

Special Education Guide for First Nation Parents



Special Needs Strategy and Omushkego Education

Special Education Guide for First Nation Parents

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Introduction

What is the purpose of this guide?

The *Education Act* requires that school boards provide special education programs and services for their exceptional students. The purpose of this parents' guide is to provide you with information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and to set out for you the procedures involved in identifying a student as “exceptional”, deciding the student’s placement, or appealing such decisions if you do not agree with the IPRC. In addition, this guide provides you with information on the development of a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). If, after reading this guide, you require more information, please contact the principal of your child’s school.



This guide does not replace existing school or local education authority policies and procedures.

Who is this guide for?

When used in this guide, the word “parent(s)” refers to both parent(s) and guardian(s). It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.

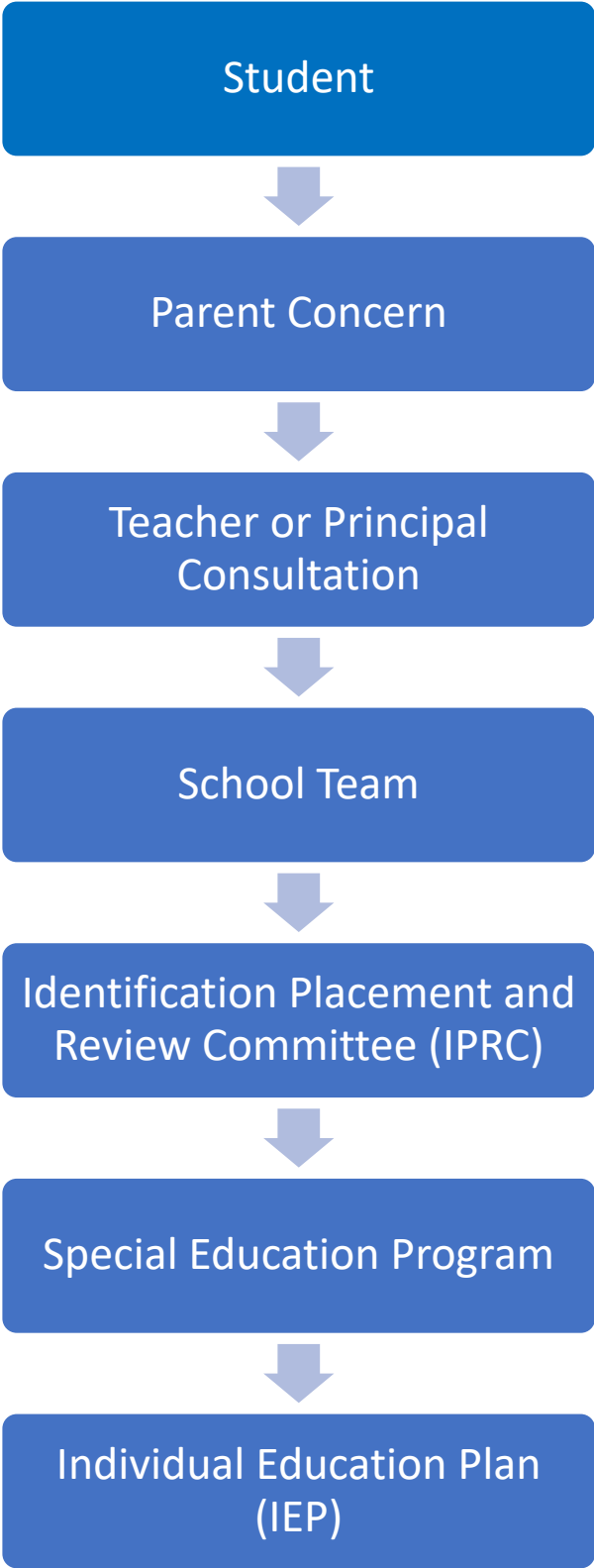
What should I do when my child is struggling in school?

When a concern arises about your child’s programs or services, it is important that you first speak to the classroom teacher. If the concern cannot be resolved with the classroom teacher, then it may be necessary for the principal to become involved. In addition, the special education resource teacher may be called upon to provide information and support in dealing with the concern. Should the concern not be resolved by the school team, then an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) will be set up for your child.



Additional guides that may help identify your child’s growth or development can be found in the Resource List.

What does the special education process look like?



Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)

What is an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)?

An Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) is a meeting to officially determine whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional. An IPRC may be requested by the parents or the school. Once parents have made a request in writing, an IPRC must be held.

