support, Health Promotion, Parental Involvement, Education and Lifelong learning. The 4 foundations are integrated into our Indigenous Pedagogy.

- 1) **Belonging:** Staff promote an environment where children and families develop rich relationships with each other, mother earth and their community.
- 2) **Well-being:** Staff promote children's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Children learn how to regulate themselves and discover their identities. They also learn how to take care of themselves and others.
- 3) **Engagement:** Staff encourage children to be curious and explore their world. The environment fosters creativity, problem solving, innovation and connection to all of creation.
- 4) **Expression:** Staff encourage children to communicate with expressive language, bodies, and materials. Indigenous language, cultural practices, and ceremonies are embedded and integrated into every aspect of the program.

Our vision is to provide high quality, holistic programs and supports that foster Indigenous identity formation and a sense of belonging.

**Goal:** Niwasa promotes the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children, youth, family and community.

**Approach:** Staff have a holistic view of children's health that includes their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well being. Children and their families have opportunity to prepare seasonal and traditional meals which include access to traditional medicines. Niwasa will ensure the environment is safe and sanitized by following recommendations the of Local Public Health Unit. Staff implement and monitor sanitary practice policies and procedures daily. Niwasa prepares meals that align with Health Canada documents including Canada's Food Guide– First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Children engage in active play throughout the day and receive time for rest and relaxation if required as stated in the Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children document. Indigenous language, cultural practices, and ceremonies are embedded and integrated into every aspect of the program.

**Goal:** Niwasa will support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/family, educators and program staff.

**Approach:** Educators are qualified and trained in connecting with children while supporting their mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. The values of Honesty, Truth, Respect, Love, Courage, Humility and Wisdom guide interactions with children, youth, and families.

A holistic approach that will support children, youth and families in developing solutions and

resolutions through co-operative problem solving. Parents are viewed as part of the circle and participate in decision making in their child's education. Niwasa promotes positive parent-child interactions and builds upon the strengths and knowledge inherent in each family. Niwasa takes a strength based approach to respond to families with varying needs. Niwasa makes connections for families through Indigenous and mainstream services as needed. Niwasa will engage in positive, responsive interactions critical for children's overall learning, development, health and well-being. Educators engage and support positive interactions between children, families, and staff. Niwasa also engages in networking and collaborative work with community partners to remove barriers and overcome challenges for Indigenous families.

**Goal:** Niwasa encourages children to communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

**Approach:** Children are viewed holistically in the context of their individuality, family, and community. Each child is competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential. Educators collaborate with parents and caregivers to support children to understand their emotions, maintain reasonable levels of focus, and develop self regulation. Staff support children in understanding others and respecting diversity. Niwasa staff support child development in their practice by using Early Years Portal and How Does Learning Happen? documents. Drumming, singing, dancing and traditional stories are part of our daily activities that represent cultural teachings and well being. We create an environment that fosters meaningful communication and interaction.

**Goal:** Staff encourage exploration, play, and inquiry.

**Approach:** Children have access to a rich environment that fosters their social, physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive development. Children are encouraged to explore, to challenge, to theorize and to question all of creation and the natural world. An Indigenous pedagogy sets the foundation for children to explore their world, their culture, their community and to develop confidence when meeting new challenges. Educators view themselves as co-learners and collaborate in their practice with children and parents in accordance with the best practice resources How Does Learning Happen? and Aboriginal Head Start National Guidelines.

**Goal:** Staff provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.

**Approach:** Educators develop program plans for children collaboratively utilizing observations and pedagogical documentation. Educators provide opportunities for each child to self-direct their learning. Educators, parents, and elders foster creativity by providing new challenges and supporting each child's interests and ideas. Niwasa views education as a lifelong process and assists children in a successful transition into the elementary school system. Early Childhood Educators provide play spaces and learning materials that offer exploration and inspiration to the children on a daily basis. Staff meet weekly to brainstorm ideas and discuss provocations to build on children's interests and provide tools that inspire further exploration and interaction among children. Niwasa continues to

develop educational, cultural and language resources that support classroom interests that are shared with parents at parent meetings. Educators develop portfolios that include learning stories in order to provide life long memories for children and help parents see their child's development over the course of the year.

