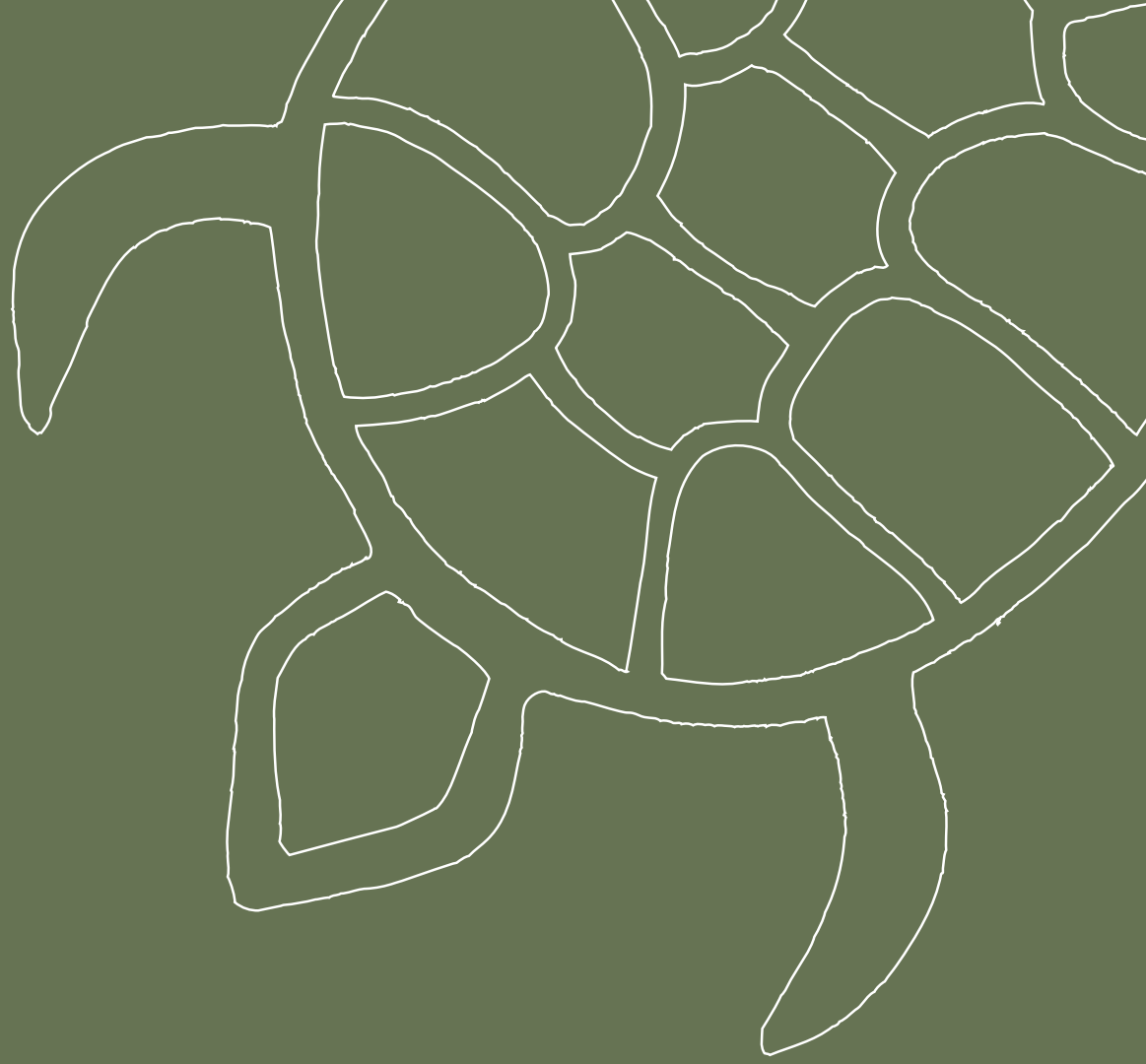


NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020





CHILD CENTRED,
FAMILY FOCUSED,
COMMUNITY DRIVEN.



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MISSION STATEMENT

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto strives to provide a life of quality, well-being, caring and healing for our children and families in the Toronto Native community.

We do this by creating a service model that is culture based and respects the values of Native people, the extended family, and the right to self-determination.





SERVICE MODEL

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) was founded in 1986.

Our service model was developed through four days of ceremony by Aboriginal Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community leaders. It directs us to develop a holistic and sustainable multi-service organization to support the quality of life of Aboriginal children and their families in Toronto. The community that came together to create NCFST was responding to the impacts of residential schooling and a European model of child welfare on Aboriginal children and families. Our service model directs us to develop and deliver integrated services for healing, wellness, and family supports sufficient to provide Aboriginal children and their families with multiple pathways to a quality life. We do this by developing programs and services that are grounded in Aboriginal values, knowledge, best practice and worldview.

2019-2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mae Maracle, President
Dr. Barbara Fallon, Vice-President
Alison Bellaire, Secretary
Dr. Richard Cummings, Treasurer
Heather Levecque, Executive Member
Alain Bartleman
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We entered into this fiscal year, April 2019 to March 2020, with all the expectations of watching Native Child and Family Services of Toronto continue to provide exceptional services to the Aboriginal community of Toronto. The reality has been more than we could have anticipated. NCFST continues to grow and provide excellent culturally grounded service. We say this throughout the fiscal year, and continuing into the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in March of 2020.



Mae Maracle

NCFST is continuing to provide excellent services to the Aboriginal community of Toronto through the continued growth of Holistic services with the new Mdeugaan Lodge, opened on June 24, 2019. We also opened a new Healing and Prevention Centre and continued the design and construction of two new Aboriginal Child and Family Centres that will open next fiscal year in the Malvern and Mount Dennis communities. NCFST continues to place the health and well-being of Aboriginal children and families as a priority in all areas.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Jeffrey Schiffer and the senior staff for their leadership during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Most of our response of recovery to the pandemic will be featured in our next Annual Report.

I want to ensure that all the staff know that the Board of Directors appreciates the continued good work and keeping the focus on the children and families. I also want to thank the community helpers who have been helping to deliver food to the community and the elders who have been providing the virtual culture sessions.

Our Executive Director continues to demonstrate strong leadership through the development of ongoing relationships with community, partners and funders. This year we saw a significant increase in our Holistic Services and early intervention programming due to increased fundraising to support these activities.

I want to thank the Board for the hard work on finances through the Finance committee and the ongoing work of the Governance committee. I also want to thank the Indigenous Spirit Fund Committee as it continues to create a charitable arm of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. All of this work continues even as the Board members learn how to operate in Zoom meetings. Meetings in person are much more enjoyable but we are managing to stay connected through online activity. The Board of Directors believes strongly in the work of NCFST, and will continue to work to ensure the continued good health of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2019-2020 was another year of transition, growth and development for Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. This Annual Report captures the highlights of our work over the past year, clearly demonstrating our commitment to implementing our mission in ways that are Child Centred, Family Focused and Community Driven. As always, it is an honour and a gift to lead and steward the Agency. I am particularly grateful for the work our team has done to continue to rapidly increase our resources available for culturally grounded prevention and early intervention programs and services. During the 2018-2019 year 58% of our budget was spent on Child and Family Well-being and 42% was spent on Holistic Services. This past year we saw that ratio adjusted to 52% spent on Child and Family Well-being and 48% spent on Holistic Services. This is reflective of our consistent work with all three levels of government to increase our capacity to identify the strengths and gifts of children and families, mitigate challenges and risks they may be facing, and work to keep families together.

We continue to reclaim space in Canada's largest urban centre for Aboriginal children and families. As you will read, our increased funding in Holistic Services has enabled us to launch Ontario's first urban healing lodge for Aboriginal women and their children, to open a new Healing and Prevention Centre, and to complete the design and begin construction of two new multi-service Aboriginal Child and Family Centres. As we continue to build these two Aboriginal community hubs we have also developed community advisory circles to co-develop the programming and services we are currently delivering at temporary sites while construction continues.