An IPRC is composed of at least 3 people, one of whom must be the principal of the school. The remainder of the committee may consist of classroom teacher(s), special education resource teacher, or other special education professionals. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend this meeting.



Identification does not prevent a student from achieving a high school diploma.

What is the purpose of an IPRC?

An IPRC will

- decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- identify the areas of your child's exceptionality;
- decide an appropriate placement that may include one of the following options:
 - Regular Classroom with Indirect Support
 - Regular Classroom with Resource Assistance
 - Regular Classroom with Withdrawal Assistance
 - Special Education Classroom with Partial integration
 - Special Education Classroom Full-time
 - or Home Instruction; and
- review the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

The *Education Act* defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program” Students are identified according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ministry of Education or Canada.

What are the categories of exceptionalities?

The following five categories of exceptionalities have been identified in the *Education Act* definition for exceptional students:

1. Behavioural:
2. Communication: Autism, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Language Impairment, Speech Impairment, or Learning Disability
3. Intellectual: Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability, or Developmental Disability
4. Physical: Physical Disability or Blind and Low Vision
5. Multiple: Multiple Exceptionalities

These five categories are a useful tool for the identification of students with special education needs. However, a student may present learning needs in many ways in the school setting and may be identified as exceptional within one or more of these categories. The determining factor for the delivery of special education programs or services is not any specific diagnosed or undiagnosed medical condition, but rather the need of the individual student based on an individual assessment of strengths and needs. A copy of these exceptionalities can be provided by the principal of your child’s school.

How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The principal of your child’s school

- must request an IPRC meeting for your child, upon receiving your written request; and

- may, with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal and the child's teacher or teachers believe that your child may benefit from a special education program.

Within 15 days of receiving your request, or giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide (or a locally developed one) and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC will meet.

Who may attend an IPRC meeting?

Parents and pupils 16 years of age or older are entitled to be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child and be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

Who else may attend an IPRC meeting and what are their roles?

The principal of your child's school, who may chair the meeting, coordinate correspondence to committee members and other participants, and invite other participants;
other resource people such as your child's teacher, special education staff, support staff, or other professionals, who may provide further information or clarification;
any person you may wish to support you or speak on behalf of you or your child;
and a Cree interpreter, that you may request through the principal of your child's school, if one is required.

Who may request that others attend?

Either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting. As a courtesy, the chair of the IPRC (usually the principal) should be notified in advance of any representative or additional resource personnel invited to attend.

What information will I receive about the IPRC meeting?

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend as an important partner in considering your child's placement. This letter will notify

you of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to indicate whether you will attend.

Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

What if I am unable to make the scheduled meeting?

If you are unable to make the scheduled meeting, you may

- contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- let the school principal know you will not be attending.

How can I prepare for a special needs concern, referral, assessment, IPRC, or IEP meeting?

- Understand the purpose for the meeting, e.g., special needs concern, referral, assessment, IPRC, or IEP;
- Talk to your child about the meeting;
- Ask them how they think they are doing;
- Make a list of questions or concerns;
- Set up a file to keep all papers organized;
- Speak to the principal, teachers and professionals working with your child;
- Ask for information about the parent's or guardian's role and the IPRC or IEP process;
- Look at your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR) and review recent assessments and reports; and,
- Ask if you can meet with the school team to discuss your child's progress.(SCDSB, 2019)

What are some questions I could ask before and at an IPRC meeting?

- Why was my child referred for an assessment?
- Who did the assessments and what methods were used?
- What are some examples of my child's classwork?
- Why am I asked to attend an IPRC meeting?

- How are my child's exceptionalities identified at this time?
- What describes my child's strengths and learning style?
- What describes my child's limitations and special needs?
- What are some strategies used for my child's learning in the classroom?
- Have you noticed a particular type of encouragement that seems to be effective with my child?
- What gains or setbacks have school team members observed in my child's learning this past year?
- If placement is recommended what would that placement involve?
- What methods would be used to assess my child's progress?
- When will I receive a personal copy of my child's completed IPRC written statement of decision?

(Morneau Shepell, 2015)

What happens at an IPRC meeting?

The chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting.

The IPRC will review all available information about your child. The members will

- consider the results of an educational assessment of your child;
- consider, subject to the provisions of the *Health Care Consent Act, 1996*, a health or psychological assessment of your child conducted by a qualified practitioner, if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision;
- interview your child, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so; and
- consider any information that you submit about your child or that your child submits if he or she is 16 years of age or older.