**Goal:** Staff create positive environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development are supported.

**Approach:** Educators observe children's interests and co-construct learning activities, make decisions, resolve challenges and develop theories that support ongoing projects primarily lead by the children and supported by educators and families. Programs are informed by the Ontario Early Learning Framework, "How Does Learning Happen?", and "Think Feel Act" documents. Our cultural and seasonal teachings guide traditional knowledge acquisition and projects that reflect Indigenous culture. We include cultural items, field trips to explore Indigenous communities, gardening and ceremonial teaching in our classroom environment to foster health and welling.

**Goal:** The program considers the individual needs of each child receiving care. Each day incorporates indoor and outdoor learning experiences, as well as rest time and sleep if needed.

**Approach:** The learning environment is well planned and developmentally appropriate. Educators utilize environmental resources to support the program. Staff encourage children to respect mother earth and contribute to their community. Niwasa understands children are unique individuals with distinct gifts. Each child is provided with appropriate outdoor time (weather permitting with appropriate clothing) and rest time if required. Trips, gardening space and outdoor learning environments are offered to the children all year round to fulfill their connection with Mother Nature and active play.

**Goal:** Foster engagement and ongoing communication with parents and caregivers about the program and their children.

**Approach:** Families are respected as children's primary teachers. Families are contributors to the program through their involvement on the Board Directors and Parent Council. Parents and caregivers engage in meaningful decision making for the planning, development, operation and evaluation of the program. Educators assist families in maintaining strong and caring relationships. Staff provide resources to families regarding child development, parental education, and referrals to support services in person, newsletters, parent education sessions, or via a social media provided by Niwasa. Parents and caregivers have an opportunity to observe the classroom and share feedback each month. Parents are involved in the classroom for special occasions including honoring women's day, family socials and harvest meal along with many other events planned by parents that engage the community.

**Goal:** Niwasa collaborates with community partners to support the children, their families, and staff.

**Approach:** Educators are committed to working collaboratively with families and other service providers to promote health and well being of each child. Niwasa works with community partners to develop early interventions to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous families. Niwasa supports a seamless transition to the elementary school system. Niwasa continues to develop linkages and relationships with service providers to enhance the facilitation in transition to support services. Niwasa recognizes that a healthy community is necessary to raise healthy children. Staff understand that healing requires achieving balance within the individual, family, and community. Children develop a sense of belonging and learn about responsibility to their community.

**Goal:** Niwasa supports staff with continuous professional learning and cultural development.

**Approach:** Staff and volunteers are provided with ongoing learning opportunities regarding early childhood development and cultural education. Staff are reflective practitioners and have opportunities to engage in current research, language acquisition and gain traditional knowledge. Staff support ethical responsibilities in Early Childhood Education and maintain their registration with the College of Early Childhood Educators. Educators continue to maintain healthy professional relationships that encourage growth and mentorship through networking opportunities, self discovery and through the cultural and knowledge sharing of traditional ceremonies.

**Goal:** Niwasa will continue to document and evaluate the impact of the strategies outlined in the program statement on children and families.

**Approach:** Niwasa will continue to evaluate the impact of the strategies for supporting children and families through regular communication at parent meetings, through surveys, feedback and regular parent participation. Educators will reflect on observations and develop children's developmental portfolios. Educators will engage in meaningful conversations and activities with children that will inform the children's learning environment. Through team meetings, training, mentorship and reflective practice, learning stories and pedagogical documentation, Niwasa will continue to monitor and evaluate the strategies and amend them as needed.

### **Mission Statement**

To provide programs and services for Indigenous children, youth, family and community that are rooted in culture and language.