I am also very excited by the launch of our new Quality Assurance and Decolonization (QAD) team. This team goes beyond the traditional scope of quality assurance, building new internal capacity for our Agency to plan, understand, monitor and evaluate our decolonization of Aboriginal Child and Family Well-being and Holistic Services.

We continue to see significant investments in our back office, as we strengthen Finance, Administration, IT, Facilities and People and Culture to accommodate the growth across the Agency. I have to acknowledge the skill, commitment, and leadership of our executive team, as well as our supervisory and management staff. While our leaders are exceptional, none of our direction could be implemented without the diverse capacities and strengths of our frontline team. Our full circle is strong. We see this clearly reflected in the outcomes of our work over the past year.



Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer

All of this has been put in motion with the support and guidance of an engaged and committed Board of Directors. Together this has led to the development of stronger relationships with sibling agencies and the community members we support, engage and reflect. Perhaps our largest challenge to date came at the end of the 2019-2020 year with the intersecting pandemics of COVID-19, structural racism, and persistent inequality in our communities. Our organizational response to these challenges has been nothing short of epic. While most of our organization response and recovery to COVID-19 and Indigenous and Black solidarity in the face of racism and structural violence will be detailed in our next annual report, I must say that these challenges have brought us closer together across the Agency, with our partners and with community. We will navigate these challenges together, and emerge stronger with new innovations, I am certain.

HOLISTIC SERVICES

SIOBHAN MCCARTHY, DIRECTOR

Holistic Services has experienced a tremendous amount of growth over the past year. Mdewgaan Healing Lodge for women and children opened its doors in September. It is the first urban healing lodge that supports women and their children in their healing journey from mental health and substance issues. A new Healing Centre at 185 Carlton now houses two healing teams as well as Tikinagan, our Pre and Post Natal team. The enhanced relationship with the community has enabled the provision of comprehensive and wrap-around services to more community members across the city. New breakfast and after school programs are helping children attend school well-nourished and prepared to complete homework and engage in physical activity in a supportive and fun environment. The new Anti-Human Trafficking program has educated community members, staff and professionals to recognize the signs of Human Trafficking as well as how to support women and men to exit. While we await construction completion of the Malvern and Mount Dennis sites, two new transitional EarlyON centres have opened in the east and west of the city, providing programming and supporting community events within school settings. It has been my pleasure to work with the talented and committed staff, supervisors and managers who make up the Holistic Services team. They bring their unique gifts to their work which have all served to improve the quality of life for our urban Aboriginal community members.

Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre (SCFLC)

We continue to strengthen and engage community partners such as Scarborough Storefront, University of Toronto Scarborough, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club and Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes. The SCFLC has had very positive interactions with Gabriel Dumont housing over the past year that has led to increased collaboration and service provision to their community members. The Gabriel Dumont housing development is across the street from SCFLC and houses approximately 125 children and their families. We have begun providing programming to their community members through our youth outreach and anti-human trafficking workers.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Culture Nights - 40+ community members attend regularly for dinner, cultural crafts and teachings.
- Winter Solstice - 175+ in attendance. Children received gifts and participated in a variety of activities. Nish Dish catered our event.
- Fall BBQ - 150+ in attendance. It was very well received by the community. Participants engaged in fun activities, face-painting, and prizes. All children received school backpacks packed with supplies.
- New breakfast program started September 2019 where children of all ages could come and have a hot breakfast prior to the start of the school day, and the younger children would be accompanied to school by the staff.
- Increased After School Program (ASP) from 20 to 30 children. This program has a young male staff as support in the program which has resulted in young boys forming a connection and a positive relationship between child and teacher. Staff have reported observing certain children that were withdrawn and not engaged in the program participate more positively. This relationship has increased homework productivity and engagement in play. All the children involved attend Eastview Public School. The ASP curriculum is designed to support the same educational goals that Eastview is working on such as program plans for Science, Culture, Math and Language.

HOLISTIC HEALING SERVICES

Serving 3,295 unique community members

The Holistic Healing Teams have continued to provide ongoing support to children, youth, and families throughout the year. Collaboration between all teams in the agency has increased as the agency has operationalized Aboriginal ways of knowing and being. The use of our Original Talking Circles (OTC) has doubled over the last year. There were 71 active files open for service. The facilitation by our Traditional Elders and conductor has provided a safe space for families to find their voice, identify what they need for their healing, and to be open to a circle of care.

Anti-Human Trafficking Program (New Program)

Our approach, training, outreach, and various circles have given us great insight into what is needed. The two staff members serviced 61 clients for Intensive Case Management and provided 12 training sessions internally and externally. The program has been extended for one year under the Ministry after a very positive evaluation. In addition, the agency was awarded a three-year Trillium grant to expand and enhance our approach.

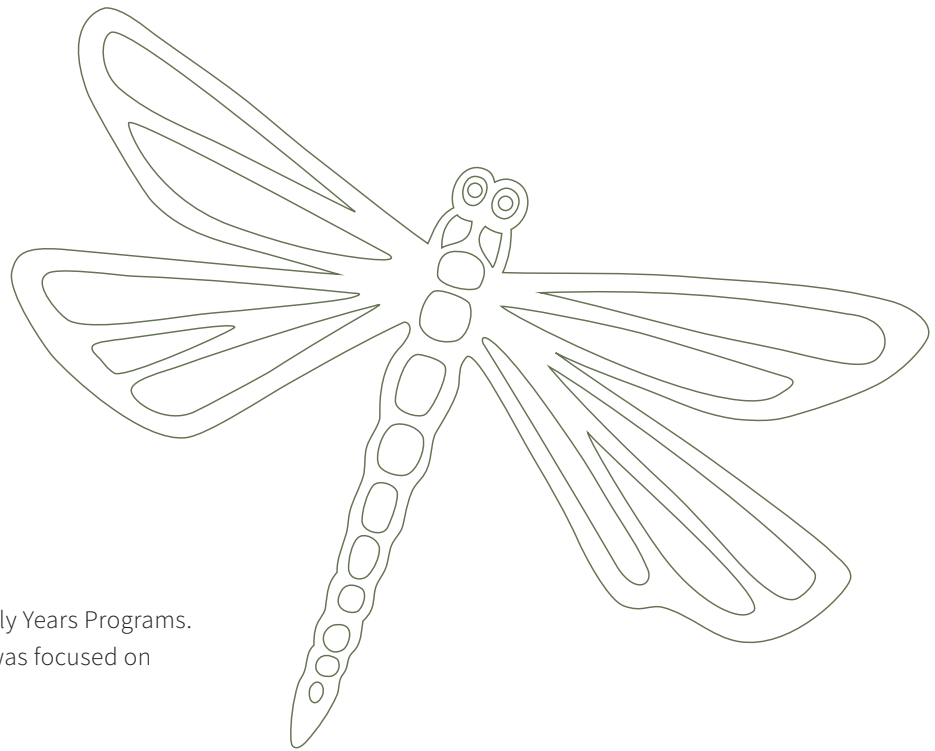
Mdewgaan Lodge (New Program)

This new Women's Healing Lodge opened its doors in September 2019 and there have been many lessons learned in the last year. The second cohort of residents is scheduled to graduate in mid-June. Since its opening, five women and nine children have successfully graduated from the program.

Healing Services

- Staff expanded its services to high-risk community members suffering from addictions and mental health challenges by developing the popular "Reclaiming Our Minds Circle" which focuses on anxiety and depression. The 12-week circle was conducted four times over the last year with an average of eight participants. The 12-week Harm Reduction Circle was conducted twice at the NYRC with an average of 15 participants.
- Youth Mental Health staff conducted the ongoing Creativity Listens Circle for youth who produced two books of photos, stories, poems, and art pieces. These books are being used as an outreach tool and for ongoing circles. The average participation in these circles was 19 youth.
- Mooka'am Clinic continues to provide client-centred individual, family, and group healing for community members. The team has developed expertise in trauma-informed counselling, theraplay, play-based interventions, and traditional approaches. Six staff on this team took part in the year-long Indigenous Focusing Training and will be graduating in June. On average, the team provided services to 180 community members on an ongoing basis.





