



Miziwe Biik – Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

Executive Summary

- In concert with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training (Miziwe Biik) is seeking to eliminate the education and employment gaps that persist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians
- The Greater Toronto Area’s (GTA) urban Aboriginal population is relatively young and growing at an increasing rate and there is significant demand for culturally relevant employment and training programs to serve this community
- Miziwe Biik has provided employment and training services to urban Aboriginal people in the GTA for the past twenty years, and is looking to expand its physical footprint and service offerings to accommodate the growing demand
- In 2014, the Ontario government conveyed land to Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT) for the purpose of establishing Toronto’s first ever Aboriginal Hub
- The Hub presents a unique opportunity to provide an integrated and dynamic economic, social and cultural space for the City’s growing urban Aboriginal population
- Miziwe Biik has developed a sustainable business case to deliver expanded employment and training services at the Aboriginal Hub through a new Institute
- Miziwe Biik is requesting a \$10M capital funding contribution to build the 20,000 sf Institute at the Aboriginal Hub

Introduction to Miziwe Biik

Miziwe Biik is a proven, trusted, and successful leader in Aboriginal training and development in the GTA. Miziwe Biik is a member of the Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle (ALFDC), which is comprised of First Nations communities (both on-reserve and in urban areas) that come together for mutual support in the area of employment and training. Since 1991, Miziwe Biik has created pathways to employment for the GTA’s Aboriginal community through four different service streams:

1. Career employment counseling;
2. Employment placement services (employment assistance, self-employment advancement opportunities, targeted wage subsidies etc.);
3. The Miziwe Biik Employment Resource Centre; and,
4. The provision of funding for education, employment and training programs.

In the past year, Miziwe Biik’s employment and training programs have resulted in:



- 386 clients finding full-time employment;
- 680 clients returning to school; and,
- 53 clients gaining the skills they need to become self-employed.

Miziwe Biik also created the Miziwe Biik Development Corporation, a non-profit that provides urban Aboriginal people with greater access to business development opportunities and affordable rental and ownership of housing through its Aboriginal Rental Program (ARP) and Aboriginal Down-payment Loan Program (ADLP).

Miziwe Biik is a trusted program delivery agent for public funders, such as the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Employment Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the federal Department of Employment and Skills Development, among others. Miziwe Biik also has deep relationships with employers, labour organizations, and training partners in the GTA, including: LIUNA, Local 675, George Brown College (GBC), Ryerson, the Independent Learning Centre and the Toronto District School Board.

Introduction to Toronto's Aboriginal Hub

In 2014, Miziwe Biik was part of the Ontario government's announcement, which conveyed Block 10 in the West Don Lands to Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT) to develop the city's and the region's first ever Aboriginal Hub. The Hub presents a unique opportunity for the GTA to provide an integrated and dynamic economic, social and cultural space for its growing urban Aboriginal population. There is currently no space within the city and region that Indigenous peoples can call their own and share their vibrant culture with non-Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal Hub will be comprised of various Aboriginal partner organizations, led by AHT, and will be the home to Aboriginally-led health, education and training services, Aboriginal businesses, and Aboriginal arts and cultural programming.

The Miziwe Biik Institute would be located at the Hub, and would provide integrated education, employment and training services to Aboriginal clients. The Institute is envisioned to include:

- **A multi-purpose vocational training workshop:** The Aboriginal population has a high affinity for the skilled trades, however there is currently insufficient space in downtown Toronto to accommodate demand for trades programming;
- **Tutoring classrooms:** This will function as a full-time study location for clients, allowing them to work in a culturally-relevant and supported environment;
- **Incubator and multi-purpose space:** This will function as incubator space for Aboriginal business start-ups, a classroom, and will also provide a stage for ceremonies and gatherings;