### **Quality Assurance**

In keeping with our mission and program statements, Niwasa will continually strive to maintain a high quality environment for the children, youth and families who access our programs. Niwasa participates in the *City of Hamilton's Quality Assurance Program* that aligns with the Early Years Pedagogy, How does learning happen? document.

## **Staff**

Our program is staffed according to the requirements of the *Child Care & Early Years Act*. Registered Early Childhood Educators (R.E.C.E.s) and Early Childhood Educator Assistants provide quality care for the children. NELCC supports and participates in the Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship program allowing students to become qualified while working directly with the children.

## **Parental Involvement**

NELCC encourages parents to spend time with their child in the program. NELCC has an open door policy and encourages conversation between parents and program staff. Parent involvement opportunities will be posted on the parent board located at the main entrance. Opportunities may include: attending field trips, assisting with fundraising activities, attending parent information workshops provided by our early year programs.

## **Ages of Children Served**

NELCC will have a maximum enrollment of 24 children ages 27 months to 5 years.

*Our staff:student ratio is 1:8.*

## **Hours and Days of Operation**

Program hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. The program operates year round excluding weekends and the holidays listed below.

## **Holidays**

NELCC will be **closed** on designated/Statutory Holidays. Prior notice of days we will be closing will be posted to notify parents and community. The following are designated and Statutory Holidays:

New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Aboriginal Solidarity Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

NELCC will close early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Prior notice of early closure times will be posted to notify parents and community.

## **Fee Payments**

NELCC accepts payment through "The City Of Hamilton Childcare Fee Subsidy Program", or through full fee payments from families. Any other organization willing to subsidize childcare fee's will need to be discussed and arranged prior to enrolment.

*Rates for fee paying are as follows:*

*Full day – 6 hours or more = \$ 34.00 Includes a nutritious lunch and up to 2 snacks*

*Half Day – under 6 hours = \$ 21.30 Includes at least 1 snack or lunch*

NELCC reserves the right to change/amend fee schedules as needed. When changes are made, NELCC will provide notice in writing to parents, staff and stakeholders 30 days prior to implementation.

### **Pick-up**

Parents/guardians must inform the NELCC staff if someone other than whose name appears on the child registration form will be receiving/removing their child from the NELCC. No child will be released without their parents consent and the individual will be required to provide photo identification.

### **Late Pick-up**

Parents and caregivers are responsible for notifying the childcare staff if you are going to be late. The time on the centre's clock will be used to determine the number of minutes when there is a late pick-up. Late fee's will be charged at \$1.00 per minute as outlined on the *Payment Agreement Form*.

### **Child Registration Policy**

All families will meet with the Program Supervisor to complete an orientation and registration package prior to their child being enrolled into the program. Families are encouraged to come for a play visit prior to their child's start date. All children must have an up to date immunization record or appropriate documents for exemption prior to the child's first day in the program.

### **Waitlist**

If the NELCC is currently at capacity, your child's name will be added to the admission wait list. The date your child's name is added to the waitlist, will be the date you confirmed with the NELCC Supervisor that you want your child on the waitlist. The name of the child and family at the top of the wait list will be contacted when a vacancy becomes available. The Supervisor will proceed down the wait list, if the parent contacted withdraws from the wait list or does not accept admission to the Centre. There is no fee to be on Niwasa's wait list and no deposit will be accepted to secure a space at Niwasa.

### **Attendance**

The parent/guardian will be responsible for reporting their child's absence to the NELCC staff.

### **Change of Information**

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the centre in writing of any changes that should be made to their child's registration form. For example: change of pick up persons, new allergies, new address or phone numbers, etc.

### **Children's files policy**

Children's file will contain the following information:

- Application (enrollment) form for child care centre
- Copy of current immunization record, or Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief , or Statement of Medical Exemption
- Completed accident reports/illness reports/medication forms
- If applicable; individual support plans

### **Withdrawal**

NELCC requires two weeks written notice to withdraw children from the centre. If notice is not given, you will be responsible for full payment of program fees in lieu of notice.