EARLY YEARS PROGRAMMING

Overall, this has been a year of growth for the Early Years Programs. Our staff worked on team building, and training was focused on culture and On the Lands Play-based teachings.

SCFLC EarlyON

Serving 15 Adults and 18 children

This program has had many successes within the last year. All staff have received on the lands training that provides experiential learning to families. This program has been operated in a limited space that restricted the number of participants in a room due to capacity and safety. This program received funding to improve space/renovations which occurred in February 2020. The new space provided an open-concept design that more closely resembles an early learning classroom setting, allowing for more participants within one space and better functionality.

As the first full year of EarlyON services were provided, the programs were built to reflect Aboriginal seasons and monthly moon teachings. Within each season, new programs were provided:

- Aboriginal languages (Mohawk, Cree, and Ojibway) were taught in partnership with the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.
- Nurturing the Seed, in collaboration with Sick Kids Infant Mental Health Program, was established to study selected families over a 1-year period to gauge child development improvements when early identification tools and resources were supported.
- Summer 2019 saw the development of on-the-land programs. Families were provided with weekly experiential learning through land-based teachings at Glen Rouge, which involved cooking, playing, and living off the land.
- In order to meet the various needs of our participants, the program was in full operation 6 days a week, Monday to Saturday, with 41 hours of programs and services on a weekly basis.

Child and Family EarlyONs

We continue to operate our Aboriginal-led EarlyON hubs in their temporary sites while we await construction completion. Community Councils were established at both EarlyON Hubs. As both Community Councils are new, they are just establishing a sense of each other. One of their roles will be to give input to family programming and events. Malvern's council meets monthly at the Sewells Road housing complex, while Mount Dennis's council meetings are held at Bala Junior Public School. In late fall, both EarlyON Hubs introduced a Child and Youth Worker to their programs; these workers are providing programs and groups to children 7-14 years of age.

The Malvern Child and Family Centre

Serving 120 families with 159 children aged 0-6 and seven children aged 7-14 years.

Engaging our families with Aboriginal culture is the main focal point in all our day-to-day programming. This year, the families experienced field trips to Crawford Lake, Centre Island, and Metro Toronto Zoo along with weekly outings to neighborhood parks. Mobile programming has also continued at Sewells Road and Grey Owl Public School.

The Mount Dennis Child and Family Centre

Serving 91 families with 154 children aged 0-6 and six children aged 7-12.

Providing on-the-land play-based experiences was pivotal to programming for the families in the Mount Dennis area. Blueberry picking, a day at the pumpkin patch, a bus trip to Crawford Lake Provincial Park, along with picnics at Humber River and High Park just to mention a few of the outings.

Staff focused on building partnerships with many of the Mount Dennis community organizations. They hosted a sewing class with the Maamwizdaa community and outreached to the Learning Enrichment Foundation, FoodShare, Wigwamen Housing, and Portage Sr. Public School. At Bala Jr. Public School, we helped with the after school program and planned cultural teachings with the kindergarten classes. A highlight was being invited to participate in the opening ceremonies at the West Lodge Long Term Care home.

Ziishay (Mobile Fathering Program) has served 34 families. Programs offered include Circle of Courage, Napisak (boys group), Circle of Fatherhood, Medicine Wheel guidance, 2-spirited fathering program, and one-on-one help with housing, school, and accessing services. Many of these programs were in partnership with NCFST's Ziishay, NYRC, and the Toronto District School Board.



DRUM MAKING CLASS FOR ABORIGINAL EARLYON AT
SCARBOROUGH CHILD AND FAMILY LIFE CENTRE

Aboriginal Head Start programs

Serving 65 children and their families

- Waabanong (East)
- Shaawnong (South)
- Epnigishmok (West)
- Kiiwednong (North)

These Head Start programs have created language nests which are designed to immerse the children in the Ojibway language by providing a culturally inclusive setting in all four sites. Our *Blueprint Cultural Curriculum* was enhanced to provide more language and cultural programming by purchasing more books, toys, medicines, foods, and music of not only the Ojibway culture but also a diverse representation of all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures.

Aboriginal Child Care Centres

Dundas Kinder Enrichment

Serving 101 children and their families

Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre (SCFLC)

Serving 69 children and their families

Both childcare sites developed strong partnerships with their respective Head Start and EarlyON programs to provide and establish a lifelong learning experience for the whole family. We continued to enrich our Aboriginal Programming with winter and summer solstice ceremonies, Culture Nights, inviting traditional storytellers, and hosting drum- and mitten-making workshops for families and community. Field Trips included land-based teachings to local parks where the children were able to explore the land while building a sense of pride and self-identity. We were able to add a full-time supply Teacher and an Assistant Supervisor to our team this year.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING

SCFLC received funding from Scotiabank to start our own pilot project of the Aboriginal Youth Employment Skills Building Program (AYESBP) for youth ages 16-30, a program that has long operated out of the Native Youth Resource Centre (NYRC). Ten youth were engaged and attending on a regular basis. Youth participated in a variety of training such as first aid, mental health first aid, and the safe food handler's certificate.

The SAGE program is a partnership between City of Toronto Arts and Culture Services/Entrepreneurial Services and SCFLC aimed at engaging Indigenous youth in creative and entrepreneurial programming. This program provides an opportunity for at-risk youth to develop different skill sets to explore their creative talents. The participants reported that by participating in the workshops and lessons, they found a new and more productive way to express themselves and to create something to be proud of. Through this, the program gave them hope for their future, especially for the youth who have not yet completed high school. The youth stated that the skills they learned allowed them to continue to make money by selling their crafts. Youth are reporting that this program gave them the drive and perseverance to do something they didn't expect they could do. They also reported that through SAGE they found a stronger connection to their cultural roots. Twelve youth were engaged through the May to September program and some have chosen to continue on with SAGE II.

SCFLC and NYRC Youth attended two overnight excursions where they were able to go dogsledding and visit a wolf centre as well as participate in treetop trekking. Forty youth attended a trip to Canada's Wonderland and over 150 individuals attended the Toronto Zoo. Fifteen youth participated in our escape room experience and practiced vital communication and problem-solving skills. Youth also attended a fun afternoon participating in a nerf war at Battle Sports. We attended movies and go-carting, Halloween Haunt at Canada's Wonderland and Screamers at the CNE Grounds.



Native Youth Resource Centre (NYRC)

The NYRC has had 5,443 youth visits and served 12, 509 meals. Twelve young women graduated from the Centennial College Office Administration program and 16 students graduated from the Aboriginal Youth Employment Skills Building Program.

Testimonials from Youth served:

“Appreciate workers providing opportunities for growth and development. Also providing aid to any needs I may have such as school, health care, housing etc...”