The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child, if the child is 16 years of age or older. You are encouraged to ask

questions and join in the discussion. Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?

Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will

- meet your child's needs; and
- be consistent with your preferences.

If, after considering all of the information presented to it, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child's needs and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services.

If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

What will the IPRC's written statement of decision include?

The IPRC's written statement of decision will state

- whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional;
- where the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional,
 - the categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as defined by the Ministry of Education or INAC,
 - the IPRC's description of your child's strengths and needs,
 - the IPRC's placement decision,
 - the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services; and
- where the IPRC has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, the reasons for that decision.

What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?

As soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement of decision noting the decision about identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

If you **agree** with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate, by signing your name, that you agree with the identification and placement decisions made by the IPRC.

If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and if you **agree** with the IPRC identification and placement decisions, the principal will promptly notify the special education resource teacher of the need to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child.



If you are unsure about the IPRC decision, please contact the principal of your child's school for clarification before signing the document.

Once a child has been placed in a special education program, can the placement be reviewed?

An IPRC review meeting will be held at least once in each school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided receives written notice from you, the parent, agreeing not to hold the annual review. You may request an IPRC review meeting any time after your child has been in a special education program for 3 months.

What does an IPRC review consider and decide?

With your written permission, the IPRC conducting the review will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP. It will consider the same type of information that was originally considered by the IPRC, as well as any new information.

The IPRC will review the identification and placement decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

What can I do if I disagree with the IPRC decision?

If you **disagree** with either the identification or the placement decision made by the IPRC, you may:

- within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns; or
- within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the director of education.

If you **disagree** with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal with the director of education within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

The notice of appeal must

- indicate the decision with which you disagree; and
- include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.

If you **do not consent** to the IPRC decision but you do not appeal it, the local education authority will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

What happens in the appeal process?

The appeal process involves the following steps:

1. The local education authority will establish a special education appeal board to hear your appeal.
2. The appeal board will be composed of three persons who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal, one of whom is to be selected by you, the parent.
3. The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after he or she has

been selected (unless parents and board provide written consent to a later date).

4. The appeal board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
5. You, the parent, and your child, if he or she is 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
6. The appeal board must make its recommendations within 3 days of the meeting's ending. It may:
 - a. **agree** with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
 - b. **disagree** with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the board about your child's identification or placement or both.
7. The appeal board will report its recommendations in writing, to you and to the school, providing the reasons for its recommendations.
8. Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the local education authority will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations (the local education authority is not required to follow the appeal board recommendations).

Special Education Program and Services

What is a special education program?

A special education program is an educational program that

- is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and
- includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific objectives and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

Assessment is the process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject/strand, course or the learning expectations identified in the student's IEP. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.

In addition, information gathering may occur as part of the assessment package for a referral to an IPRC. Common requests for assessment include health (or medical), psychological, and speech and language (or communication). These assessments are usually undertaken by licensed or registered professionals. Parents must provide consent before these assessments can be done.

What are special education services?

Special education services are the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program. A student does not have to be formally identified to benefit from special education programs or services.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

When is an Individual Education Plan (IEP) created?

For students who have been formally identified through the IPRC process, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be created within 30 school days following the IPRC. For students who have previously existing IEPs, a current IEP must be created within 30 school days from the start of each school year.

What is an IEP?

Principals are required to ensure that an IEP is developed (in consultation with parents and the student, where the student is 16 years of age or older) for every student who has been identified as exceptional by an IPRC.

An IEP is a written plan created for your child that

- describes the special education program and/or services required by your child, based on a thorough assessment of his or her strengths and needs;
- contains a transition plan for each exceptional student who is 14 years of age or older who is making the transition from secondary school to postsecondary activities, unless the student was identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness;
- includes a record of any *accommodations* needed to help your child achieve their learning expectations;
- identifies learning expectations that are *modified* from the expectations for the regular grade level in a particular subject or course, if modifications are required;
- identifies *alternative expectations*, if required, in areas not represented in the Ontario curriculum; and
- includes a record of the teaching strategies specific to modified and alternative expectations and of assessment methods to be used to determine the student's progress towards achieving these expectations.

An IEP is **not**:

- a description of everything that will be taught to your child;
- a list of all the teaching strategies used in regular classroom instruction;
- a document that records all of the student's learning expectations; or
- a daily lesson plan.

Who has an IEP?

