

Creating connections in the kitchen

By Kristena Schutt-Moore The kitchen is open once again for the EarlyON Centre's Kitchen Connection's Program. The food and wellness program is held at the Inodewiziwin EarlyON Centre in Maynooth. The goal of the program is to encourage both parents and children to cook together. Held every Friday morning, families gather to learn a prepared recipe that is both budget friendly and healthy. When the food is done they gather around the table and eat together. Studies have shown that children are more likely to try something new if they are involved in the cooking process. It also helps youth learn about kitchen safety and food preparation. The recipe is different each week and the meal costs roughly \$15 or less each week to show how budget friendly cooking can be, with the fresh ingredients all being budgeted out. However there are some items such as pantry staples like salt, pepper and spices that are not budgeted for, as they are often found in the pantry staples and different people prefer different spices and such items.

Indigenous cultural coordinator Diane Martin says that the importance of the program is that there are a lot of families with food insecurities right now and the program helps show how to make a healthy meal on a budget. At the end of the lunch the parents are given an information packet that could include information on the different ingredients in the day's recipe, or how to budget, or how to balance meals to get recommended food servings. The packets also include a \$10 grocery card so that they could purchase the ingredients themselves and make the meal at home. The Kitchen Connections Program is funded by the United Way of Quinte to help area families meet their food needs. Those interested in participating in the program are asked to register by emailing register@nhcs.ca so that the coordinators can ensure that there are enough ingredients, information packages and grocery cards available.