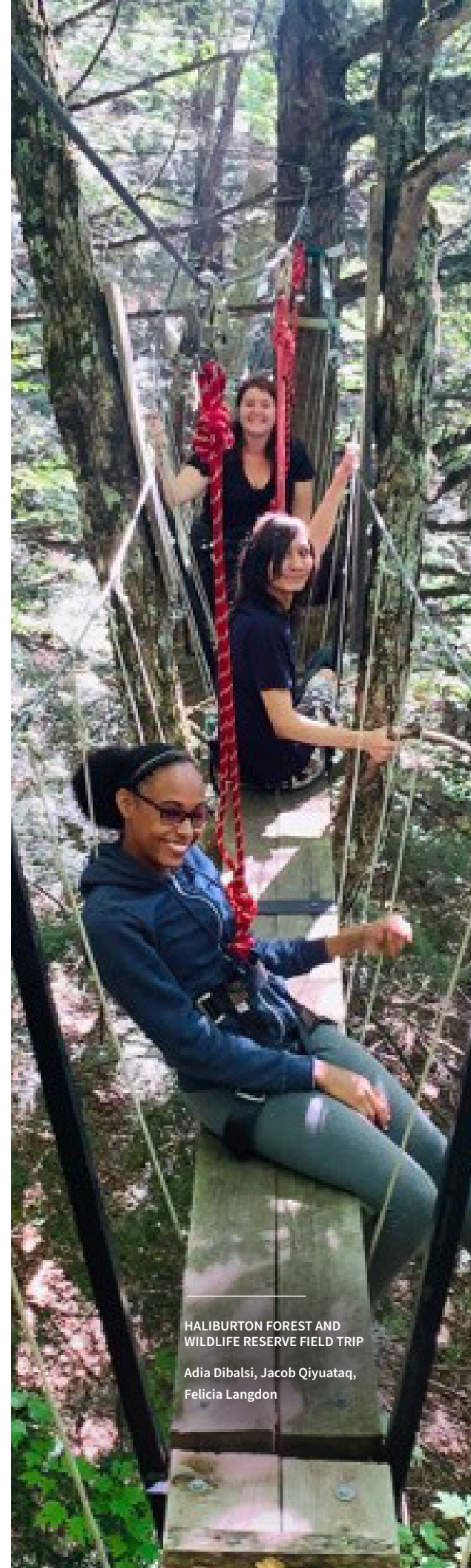
“I appreciate the housing support and making sure I had everything I needed for my new apartment. I’m grateful for my worker calling me regularly, supporting me and being caring at a time in my life when I need it the most. I need a call at least once a week for check-in.”

“I like to have as many supports in place because I have no family. I appreciate the respect they have for me as an individual, I also appreciate the fact they are consistent with me, meeting me halfway throughout all my efforts. As an individual in the community, who is very different from a lot of others, I see myself getting what I need to get done, with the help of the YIT workers because I meet them halfway instead of allowing them to do everything for me. I have no issues nor concerns involving them.”

“Really appreciate the support with everything. I don’t have any suggestions for improvements.”

Transitional Housing

There are five transitional housing programs at NCFST: two for young men and three for young women with their children. The average stay is 18 months, after which community members are supported to move into independent stable housing. This year, 46 young men were provided transitional housing supports and 37 young women were provided transitional housing supports.



HALIBURTON FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESERVE FIELD TRIP

Adia Dibalsi, Jacob Qiyuataq, Felicia Langdon

Day camps:

Campers take part in a wide range of cultural and recreational activities designed to foster team building, leadership, and self-esteem. Children develop physical skills appropriate to their stage of development through structured and unstructured play, indoors and outdoors. The children are exposed to creative experiences in art, music, dramatic play, movement, sensory awareness, emotional awareness, cultural awareness, language, cooking, science, and more. Such activities include nature walks/hiking, learning about plants and medicines, as well as crafts using plants and natural products from the land; sport and recreation such as swimming, rugby, and Métis dancing; excursions to the Science Centre, Toronto Zoo, Royal Ontario Museum, and Petticoat Creek Conservation Park; and workshops such as Métis dot art, tobacco ties, traditional cooking, and hoop dancing from various guest facilitators and community members.

Overnight camp (Camp Grundy):

Overnight summer camps give Aboriginal children and youth the opportunity to learn about their culture and have a positive sense of personal identity and belonging. Our camps operate from a strong cultural base, and as such, common cultural practices such as smudging, talking circles, storytelling, and other teachings are part of daily activities.

Campers learn a variety of cultural, recreational, and leadership skills as they build confidence and make new friends. Exciting and fun activities include overnight canoeing/fishing trips, beach volleyball and other games, swimming, nature trail hikes (may see cranes, turtles, deer and fox), Aboriginal crafts and storytelling, traditional ceremonies, Teaching circles/Elders, and opportunity for campers to sleep in a Teepee (Counselor supervised).

- Scarborough Day Camp - 45 Participants
- Downtown Day Camp - 26 Participants
- Glen Rouge Day Camp - 71 Participants
- Camp Grundy (overnight) - 279 Participants

Testimonials:

“Grundy is always providing new things and living up to my expectations. I learned about who I am and how to protect myself, others and mother earth in new ways. I learned new songs in the sweat lodge and how to make dream catchers.”
– Camper, Teen Camp

“I enjoyed the sweat lodge with the adults...I learned more about the medicine wheel, the 4 seasons and Elements. I looked forward to Circle and group smudge each morning. I enjoyed teachings from facilitators and their sharing of wisdom. New skills learned at camp was plant knowledge as well as learning how to make a shaker and my own personal bundle. Big thank you to Camp Director as he made us feel welcome. Enjoyed his vast knowledge and kindness he extended to us. Camp Lead is very friendly, helpful and took time to talk to us and get to know us; very approachable. And thanks to all camp counsellors.”
– Camper, Family Camp 2

“I loved to gain more knowledge about the Native culture, especially loved the crafts and the knowledge and history shared by [some of the staff/facilitators]... I will always remember.”
– Camper, Family Camp 1

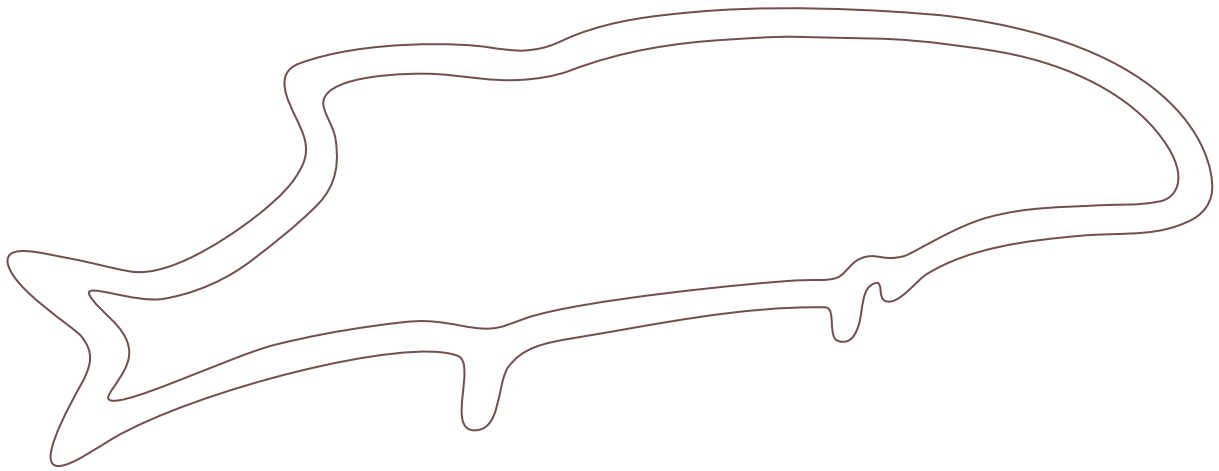
CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

DAVID VAN OVERDIJK, DIRECTOR

The Child and Family Well-being portfolio encompasses a number of direct service teams and programs all working together to deliver services that are grounded in culture and reflective of our service model. Our service model speaks to the need to strengthen and keep whole the families that we are privileged to serve.

Our Child and Family Well-being teams continue to engage with families using a generic approach, a model of service provision that was developed after a reconciliation process with community child welfare recipients. Our long term children's service and resource teams saw exceptional feedback from the Ministry's extended society care/licensing review.

While we did experience a slight increase in our child 'in care' numbers, this can be attributed to our service provision to 16 & 17-year-old youth through Voluntary Youth Service Agreements (VYSAs). The increase also comes from 'living up' to commitments made by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Society's (OACAS) own reconciliation process and transfers of Aboriginal children in the care of the Catholic Children's Aid Society (Toronto).



This was the first full year of implementation for our Tikinagan Pre and Post Natal team. The team's development and continued success are based on community engagement and feedback related to the services and supports that these community members - primarily women - require to successfully parent their infants and children.