- Every student identified as exceptional by an IPRC;
- Students whose school principal, with input from the regular classroom teacher, special education staff and parents or guardians, determines that their achievement will be assessed on the basis of modified expectations; and,
- Students who regularly require accommodations for instructional or assessment purposes.

The IEP shall be continuously monitored throughout the year and must be formally reviewed and updated at each reporting period as appropriate. The IEP will be placed in your child's Ontario School Record (OSR). The principal must ensure that you receive a copy of the IEP.



IEPs may be developed for students who have not been formally identified as exceptional by an IPRC but are receiving special education programs and/or related services.

Who is involved in the development of an IEP and what are their roles?

An IEP is developed by a team that includes school staff (e.g., classroom teacher, classroom assistant, and special education teacher) and the child's parents or guardians. The team meets, reviews the information available about the child, and designs a special education program to address the child's special needs. The classroom teacher is responsible for implementing the plan, communicating student progress with the parents, and updating the IEP with other school staff as required. The classroom assistant or tutor/escort may

assist students with learning activities and accommodations as described in the IEP. The special education teacher may provide instruction and support in a regular classroom or in a special education classroom for all or part of the day.

How can I be involved in the development of an IEP and what is my role?

Parents can assist with the development of the IEP by

- participating in the IEP process;
- advocating for their child's best interests;
- providing relevant information about their child in the home and community;
- working together with school staff; and
- maintaining open communication with the school. (DSBONE, 2016)

What are some questions I could ask at a planning or IEP meeting?

- What is your understanding of my child's learning strengths and needs?
- What does my child do well?
- How does my child relate to classmates?
- What kinds of accommodations will be available in the classroom?
- What modifications will you be making to the curriculum to support my child's learning?
- What skills does my child need to develop so he or she will be successful in school next year?
- What independent living or pre-employment skills will my child need to work on right now?
- What kinds of alternative programming will be available to support my child's learning?
- Who is to provide the recommended services?
- How can we stay in touch so that I can support the work you are doing in the classroom? What's the best way to reach you?
- What are some ways I can help my child at home?
- Who should I be in contact with, and how often should we meet to discuss my child's progress?

- When should my child's IEP be reviewed again?
 - What type of observations would be good for me to record and bring to the next planning meeting?
 - When will I receive a personal copy of my child's completed IEP form?
- (Morneau Shepell, 2015)

What happens at an IEP development meeting?

In planning a student's special education program, the IEP team must consider a range of options to determine the ones that will best meet the student's individual needs. The following categories are used to classify the subject/strand, course or alternative program in which the student will receive instruction:

No Accommodation or Modifications

No statement is included on the IEP if the subject/strand or course in which the student requires neither accommodations nor modified or alternative expectations.

Accommodated Only (AC)

Statements on the IEP identifying special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. The provincial curriculum *expectations for the grade are not altered* for a student receiving accommodations only.

Modified Curriculum Expectations (MOD)

Statements on the IEP that reflect the *changes made to the grade-level expectations* for a subject/strand or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. Modifications may include the use of learning expectations at a different grade level and/or an increase or decrease in the number and/or complexity of expectations relative to the curriculum expectations for the regular grade level. At the secondary level, a credit may or may not be granted for a course, depending on the extent to which the expectations in the course have been modified.

Alternative Learning Expectations (ALT)

Statements on the IEP describing alternative expectations developed to help students acquire knowledge and skills that are *not represented in the Ontario curriculum expectations*. Because they are not part of a subject or course outlined in the provincial curriculum documents, alternative learning expectations are considered to constitute alternative programs or alternative courses. Alternative programs or courses are provided in both elementary and secondary schools.

How is the achievement of students with special needs reported?

On elementary and secondary report cards an IEP check box is provided for each subject/strand or course.

IEPs with Accommodations Only

If a student's IEP requires only accommodations in a subject/strand or course, the IEP box will *not* be checked. Letter grades or percentage marks are based on regular grade expectations.

IEPs with Modified Curriculum Expectations

If the expectations in Kindergarten to Grade 8 are based on expectations for a particular grade (e.g., Grade 3), but are different from the regular program for that grade (e.g., Grade 5) then the teacher must check the IEP box for that subject. In the Strengths/Next Steps section, the elementary teacher must include the following statement: *“This (letter grade/percentage mark) is based on achievement of expectations in the IEP that vary from the Grade X expectations (and/or) are an (increase/decrease) in the (number and/or complexity) of curriculum expectations.”*

If the expectations in Grades 9 to 12 are based on modified expectations then the secondary teacher must check the IEP box for that course. If the expectations are modified so that a credit will not be granted the following statement must be included in the Comments section: *“This percentage mark is*

based on achievement of the learning expectations specified in the IEP, which differ significantly from the curriculum expectations for the course.”



