

# The Native Clan Organization and LINKS Institute Announce Educational Partnership for Support Worker Training Program

*Program Intended to Provide Indigenous Students who Have had Contact With the Justice System a Low-Barrier Training Opportunity*

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“

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*Kendell Joiner*

[Organization](#), an Indigenous non-profit providing services to Indigenous people who have had contact with the justice system, has partnered with [LINKS Institute](#), a private career college in Manitoba to address workforce development needs for Indigenous relatives who may have barriers in accessing education for their career development. The Native Clan Organization, LINKS Institute, and a number of other community-based Indigenous organizations, will coordinate curriculum to focus the program on the needs of students in Winnipeg, and that of the Indigenous community.

“It is important that we allow access to all fields of support for our relatives that want to help others after their contact with western justice systems,” says Kendell Joiner, the Chief Executive Pathfinder of the Native Clan Organization. The partnership is a natural progression for both The Native Clan Organization, and LINKS Institute, which has been operating since 2021. “As a grassroots educational business, LINKS is really excited to engage in this partnership which is consistent with our mission of building social service workforce capacity in Manitoba”, says John Jackson, President and Chief Executive Officer of LINKS Institute.

“As a society, we have placed many administrative barriers on allowing relatives who have had contact with the western justice system to be able to help those also exiting these systems in a lived experience capacity”, says Joiner. “ This is a common practice that is seen as extremely important in every field that delivers support services in community, and the justice field is no different in that we owe it to our relatives to support and help in a manner that is realistic and customized.”

The program, which is set to launch in late April this year, will help up to 15 students gain access

to education which is culturally sound and Winnipeg focused. Students will have access to Elder/ Knowledge Keeper support, ceremony , transportation, and meals. "This partnership between LINKS Institute, the Native Clan Organization and others, is an innovative collaboration which brings together academic and cultural support", says Jackson. The program will be a hybrid/blended version of LINKS Institute's online programs, based out of the Native Clan Organization's 424 Logan site. "This location is our recently launched Community Program Space" , says Joiner. Students will not have to buy tech or most supplies, as Native Clan will provide these supports to students.

The overall goal is to provide low-barrier access to high quality social service worker education, but also to build a support system between the students themselves on a peer to peer level, so that they can travel through the educational process together. The students will have a flexible and adjustable course schedule to accommodate seasonal needs for being away such as Sundance or other ceremonies, that can take students away from class for periods of time.

Both Jackson and Joiner believe that true healing occurs when trust is built, and that a level of understanding is reached where relatives feel safe enough to disclose feelings, emotions, and experiences that contribute to their path to their good life. "Step one in allowing our relatives this space to help others exiting these systems is by providing low-barrier education and training, and this is what we are doing here." Says Joiner. "Our intention is to run this program and learn more about the Indigenous student experience with The Native Clan Organization and other partners, before thinking about how we can scale similar opportunities in other parts of Manitoba, and beyond.", says Jackson.

## About LINKS Institute

LINKS Institute is a private vocational institute registered in Manitoba and offers programs to prepare students to work in health and social services. The school currently offers 5 distinct programs: Medical Unit Clerk; [Community Support Worker](#); Mental Health Certificate; Mental Wellness and Harm Reduction Diploma, and the newest Child & Youth Care Worker Diploma.

## About the Native Clan Organization

The Native Clan Organization, Inc. (NCO) established in 1972, is a unique non-profit community support agency founded by Al Chartrand. The overall mission of NCO is "The Native Clan Organization helps and supports our relatives navigate through, heal from, and return to their communities after contact with justice systems and to provide advocacy and progression of Indigenous ways of justice within those systems."

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