Our Family Finding team (also recently developed) saw by mid-September a total of 36 kin located, with six of these offering permanency and with others able to provide respite and long-term family connections.

Our Band Engagement worker, by the end of January, had visited over 30 First Nations throughout Ontario. With the enactment of Bill C-92, these visits have led to the beginnings of discussions about protocol development regarding how NCFST will work with individual Bands when providing Child and Family Well-being services to their respective community members residing in Toronto.

This year also saw the development of a brand new collaborative initiative that was launched in late October. The Ode'I Min Health Clinic, run weekly out of our 30 College location, was developed in partnership with the Inner City Health Authority (ICHA), NCFST's Family Supports team, and supported by Toronto Public Health. The care team includes Traditional Knowledge keepers; Dr. Suzanne Shoush, an Indigenous Primary Care Physician; and Toronto Public Health nurses. This clinic has far exceeded all initial expectations and continues to grow.

I would like to conclude this report by acknowledging all of our staff, across the department, who have done some absolutely amazing work with our families, children, and youth. Without them, we could not have achieved the kinds of incredible outcomes as reflected in Ashley's story.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 92% of children and youth served through our Child and Family Well-being teams remain with their immediate/extended families following an initial assessment of concerns. Of those requiring alternative care, 79% are discharged within 36 months.
- As per our publically reported performance indicators, only 5% of our youth are residing in a group care setting with the vast majority placed in family-based care settings.
- 260 individuals and 156 families served by our Tikinagan team.
- 30 children and youth that required alternative care were placed in a Kin out of care home.
- Through the expansion of the age of protection to 18 years, 10 youth have been engaged and serviced through the provision of a VYSA.

ASHLEY'S STORY

'Ashley' is an amazing 25-year-old woman from a First Nation in northern Ontario. She is strong and determined. Her strength comes from a resilience she continues to demonstrate after bearing witness to family violence and substance misuse within her family as a child. She was exposed to many maladaptive coping mechanisms in group homes including grooming. Her childhood trauma led to self-harm and other addictive behaviors. Her father and sister both have passed on to the spirit world due to addictions.

Family violence and progressive substance misuse led to her own children being brought into care in 2014. Trauma continued to impact her choices and in 2019 she partnered with a violent man with an addiction to crystal meth. Ashley informed Child and Family Well-being in July 2019 that she was pregnant.

Ashley shared her plan to parent and wanted to mitigate child welfare concerns. In August, her Child and Family Well-being worker spoke with her about a pre and post natal team that was newly launched: Tikinagan. Ashley, covering a black eye and shielding her self-harm scars, met with the Tikinagan Supervisor. She shared that she was homeless (mostly sleeping at McDonald's) and wanted to begin to work on housing. She also stated she was aware that she would need to address her addictions and trauma.

Tikinagan services were deployed. Challenges presented quickly, such as gaps in services or poorly developed systems: No beds in shelters, long housing waitlist, rigid prenatal housing programs with strict qualifying parameters such as age, sobriety, lack of culturally safe care, house rules... The barriers were insurmountable, yet Ashley showed up determined every day. The circumstances in her relationship complicated her substance misuse. Despite this, she showed up numerous times to hospitals asking for support for her addiction, only to be sent away with no support. In the fall, she attended several different addiction-specific programs for pregnant women, but the lack of culturally-aware services threatened to deviate Ashley from her goal. But she made a good attempt with the system and lasted five days in a mainstream residential treatment program:

Ashley's life continued to be marred by her addiction issues and resulted in a violent episode in November 2019 where she was robbed and beaten by her partner. That evening, with the help of Tikinagan staff, she was able to secure emergency shelter at Anduhyau. Unfortunately, in December, as Ashley continued to struggle, her newborn baby was brought into care given the lack of any Kin alternative.

“ I want to be with my people that understand me and use my culture as a way to guide me through this. I really want to stay in Toronto and be close to my supports at NCFST.”

From that moment on, Ashley's life shifted. Her partner was picked up for a petty crime and other warrants and he was incarcerated. Ashley's circle of care team, including Child and Family Well-being and Tikinagan staff, was soon to be expanded to include staff from our own Mdeewgaan Lodge as Ashley entered and completed their pre-treatment program. She moved into the residential program in February 2020. Mdeewgaan staff continued to work with her to help her manage her frustrations and adapt their approach in ways that empowered, supported, and helped her heal the way she wanted and needed. She has maintained her sobriety, and in March 2020, her son was returned to her care at the Lodge.

Ashley taught everyone on her care team so much and reminded all that as Indigenous people, to be proud of who you are. Even if you are sleeping at McDonald's, we must praise our accomplishments for taking a step every day to grow and to change. She taught us all to be adaptable like the beaver and have the wisdom to deploy our services in ways that reflect our beliefs as Indigenous people. She reminded many people that she is homeless and uses substances but that we must honour her for being a water carrier. We have a role to protect our women in our communities, not to shame them. Ashley demonstrates daily courage as she continues on her healing journey while being an excellent parent to her young son.

By: Cathy Punnett - Supervisor, Tikinagan Pre and Post Natal Support Services



PLAY ROOM AT MDEWGAAN LODGE

The finance team has made great progress in the budgeting and reporting process. Our accounting team also looked for an improved way to process our accounts payable invoices to make the entire workflow more streamlined and better for the accounting team, as well as to provide a better way for anyone else that needs to approve, review or access our vendor invoices and payments. We have found a solution in a software called Sage APA. Sage APA allows us to keep all our invoices in the cloud, so they are accessible at all times, and also will allow our approvers to give their approval on invoices and payments from anywhere they have an internet connection. Sage AP Automation has been implemented and has eliminated lost invoices, slow approvals on invoices and payments, and the complex manual approval workflow.

Team members in the IT area are fully committed to digital transformation to solve problems in a new, fast and frequently changing technology landscape. Centred around the children and communities we serve, IT aims to reduce the technical physical footprint and become more cloud-based to allow for greater continuity of the services and programs we support.

Just to highlight a couple of initiatives, IT has been able to remotely connect, troubleshoot and perform system updates through newly acquired technology. Significant strides have been made on modernizing our network infrastructure to address cloud readiness, outdated equipment, patch level redundancy, high availability, security risk, and bottlenecks. The immediate response increased our VPN, remote access capabilities, WIFI, instant chat and video conferencing technologies.

Service desk optimization was among the highest IT priorities including escalation processes, rule-based ticket allocation, user progress notifications, and the alignment of the service management process with the newly implemented ticketing system. IT policies and procedures including our IT security policy have been revised and improved. Cybersecurity insurance has also been put in place. In addition, centralized monitoring, alerting, patching, remote deploy, and remote assistance solutions for computer, server and network assets were implemented in 2019-2020. New anti-virus, malware, data loss, zero-day attacks, and data rights protections are currently and progressively taking place via Microsoft and Cisco.

We also acknowledge and recognize the considerable work accomplished by the Facilities Team. In May 2019, NCFST purchased a property at 185 Carlton Street for a clinical hub. All the renovations have been completed and teams moved in the fall. A 5,000 square foot residential building was purchased in March 2020 for use as our third Women's Transition House. Repairs were made, rooms were furnished and the house was set up in one week to receive women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The home can house up to six women.

NCFST currently has three active projects. Active projects are those which have been approved, for which building permits have been applied or issued, and/or which are under construction. Building permits were received and construction started for the two new EarlyON hubs in January 2020. We have also signed off on a lease for the Integrated Team at 3785 Kingston with a possession date of June 15, 2020.

NCFST engaged Northern Supply Chain (NSC) to lead several large procurement initiatives to assist us in complying with Ministry directives. NSC provides procurement services to all Ontario Children's Aid Societies.