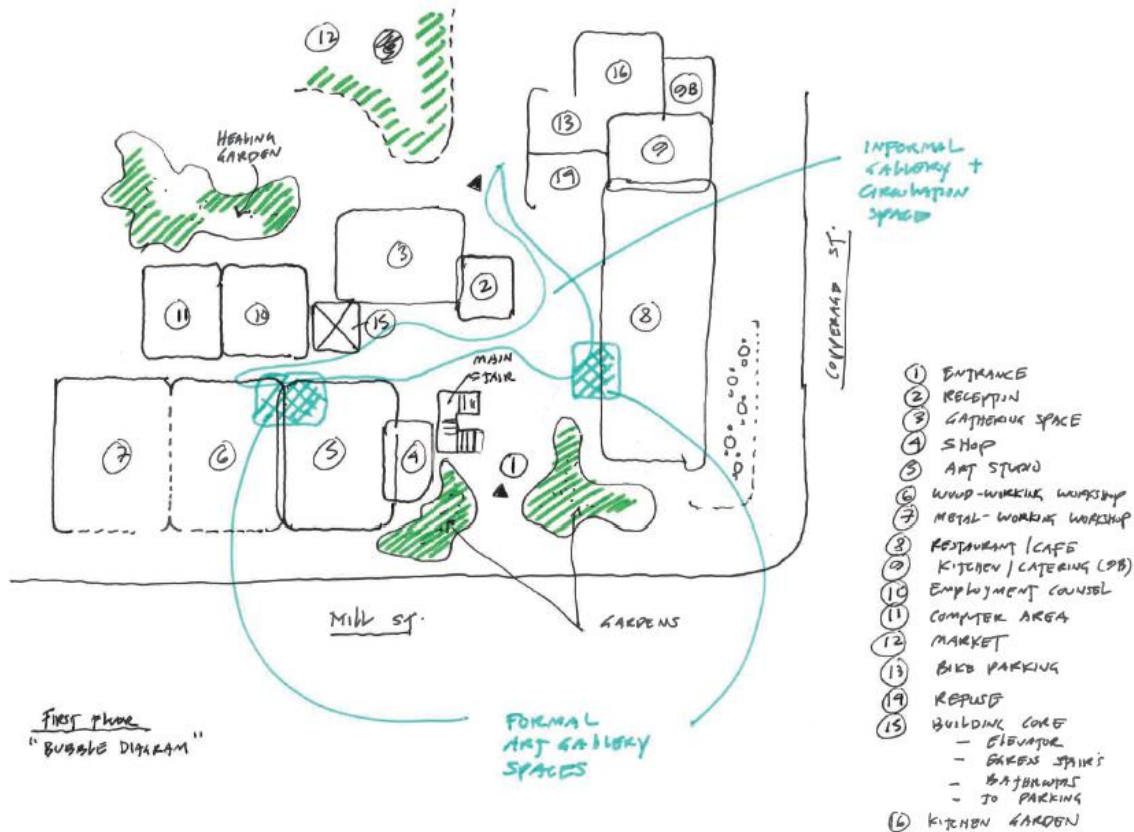


- **Special-purpose space:** This space will accommodate George Brown College's program as a strategic education, employment and training partner in the Hub; and,
- **Outdoor space:** This will be used for outdoor ceremonies and serve as a common space for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to gather and exchange lived experiences.

The physical Institute would provide both the practical space for teaching and learning, as well as containing the informal space for cultural activities and for student and community interaction. While this space will be designed to meet the specific needs of the Aboriginal population, non-Aboriginal people will be welcome to take part in social and cultural events and exchanges hosted by Miziwe Biik and its partners.

Miziwe Biik is charged with raising the capital to construct its facility. The facility for the Institute itself is planned to be approximately 20,000 sf. The vision for the educational programming at the Aboriginal Hub extends beyond Miziwe Biik, and requires the close integration of the partner organizations in order to deliver the most comprehensive programs to support the wide range of Aboriginal clients and students. Miziwe Biik is currently partnered with GBC to provide these types of supports for students. Together, Miziwe Biik and GBC have developed and delivered joint educational programming, which has resulted in streaming clients into post-secondary programs at the College. With the additional space provided by the Institute, Miziwe Biik and GBC will expand their joint offerings, allowing for greater continuity through in-house delivery. GBC will also occupy part of the space in the Institute as a tenant, which will serve to strengthen an already dynamic and accomplished partnership that is beneficial to the GTA's Aboriginal community.

