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POW WOW CLUB HEALS CHILDREN THROUGH DANCING

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Inc.'s "Rising Sun – Sons and Daughters of the Four Directions" program is generating community interest as well as individual healing.

The Pow Wow Club is one of three activities that are doing well.

"Rising Sun" is designed to provide children and youth, ages 5 – 18 years, in the care of Winnipeg Child and Family Services (CFS) with a full range of evening and weekend cultural development activities. The programs include the Pow Wow Club, Aboriginal Scouts, and a weekly Sweat Lodge ceremony in Bird's Hill Park.

The program has been in operation for less than eight months, but attendance has grown up to 120 children per week. The various activities are offered over four days and provide a gathering place for the community and a chance for families to reconnect to their culture.

"Seventy per cent of the children we work with are in the care of Winnipeg Child and Family Services," said Spatch Mulhall, Youth Cultural Development Coordinator, "and the most remarkable thing about this program is the sense of ownership and pride it has created in the community. We have foster parents sewing the dance regalia, volunteers preparing the snacks, parents and community members – even former gang members – learning to dance, and professional dancers sharing their skills and knowledge with the children themselves."

The Pow Wow Club performed before an audience of bank executives, the Winnipeg Police Force Feast at the Indian & Metis Friendship Centre, and will be part of the Opening Ceremonies of the North American Indigenous Games.

The Pow Wow Club meets every Tuesday, from 6-8 p.m. at the Indian & Metis Friendship Centre, 45 Robinson Street, and on Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m. at the Broadway Community Centre, 185 Young Street. The Aboriginal Cubs, ages 8-10, and the Aboriginal Scouts, ages 11-13, meet on Thursdays, 6-8 p.m. at 94 McGregor Street. The Sweat Lodge is on Saturdays, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Transportation is provided.

Parents can register their children for more than one program, if space is available. Priority is given to children in care. Refreshments are provided at the in-house programs. Winnipeg CFS and Neighbourhoods Alive fund the program.

To register for the programs, contact Joe McDougall or John Houle at 925-0326.

The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre was established in 1984 by the Aboriginal community to provide culturally relevant, preventive and supportive services and resources for Aboriginal families living in Winnipeg.