FUNDING

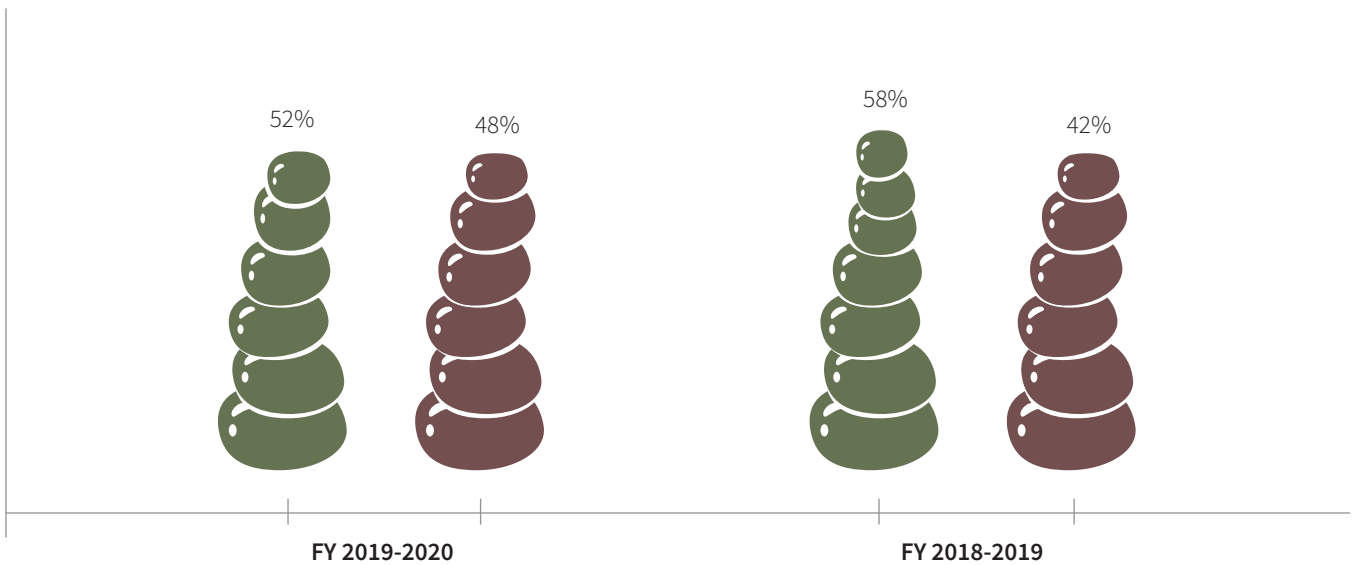
Funding for fiscal 2019-2020 has increased by 16% compared to the prior year mainly due to increased level of funding received from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), City of Toronto and Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy resulting in a 6% increase in preventive services provided by the organization.

Total funding for fiscal 2019-2020 was \$41,268,847 that includes Child and Family Well-being funding of \$21,349,624 and Holistic Services funding of \$19,919,223.

	% of Total Funding		
	FY 2019-2020	FY 2018-2019	Variance
Total Child and Family Well-being	52%	58%	-6%
Total Holistic Services	48%	42%	6%
	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%

% of Total Funding

■ Total Child and Family Well-being
 ■ Total Holistic Services



The comparative total in fiscal year of 2018-2019 was \$35,578,364 that included Child and Family Well-being funding of \$20,564,046 and Holistic Services funding of \$15,014,318.

FY 2019-2020

	Total Funding	Expenditures	Net Funding
Child and Family Well-being	21,349,624	21,332,029	17,595
Total Child and Family Well-being	21,349,624	21,332,029	17,595
Children’s Mental Health and Family Well-being	5,075,819	5,085,428	-9,608
Scarborough Enhancement, Bala and Malvern Hubs	2,393,913	2,537,438	-143,525
Organizational Enhancement	2,047,712	2,047,712	0
Transitional Housing	1,768,743	1,720,749	47,994
Pre and Post Natal	1,495,511	1,474,631	20,880
Admin	1,452,946	863,385	589,561
Day Care	1,290,686	1,504,512	-213,826
Head Start	1,258,756	1,243,026	15,730
Youth	1,232,809	1,485,736	-252,928
Prevention Services	720,031	739,308	-19,277
Social Recreation	676,795	679,637	-2,842
Scarborough	383,246	411,876	-28,629
Culture	63,970	68,835	-4,865
Before and After School Dundas	58,286	58,286	0
Total Holistic Services	19,919,223	19,920,560	-1,337
	\$41,268,847	\$41,252,589	\$16,258

OVERVIEW

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Child and Family Well-being revenue has increased by 4% in 2019-20. Program costs increased by \$840,996 compared with 2018-2019 due to increases related to staff costs, travel, and technology costs.

HOLISTIC SERVICES

Holistic Services funding increased in this fiscal year by \$4.9 million mainly from deferral of funding from Indigenous Services Canada that funded infrastructure and Pre and Post Natal supports in 2019-20 and program costs increased by \$5.2 million.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Total Children's Mental Health and Family Well-being funding increased by \$283,060 over the prior year due to increased fiscal funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy. Total program costs increased by \$383,671 compared with the prior year due to increased staff costs and program related costs.

YOUTH

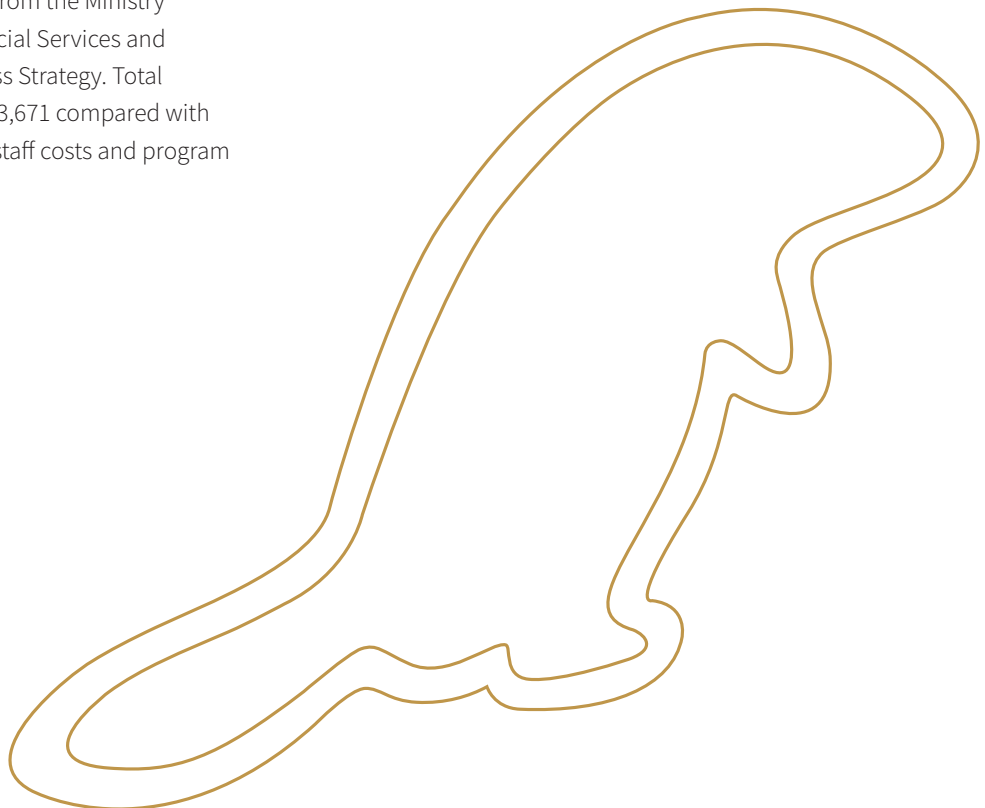
Total youth funding for the fiscal year 2019-20 decreased by \$171,009 and total program costs increased slightly compared with the prior year.

