



## **Sault College News Release**

For immediate release

### **Help Wanted: Support the Healing from Historic Trauma**

(Sault Ste. Marie, ON March 31, 2015) Project ALLY: Aboriginal Leaders Liberating Youth is an annual event created and hosted by faculty and students in the Social Service Worker - Native Specialization (SSW-NS) program at Sault College to develop community capacity and promote healing and wellness. On Tuesday, April 14 at Northern Grand Gardens, close to one hundred Aboriginal youth ages 11 – 17 will be paired with influential Aboriginal role models from the community. The fun evening of empowerment will include SSW-NS students facilitating the creation of sustainable, supportive mentor-type relationships.

The project, beginning in 2014, was developed in response to heartbreaking stories of suicide, racism/bullying, low self-esteem, cultural identity loss and other historic trauma impacts faced by Aboriginal youth in our community. In partnership with the Sault Ste. Marie Indian Friendship Centre, Project ALLY works with educators and social service providers in the community to connect with youth.

“The term ALLY was chosen for the project because historical trauma impacts every citizen in some way and each person can make a difference and support change,” says Stephanie Stephens, Professor, Social Service Worker-Native Specialization at Sault College. “Historic trauma is seen in schools interfering with all students’ learning. It is a social justice issue when youth justice is overrepresented with Aboriginal peoples and the impacts worsen with each generation that does not achieve wellness. Historic trauma is also an economic issue when our future labour force is suffering from traumas which increase the need for tax dollars going toward health care and social services. Our economy would benefit tremendously from the

fastest growing population in Canada (Aboriginal children & youth) reaching their fullest potentials in education and wellbeing. Every citizen in Algoma district can be an ally.”

SSW-NS students plan the entire evening based on the principles of the 7 Grandfather Teachings and coordinate activities to ensure each individual leaves feeling empowered, with a sense of mastery and confidence. Throughout the evening Aboriginal young people will be surrounded by community members who will inspire and acknowledge the gifts the young people bring presenting the youth as valuable and important contributors in our community. SSW-NS students believe there is hope that staggeringly high rates of Aboriginal youth suicide, poverty and homelessness can be reduced when the community comes together.

For \$50 community members can sponsor a youth to attend this powerful and healing experience. Organizations or businesses are also welcome to provide donations for prizes. All funds will go towards personal care packages of toiletries and afterschool snacks for all youth in attendance. If you would like to learn more or would like to make a donation to support this endeavour visit the [Project ALLY Website](#) or contact Stephanie Stephens at [stephanie.stephens@saultcollege.ca](mailto:stephanie.stephens@saultcollege.ca) or call 705-759-2554 ext. 2483.

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### **About Sault College Community Services Programs**

Community Services programs are for those students interested in working with people committed to helping improve the lives of others. Explore options in Social Service Worker, Social Service Worker – Native Specialization, Child and Youth Care, Early Childhood Education and Peace and Conflict Studies. Programs include extensive fieldwork where one can acquire the counselling and people skills needed to succeed in the field. Ranked #1 in the province with a score of 85% in overall student satisfaction by students themselves, Sault College is located on the border to the United States and situated in the middle of three of the largest great lakes on the planet. Sault College is one of 24 publicly-funded colleges in the province of Ontario. Visit our website at [www.saultcollege.ca](http://www.saultcollege.ca) to learn more.

Please contact:

Tessa Vecchio, Communications Officer

Sault College

705.759.2554 ext. 2830

[www.saultcollege.ca](http://www.saultcollege.ca)