



THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE COUNTY OF SIMCOE

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For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE

CAS Employees and Aboriginal Partners "Walk the Talk"

(BARRIE) - Today 150 employees of the Simcoe County Children's Aid Society (CAS), along with representatives of the Aboriginal and Métis communities took to the Barrie streets in a unified show of support and celebration for the work being done by the CAS and the Aboriginal communities to provide more appropriate services for Aboriginal children. The walk started at the CAS offices on Bell Farm Road and ended at the Barrie Native Friendship Centre on Bayfield Street, a total of 2.5 kms.

"The walk is a visible demonstration of the importance that we place on our relationship with our Aboriginal and Métis community partners," said Ted Soucie, Midland Branch Service Director and member of the Aboriginal Child Welfare Advisory Committee of the Simcoe County CAS, a body working to provide more culturally appropriate service to this population.

"Come to our House, get a feeling for who we are and what we do", was the invitation extended to the CAS by the Aboriginal and Métis members of the committee", said committee co-chair Yvonne Brunelle, of the Enaahitg Healing Lodge and Learning Centre. There was opportunity for CAS staff to hear from a number of organizations that work with and provide service to the Aboriginal and Métis communities across the region.

"Historically, many wrongs were perpetrated by the child welfare system upon our First Nations communities in the mistaken belief that we knew what was best for them. We didn't, and those communities paid a terrible price", said Mary Ballantyne, Executive Director of the CAS. "We have recognized our responsibility to apologize for those wrongs, learn from our mistakes and jointly develop and provide service that is respectful and built on understanding Aboriginal and Métis cultures. This is very positive and satisfying work - long overdue."

A traditional meal prepared by the Orillia Native Women's Group finished off the morning.

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