SOCIAL RECREATION

Total Social Recreation funding increased by \$11,397 and program costs increased by \$8,361.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Total Transitional Housing funding for the fiscal year 2019-2020 increased nominally by \$28,437 due to additional supports from the City of Toronto through the Supports to Native Transition House Project. Total program costs decreased by \$20,572 due to decreased staff costs and direct program costs compared with the prior year.



HEAD START

Total Head Start funding for fiscal year of 2019-2020 decreased slightly by 7%, and direct program costs decreased by 10% compared with the prior year due to eligible expenditure restrictions from Public Health Canada.

CORE

Total Core funding increased \$1,048,041 for fiscal year 2019-2020 due to new funding from the Journey Together program from the City of Toronto and new funding from Indigenous Services Canada and Ontario Art Council for Indigenous Culture programs compared with fiscal year 2018-2019. Total program costs also increased \$948,453 due to increased staff costs and direct program costs compared with the prior year.

ADMINISTRATION

Total administration funding increased by \$624,028. Total program costs for the fiscal year 2019-2020 increased by \$423,661 due to higher level of salary and benefit expenses compared with the prior year.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE

DEBORAH KYRZAKOS, DIRECTOR

The People and Culture mandate is to develop and build strong relationships with our staff by providing strategic insight into people and cultural solutions.

Work continues in the areas of developing and strengthening sustainable strategies in Recruitment, Onboarding, Learning and Development, Succession Planning, Performance Management, and Employee and Labour Relations, with a strong emphasis on culture and communications within each program area at every level of the Agency. We actively recruit on various Aboriginal websites and at Job Fairs; this past fiscal year, the Agency participated in four Job Fairs. Furthermore, we participate in placement programs where we focus on placing Aboriginal youth in positions that are culturally grounded within the Agency. They have been placed in such positions as Youth Drop In Worker, Summer Camp Coordinator, Camp Counsellor and Cultural Infrastructure support positions.

OUR STAFFING STRUCTURE

299

Total number of employees

The staffing complement has increased by 20%, from 238 staff in 2018-2019 to 299 staff in 2019-2020. The staff increase is primarily in the areas of Holistic Services and Child and Family Well-being. Of the 299 staff, 19.5% (58 staff) are contract.

58

Contract employees

Overall

57%

self-identified as Aboriginal

Overall

50%

of management staff self-identified as Aboriginal



48% of the budget funds positions supporting Holistic Services.

52% of the budget funds positions supporting Child and Family Well-being.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CULTURE

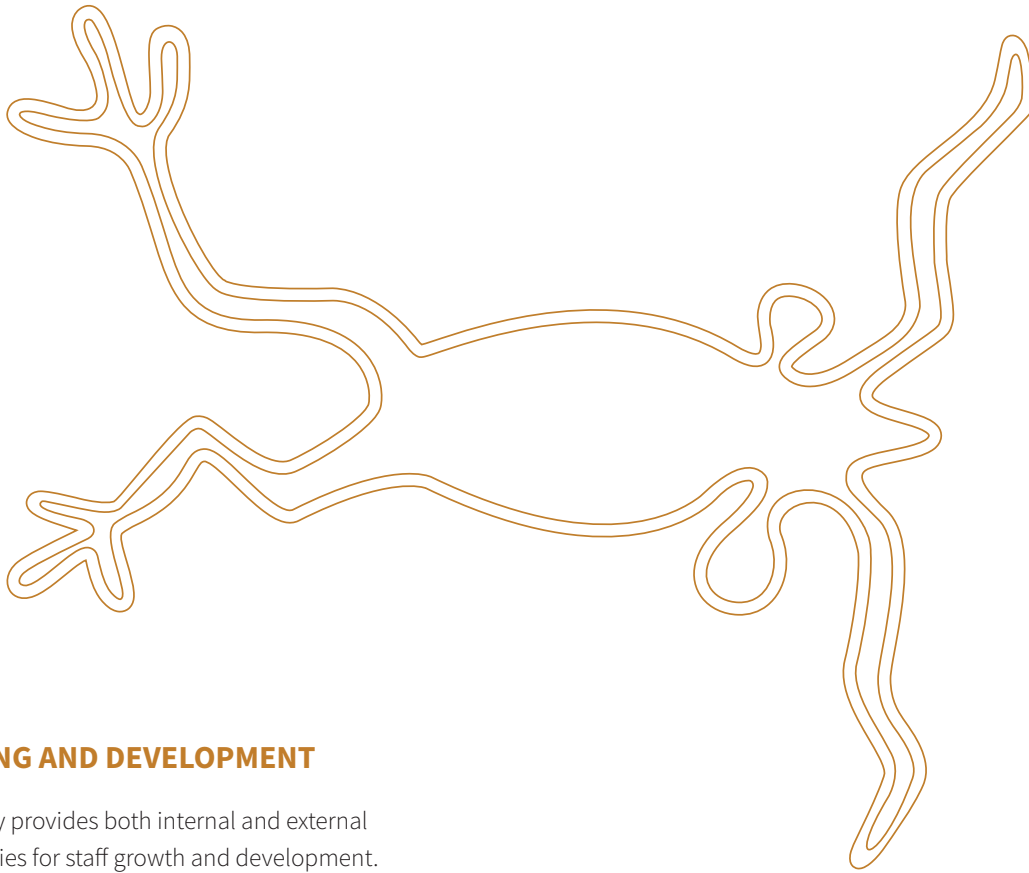
We are very excited about the creation of two new departments that are specifically designed to provide a greater reach and connection so we can serve and meet the needs of families and the community in the best way possible.

The newly created Communications Department works to build public awareness and enhance the agency's presence through marketing and appropriate cultural branding. The first initiative completed was to redesign and create a new website that reflects NCFST's mission and values and an Aboriginal worldview. This new redesign will provide families and community members with an easier method of finding information and a newly updated platform to promote further online engagement.

The newly created Culture Department has focused on building capacity within the team and has begun implementing methods to better support staff and diverse cultural practices. This work will continually be rooted in the strategic direction of the organization to enhance our capacity to deliver a range of wraparound cultural services. Cultural safety will be an ongoing and integral process in order for the Agency to strengthen working relationships, promote healing and resilience, and deepen relationships between families and their workers. These ongoing initiatives will continuously evolve based on the needs of the Agency and continued engagement with staff, families and community members.

Over the past year, the Culture Department facilitated the following events and ceremonies: Original Talking Circles; Cultural Consults with staff; Direct Cultural Supports for community members; Full Moon Ceremonies; Women's and Men's Purification Lodge Ceremonies; reunification of children with their biological families; Honoring Ceremonies, Pre and Post Natal Teachings and Ceremonies; Pipe Ceremonies; Spirit Name teachings and ceremonies; and Agency Eagle Staff and Drum Ceremonies.



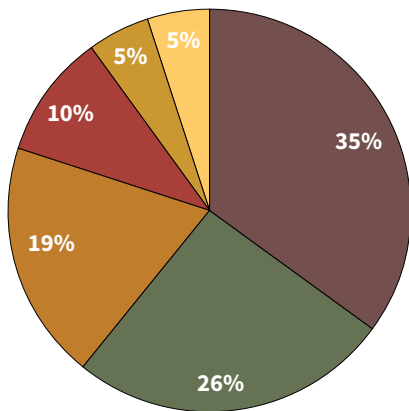


LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

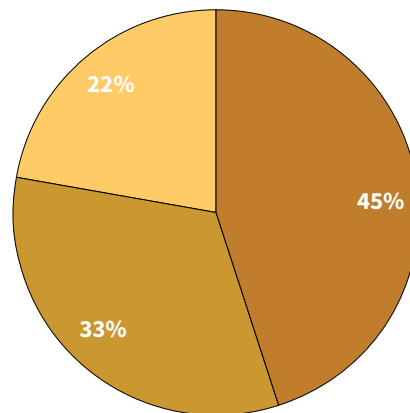
The Agency provides both internal and external opportunities for staff growth and development.