Not all subjects/strands or courses in a grade will necessarily be modified.

IEPs with Alternative Learning Expectations

In most cases where a student’s expectations in an IEP are alternative learning expectations, letter grades or percentage marks are not given. However, where letter grades or percentages are given, the teacher must check the IEP box and include the following statement in the Strengths/Next Steps section: *“This (letter grade/percentage mark) is based on achievement of alternative learning expectations in the IEP, which are not based on the Ontario curriculum.”*

What happens to my special needs child as they move from elementary to secondary to post-secondary school and to community living?

All students who have an IEP are required to have an up-to-date transition plan in their journey through school. The development of a detailed and coordinated plan ensures that school and local education authority staff are prepared to meet student needs. To ensure successful transitions, parents can

- notify the school or local education authority about a student who has special education needs well in advance of school entry;
- become involved in entry to school or school transitions planning;
- establish and maintain links with community partners who provide services for students with special needs; and
- participate in orientation or training opportunities for students and parents.



Transition support or student services provided by most post-secondary schools can help a student achieve a post-secondary diploma or degree.

Community Partners or Organizations

What community partners or organizations are available to help me and my special needs child?

Many community partners or organizations are available to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children. Your school’s principal can provide the names of the organizations that serve your community or you can review the list of agencies and organizations below.

Name of Organization	Contact Information
CanChild, McMaster University	McMaster University, 1400 Main St. W., Room 408, Hamilton, ON. L8S 1C7. Ph: 1-905-525-9140. Website: www.canchild.ca
Cochrane-Temiskaming Children’s Treatment Centre (CT CTC)	733 Ross Ave. E., Timmins, ON, P4N 8S8. Ph: 1-705-264-4700/Toll-free: 1-800-575-3210. Website: www.ctctc.org
Cochrane-Temiskaming Resource Centre (CTRC)	600 Toke St., Timmins, ON. P4N 6W1. Ph: 1-705-267-8181. Website: www.ctrc.on.ca
Hands & The Family Help Network	391 Oak St. E., North Bay, ON. P1B 1A3. Ph: 1-705-476-2293/Toll-free: 1-800-668-8555. Website: www.HandsTheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca
Kids Inclusive Centre for Child & Youth Development (KI)	166 Brock St., Kingston ON. K7L 5G2. Ph: 1-613-544-3400/Toll-free: 1-855-544-3400. Website: www.kidsinclusive.ca
Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN)	145 Wilson Ave., Timmins, ON. P4N2T2. Ph: 1-807-623-8228/Toll-free: 1-800-465-9952. Website: www.nan.on.ca
Northeast Community Care Access Centre (NCCAC)	48 Revillon Road, Moosonee, ON. P0L 1Y0. Ph: 1-705-336-2233. Website: www.northeasthealthline.ca
Northern College	First Ave., Moosonee, ON. P0L 1Y0. Ph: 1-705-336-2913. Website: www.northernc.on.ca

One Kids Place (OKP)	400 McKeown Ave., North Bay, ON. P1B 0B2. Ph: 1-705-476-5437/Toll-free: 1-866-626-9100. Website: www.onekidsplace.ca
Ontario Autism Program (OAP)	North Region Northeast Autism Ontario. Toll-free:1-800-472-7789 x 345. Email: angele@autismontario.com
(Payukotayno) Milopehmatesewin Child & Family Services	75 Ferguson St. Box 75, Moosonee, ON. P0L 1Y0. Ph: 1-705-336-0058/Tool-free: 1-888-702-2981. Website: www.payukotayno.ca
Porcupine Health Unit (PHU)	169 Pine St. S., Timmins, ON P4N 8B7. Ph: 1-705-267-1181/Toll-free: 1-800-461-1818. Website: www.porcupinehu.on.ca
Weeneebayko Atuskaywin Health Authority (WAHA)	Box 34, Moose Factory, ON. P0L 1W0. Ph: 1-705-658-4544. Website: www.waha.ca
Wesway Respite Services	1703 Victoria Ave. E., Thunder Bay, ON. P7C 1C8. Ph: 1-807-625-6692/Toll-free1-888-623-2353. Website: www.wesway.com

Resource List

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[Special Education Guide for First Nation Parents](#) provides parents with information on Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) procedures and on the development of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).