



**Algoma University School of Social Work Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Omushkego Education – Mushkegowuk Council and Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services**

*Collaborative program delivery to increase access to education in the north*

(TIMMINS, ON- June 8, 2023): On Thursday, June 1, 2023, the Algoma University School of Social Work, Omushkego Education- Mushkegowuk Council, and Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services came together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to expand access to education in the Mushkegowuk Territory.

The purpose of this agreement is to establish a new partnership with the University School of Social Work and Omushkego Education, and Payukotayno: J&HBFS. This partnership is to promote excellence and quality in the development and delivery of a continuum of post-secondary social work education (certificate, diploma, degree, and training programs and courses) through detailed, program-specific agreements, in the Mushkegowuk Territory, based in Omushkego ways of knowing and being and that is in-line with Canadian Association of Studies in Social Work Education and the Special Mission of Algoma University.

The goals of the partnership include improving accessibility to certificate, post-secondary education and training programs, and the retention and success of the Mushkegowuk People in these programs while fulfilling our shared commitments to reconciliation and addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in education and child welfare. All parties agree to work collaboratively to respond to the education, employment and training needs within the Mushkegowuk Territory while contributing to the advancement of self-governance in child welfare, education, and promoting and supporting healthy individuals, families, and communities (milo/mino pimatisiwin).

To learn more about the School of Social Work at Algoma University, click [here](#).

To learn more about Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services, click [here](#).

To learn more about Omushkego Education – Mushkegowuk Council, click [here](#).

**Quotes:**

*“As part of our response to the Calls to Action and Algoma University’s Special Mission to provide programming focused on the needs of Northern Ontario; and to cultivate cross-cultural learning between Indigenous communities and other communities, in keeping with the history of Algoma University and its geographic site, this partnership symbolizes what is possible. The discussion leading to the partnership with Omushkego Education – Mushkegowuk Council and Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services and the ensuing agreement paves the way forward for developing new and more responsive ways for working in and with community. Under this MOU, we will work together with community to develop and implement innovative delivery models for delivering culturally responsive university programming within the Mushkegowuk territory. Thank you to the School of Social Work for taking the lead as the first program that is opening up new ways of program delivery.”*

- Asima Vezina, President and Vice-Chancellor, Algoma University

*“This partnership supports our shared responsibilities of addressing the challenges of unlearning colonial practices of child welfare and honouring Indigenous ways to know and be. It is inspired by the Agency’s commitment to a vibrant workplace culture and current recruitment, retention, and capacity-building strategies.”*

- Irene Tomatuk, Executive Director, Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services

*“Omushkego Education – Mushkegowuk Council welcomes this partnership. What a wonderful opportunity for our people and communities, as we move towards providing a curriculum that is rooted in an Omushkego perspective and move away from colonial practices of education, which have been embedded in curriculum for so long. This is but yet another step in the community’s quest for self-determination and self-government, especially as it relates to the education of our people.”*

- Vern Cheechoo, Interim Executive Director, Mushkegowuk Council

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(L to R Back Row: AU School of Social Work Director and Assistant Professor, Dr. Rose Ann Torres; Omushkego Education - Mushkegowuk Council, Director Debbie Ross; AU Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, David Marasco; AU Assistant Professor, Dr. Suleyman Demi, Professor Emeritus, Laurentian University Dr. Emily J. Faries; AU Chancellor, Mario Turco; AU School of Social Work Assistant Professor, Dr. Dionisio Nyaga. Front Row: Interim Executive Director, Mushkegowuk Council, Vern Cheechoo, Executive Director Payukotayno: James & Hudson Bay Family Services, Irene Tomatuk, AU President and Vice-Chancellor, Asima Vezina)

**About Algoma University**

Algoma University, established in Sault Ste. Marie in 1965, offers a wide range of degrees and certificates spanning the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines. The University also offers programming at campus locations in Brampton and Timmins. Algoma University has a Special Mission to cultivate cross-cultural learning between Indigenous populations and other communities. For more information, please visit [www.algomau.ca](http://www.algomau.ca).

**About Mushkegowuk Council**

Mushkegowuk Council is accountable to members of Attawapiskat First Nation, Chapleau Cree First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Missanabie Cree First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Taykwa Tagamou Nation. Mushkegowuk Council is committed to providing responsible and accountable political leadership and is dedicated to providing quality equitable and accessible support and advisory services to respond to and meet the social, economic, cultural, educational, spiritual, and political needs of its member First Nations, thereby improving the quality of life of our people. The homelands of the Mushkegowuk First Nations include almost a quarter of the land area of Ontario as well as portions of Nunavut territory in James Bay.

**About Payukotayno**

In partnership with our communities, Payukotayno: James and Hudson Bay Family Services is mandated to deliver culturally appropriate services for the safety and well-being of children and families. Payukotayno, along with our affiliated Child and Youth Milopemahtesewin Services, builds on the strengths and nurtures the resiliency in our communities. We strive to meet the vision of “Keeping Our Children Home”.

**Media Contact**

Megan Parlowe  
Senior Communications Officer  
[megan.parlowe@algomau.ca](mailto:megan.parlowe@algomau.ca)  
705-971-2227

WEBSITE

