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NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Justice Centre Opens in Kenora

Innovative Centre to support Indigenous communities

February 06, 2023

[Ministry of the Attorney General](#)

KENORA — Today, the Ontario government, in collaboration with Indigenous leaders, the Ontario Court of Justice and community partners, launched the opening of the Kenora Justice Centre.

Designed with and for the Kenora community, the innovative Centre will hold individuals accountable for their offences, while providing community-led supports through health care, education, housing and other social-service providers. Wrap-around programs will be delivered by specialized teams that include Indigenous-led organizations, and mental health and addictions counsellors.

“In many Ontario communities, we see a revolving door of repeat offenders struggling with poverty, mental health issues, addictions, lack of secure housing and unemployment,” said Attorney General Doug Downey. “The Kenora Justice Centre will offer community supports to address these challenges, hold individuals accountable, reduce the likelihood of future contact with the justice system, and help victims and communities heal from the effects of crime.”

Programs and services at the Kenora Justice Centre will also focus on addressing the root causes of crime, while supporting healing and growth for at-risk youth and young adults. The Centre will also work with local community partners and Elders to provide Indigenous-led support programs and services to help individuals heal from trauma.

“Our government is improving the way we administer justice by implementing culturally appropriate and specialized wrap-around justice services that will enhance public safety across the Northwest,” said Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and MPP for Kenora-Rainy River. “By shifting parts of our justice system into a community-based setting, we are confident that healing will be front and centre while ensuring that individuals are held accountable for their crimes.”



Located in a building owned by the [Kenora Chiefs Advisory](#), the Justice Centre is working with community partners and the Ontario Court of Justice to include:

- A courtroom configured to support rehabilitation and encourage dialogue between individuals, judges, Elders, Crowns, duty/defence counsel, victims, police and members of the community
- An Elder/cultural liaison room for participants to work with on-site Elders and interpreters to create healing plans
- Access to on-site integrated social services to support individuals and families, such as housing, income supports, mental health, and employment
- A primary health-care room to support Indigenous-led health and treatment services
- A technology room to support participants who lack reliable access to internet services for court appearances, tribunal hearings or medical appointments
- Smudging is welcome in all Justice Centre spaces and a Community Room will prioritize opportunities for ceremony, workshops and training for all community partners

"It is critical for the criminal justice system to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the system," said Francis Kavanaugh, Ogichidaa, Grand Council Treaty #3. "The Kenora Justice Centre has been created in collaboration with Elders and community to prioritize Indigenous-led healing and wellness for youth, young adults and their families. It represents a new path forward for our community."

"There are many barriers limiting access to justice for First Nations in the North. We need new, innovative approaches for our disadvantaged citizens that find themselves in the correctional system," said Derek Fox, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief. "The co-development of this community justice centre with Grand Council Treaty #3 has created a new environment in Kenora where Indigenous youth, young adults and their families can access justice services in a culturally-inclusive and trauma-informed space. We look forward to building on this experience and working toward additional centres within the NAN territory."

"The Ontario Court of Justice is pleased to recognize the opening of the Kenora Justice Centre. The Kenora Justice Centre seeks to deliver justice services in new and innovative ways, with a focus on Indigenous justice participants, and an approach based on both criminal and Indigenous restorative justice processes," said The Honourable Lise Maisonneuve, Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Justice. "The Court looks forward to the opportunity to continue to work closely with community partners to provide meaningful access to justice services for the people of Kenora, and the people of Ontario."

Quick Facts

- Guided by the [Kenora Justice Centre Advisory Council](#), the Justice Centre design process in Kenora was informed by a community-needs assessment with Indigenous leadership, Elders, justice participants and Indigenous-led organizations.



- Kenora's Justice Centre is one of four sites recently established across the province, with the other three located in London and Toronto's Downtown East and Northwest neighbourhoods.
- Ontario's Justice Centre model is informed by international best practices drawn from over 70 communities around the world.
- Support for Kenora's Justice Centre is part of the [government's strategy](#) to fight guns and gangs in communities across Ontario.

Additional Resources

[Ontario's guns, gang and violence reduction strategy](#)

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