The development for Block 10 is underway, with Dream Development (KilmerDundee) serving as the master developer for the Hub. Miziwe Biik also continues to move forward with its development of the vision for the Institute and its campus. In addition to its partnership in academic programming, Miziwe Biik has engaged GBC's design team to provide architectural support in the development of its building on Block 10. Miziwe Biik and GBC are assessing more traditional and environmentally sustainable approaches to the design and construction of the building to ensure that it is culturally relevant and a design jewel for the City and region.



Why the Institute and the Hub are Needed

The GTA's growing Aboriginal community faces a number of challenges to its economic success. Gaps in education, employment and earnings persist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations affecting the prosperity of Aboriginal people. Based on the last completed study available, average incomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Toronto are \$33,000 and \$70,000 respectively.¹

In addition, the GTA's Aboriginal population is growing rapidly, and has not always been wholly accounted for, exacerbating the need for culturally-tailored service offerings. The 2011 Toronto Aboriginal Research Project (TARP) identified 70,000 Aboriginal peoples living in the GTA, while the 2011 Census only captured 37,000. This difference of 33,000 is explained by the TARP's interviewing of Aboriginal service providers, accounting for homeless, at risk, and transitioning individuals not captured by the Census.

One of the most critical challenges faced by the GTA's Aboriginal population is access to culturally relevant education and training that leads to access to employment opportunities. Aboriginal people

¹ [Toronto Aboriginal Research Project, 2011](#)



distinctly favour learning in Aboriginal-friendly environments that are tailored to the unique learning styles. Of Miziwe Biik's 1,224 clients in 2016, 80% expressed a need for Elder and traditional teachings and guidance, while 80% vocalized high levels of institutional mistrust and racism. The Hub presents the opportunity to provide the growing number of urban Aboriginal peoples with a much needed anchor community for culturally-tailored services.

Miziwe Biik is seeking to provide clear pathways for the sustainable economic advancement of the Aboriginal community in the GTA through its Institute on Block 10, but requires a partnership with the federal government for the capital funds for its building. The Province of Ontario has generously delivered the Block 10 lands for the Hub and the Institute. Miziwe Biik will contribute its own capital to the building of the Institute, but requires financial support to realize the project. Because off-reserve Aboriginal people fall between funding programs – not within Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's funding stream, and too small for Infrastructure Canada – Miziwe Biik's challenge is seeking a direct financial contribution and partnership through Budget 2018.

The Contribution and Partnerships

Miziwe Biik has secured the land for the Institute and has a viable and proven operating model; now it needs capital to fund the building. Miziwe Biik estimates it will cost \$12M to construct the Institute. Miziwe Biik will provide a \$2M contribution through mortgaging its existing property on Gerrard Street and financing a portion of the building, and is requesting a \$10M capital contribution from the Government of Canada.

This Hub will serve as the Province's first urban Aboriginal campus and provides the federal government with the ability to have a multi-generational impact on Aboriginal people outside of reserves that will contribute to truth and reconciliation.

Conclusion

Enabling the young and growing Aboriginal population to access education, employment and training services will lead to significant community gains aligned with the recommendations for the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. The demand for these services is strong, and Aboriginal service providers are best positioned to address this need. As of now, there is no integrated economic, social and cultural space to serve the needs of the GTA's growing Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal Hub fills this gap for the community and provides the City with a unique and innovative cultural space that celebrates and supports the growing urban Aboriginal population. Within the Hub, Miziwe Biik will provide culturally-tailored education, employment and training services to the in a space already earmarked for the urban Aboriginal community.



Miziwe Biik has secured the land and the partnerships to maintain operations, but is still in need of the capital to construct the building. In order to provide a much needed facility for the GTA's growing urban Aboriginal population, Miziwe Biik is requesting a \$10M capital contribution from the Government of Canada for the building.

The Principles of Reconciliation state that "Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources."² Through these elements, the Institute and the Hub can take form and bring together the community to advance many of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action³, including:

- Number 7: We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians;
- Number 8: We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves; and,
- Number 11: We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.

Miziwe Biik would welcome the opportunity to discuss its request with the Committee.

² [Principles of Truth and Reconciliation, 2015](#)

³ [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015](#)