## **Confidentiality**

All children's files and records are considered confidential for the staff and parents only, and will be kept in file cabinets in the centre's office at all times. Every parent has the right to access their child's file.

All files are the property of NELCC unless your child attends the Niwasa Head Start Preschool as well, then two sets of files will be kept, one in each location.

## **Behaviour Guidance**

Educators will support children as they move through the continuum of development and acquire skills for problem solving. Educators will respect each child's unique form of expression and communication while role modelling positive interactions. Educators will respond with empathy and redirection while assisting children to learn strategies for staying calm and focused.

The following practices are prohibited at the NELCC;

- A. corporal punishment of the child;
- B. deliberate use of harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect;
- C. depriving the child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding;
- D. locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining children; and
- E. using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine the children.
- F. inflicting any bodily harm on children including making them eat or drink against their will.

## **Inclusion Policy**

Every child is unique and important, Niwasa provides an inclusive program where all children and families have equitable access to program services regardless of their fee subsidy status. This includes children with individualized needs. Equitable access to services will be provided to families regardless of fee subsidy status.

## **Clothing and Children's Belongings**

Please dress children appropriately for the weather and season. We encourage families to leave a spare set of clothing at NELCC. Any items brought to NELCC should be labeled with your child's name. NELCC is not responsible for any lost items but we will do our best to locate items that are brought to our attention.

## **Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play is an important part of child development. The Child Care & Early Years Act requires at least 2 hours of outdoor play daily (weather permitting) for children enrolled for 6 or more hours.

## **Nap/Rest Routine**

In accordance with the Child Care & Early Years Act, a rest/nap time to a **maximum of two** hours must be provided each day for toddlers and preschoolers. Consideration is given to each child's individual needs. Children unable to sleep are offered alternative activities. The need for rest and sleep varies greatly at different ages, and even among children of the same age; however, rest is an important part of the day for all children. This provision allows for a period during which quiet activities are

encouraged and children can nap if required. Each child has his/her own cot and bedding provided by the child care. Bedding is changed and laundered weekly. Children may bring a soft comfort item (toy/blanket) from home for rest time.

### **Field Trips**

We often take small walks throughout the neighbourhood. Parents will be asked to sign a consent form at enrolment for their child to participate. When we are away, a notice reminding you of where we are will be posted on the door.

Special trips will be scheduled throughout the year. A notice will be sent home to inform you of the details. Parents will be required to complete and return a permission form.

### **Supervision of Students and Volunteer**

NELCC provides learning opportunities through field placements in our programs for secondary and post secondary students and volunteers. Students and/or volunteers are always monitored directly by staff and are never left alone to supervise the children. All students/volunteers are required to have a vulnerable sector screen prior to participation in the program.

### **Smoking**

There is NO SMOKING within 100 feet of the NELCC building.

### **Parking**

There are designated parking spots for parents available at the south end of the building.

### **Ill Children and Daily Health Check**

In order to prevent the transfer of illnesses to other children, parents must look for these symptoms before sending their child(ren) each day;

Diarrhea  
Persistent Cough  
Fever  
Severe Pain  
Headache  
Discharge from eye  
Vomiting  
Unusual Rash

If you do notice one of these symptoms in your child, please notify the NELCC staff.

A Health Check will be done upon each child's arrival at NELCC each day. If a staff member observes a change in your child that indicates they are not feeling well they may contact the parent(s) to pick up their child from the center.

**Administration of Medication**

NELCC will administer prescription medications to children. Parents will be required to fill out all appropriate forms indicating what the medication is for, dosage, any other specific instructions and time of administration. Medication must be in the original container with the original label.

**Food and Nutrition**

NELCC will provide meals and snacks in accordance with the Canada and Aboriginal Food Guide. Menus are posted in the classroom on a monthly basis. Any special dietary restrictions for medical or religious / cultural reasons will be followed accordingly.