Staff that engage in continuous learning are better able to meet the challenge of change in the Agency and this continues to build capacity. The training distribution for 2019-2020 was as follows:

Learning and development were delivered in several mediums:



- 35% attended by Child and Family Well-being staff
- 26% attended by Holistic Services staff
- 19% attended by Early Years staff
- 10% attended by Youth Services staff
- 5% attended by Administrative staff
- 5% attended by Executive staff



- 45% of staff attended in-house training
- 33% of staff attended external training
- 22% of staff participated in online training

Much of the training delivered in-house incorporates Aboriginal teachings to ensure that service delivery is steeped in culture. Some Aboriginal learning and development opportunities that staff participated in were:

- Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (18 days)
- Indigenous Tools for Living
- Band Engagement
- National Elders Gathering Reconciliation, Revitalization of our Culture and Language, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Climate Change (Winnipeg)
- Indigenous Child & Family Well-Being Conference
- Holistic Approach to Family Violence
- A History of Violence; Healthy Sexual Development; Sex Trafficking
- Human Trafficking on a Spectrum; Safety Planning; Cultural Intervention
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)
- Bill C-92: An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families SC 2019, c 24
- Annual Cultural Renewal

CULTURAL RENEWAL

The 2019 Cultural Renewal focus was on Decolonization at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, and this was delivered to most of the staff in the Agency.

The day consisted of Teachings delivered by Turtle Concepts, Joe Brown and in-house Knowledge Keepers from the Culture Team. The Renewal also included Sweat Ceremonies.

Teachings by Turtle Concepts

- Skill Building Based on Colonization
- How History Affected Socialization
- Connecting Culture to Identity

Teachings by Joe Brown

- Cultural Sensitivity and the Rotinonhsyonni Traditions

The overall feedback was praise for a well-delivered program that served to reinforce the NCFST mission and values. Comments received in the feedback as significant takeaways included:

“The reinforcement that we are resilient people and we can do anything we set our minds to.”

“For me, the takeaway was the reinforcement of language and how important it is for individuals to learn and embrace their own. Joe’s talk has inspired me to learn the languages that I have lost.”

“I was able to get perspective on where I am today and how I’m to look forward for much-needed changes!”

Peaceful Relations

Teachings were delivered by Dr. Phil Lane Jr., Diane Longboat, Little Brown Bear, Laini Lacalles and in-house Knowledge Keepers.



FEAST TABLE AT MDEWGAAN LODGE OPENING

ABORIGINAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In addition, the Agency partnered with Toronto Aboriginal Support Services (TASSC) where an Indigenous Consultant was hired to develop and create content/curriculum for Aboriginal Leadership and Management level staff. This program will be rolled out in the 2020-2021 fiscal year and is designed to onboard new and existing management workforce.

IFOT (INDIGENOUS FOCUSING-ORIENTED THERAPY) TRAINING PROGRAM

This past year, we were very excited to introduce the Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) Training Program. In order to graduate from this program, each participant needs to complete seven modules that consist of 21 full days. The Agency expects to see 18 staff graduate from this program.

Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP) is increasingly recognized as essential to interventions that support the preventative work that keeps Indigenous families together and out of the child welfare system. There are few TIP programs in Canada that have been developed by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people, and IFOT is one of those programs. It is anticipated that by training and developing practitioners in Indigenous TIP across our agency, we will further prevent the apprehension of Aboriginal children and promote well-being amongst community members.

The IFOT Training Program is a clinical program taught to counsellors, therapists, front-line workers, and others across Canada. IFOT is associated with concrete preventative outcomes in dozens of Indigenous communities across Canada and the United States. Becoming certified in IFOT will increase the capacity of staff to work with community members, while also contributing to their own professional development.

INDIGENOUS TOOLS FOR LIVING (ITFL)

In addition to IFOT, we also introduced Indigenous Tools for Living Training (ITFL). This is a three-day training on how to work with and sit beside complex trauma. The training was attended by 32 staff. Our goal is to continue to build internal capacity, and two staff were identified to become internal trainers.

This training was specifically designed for front-line non-clinical workers in social work, victim services, first responders, and similar professions. It was facilitated by instructors and Elders from the Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy Program and was clinically supervised.

ITFL emphasizes knowledge and application through classroom instruction, applied scenario-based learning, and clinical practice and supervision (when taught to clinicians). A variety of Aboriginal treatment modalities are woven throughout, including experiential exercises, storytelling, ceremonial processes, and land-based healing techniques. Together, these provide concrete tools and approaches for working with complex trauma in ways that avoid burnout and triggering, while at the same time maximizing impact and achieving better outcomes.



FUTURE GROWTH

The Agency recognizes the importance of a growth mindset, particularly as we continue to culturally transform. We will engage employees in a productive way, build cultural capacity, and accelerate learning and development with a goal to service families and youth in a way that is meaningful and purposeful for them.

This year was one of growth: We were successful with increasing our Aboriginal staffing workforce and we were very excited to have introduced some significant development opportunities. We introduced a number of new program areas of cultural development in Indigenous Therapy and Leadership, and as we continue to grow, our focus will be on recruiting and developing staff so that they are able to meet the needs of the Aboriginal families, youth, and community we serve.



MDEWGAAN LODGE OPENING
Suze Morrison, Siobhan McCarthy,
Alita Sauve, Jeffrey Schiffer, Kristyn Wong-Tam

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DECOLONIZATION

MARK ATANSOFF, DIRECTOR

In May of 2019 the previously inactive Quality Assurance department at NCFST was reactivated, refocused and renamed Quality Assurance and Decolonization (QAD).

A decolonized focus to the work is requiring us to question current practice standards, structures and processes, by investigating their evidence base and outcomes, and proposing new innovations that replace aspects of the current system with practices and approaches grounded in Aboriginal worldview as reflected through our service model. To support our work here three program evaluations were started in 2019 and continued into 2020: the NCFST Medical clinic, the Tikinagan Pre and Post Natal team and the newly formed Family Finding team.

The newly formed QAD department quickly made working groups with both the IT department and funding and finance departments to ensure integrity in data collection and timely reporting for funded programs. During this time period, the QAD department also took on responsibility for training and implementing the new practice standards set out in Part X of the CYFSA which spells out increased reporting and tighter time lines for the collecting, storing and disclosing of an individual's personal information by mandated child and family wellbeing agencies as well as children's mental health providers. The QAD department also took on responsibility of vetting all external research partnership requests and began to establish criteria for all agency research proposals.

At the tail end of the fiscal year NCFST hired its first Director of Quality Assurance and Decolonization to further support the excellent work being performed by the department.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

KENN RICHARD, NCFST FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

Indigenous Spirit Fund: A Fund for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children, Youth and their Families

Last year we were proud to present our first report on the Indigenous Spirit Fund. The Fund, a long-ago-dream, finally came to life and represents the first initiative of its kind – one that is designed to engage Canadians on collaborative and concrete actions that bring Reconciliation to life. We reported that we were staking our ground and beginning the process of nurturing productive relationships of benefit to families, sometimes where relationships have not existed before.

We were especially pleased to continue our strong relations with the Toronto Foundation and the community it serves. The energy expressed by CEO Sharon Avery and her staff, as they worked so hard to connect our fledgling fund to a generous donor, lifted us up when we needed encouragement. Their Trust Collective, of which we are a part, is congruent in all ways with Indigenous cultural views on gender relations. We are pleased to both learn and teach within this progressive experiment in community building.



This year found us making profound decisions in establishing our identity in a visual way. A logo expressing our unique mission proved a challenge, as we sought to fly higher than the conventional and clichéd representations of Indigenous enterprise that persist. Looking at the logo on which we successfully landed, you will see an Indigenous child with a spontaneous expression of spirit. Backgrounding the child are elemental expressions of the Anishinaabe Star Blanket, a highly significant expression of gratitude, pride and hope. We acknowledge the good work of Aardvark Inc., their know-how, and for being patient as we sorted it out. The result feels just right.

We also want to acknowledge our ongoing friendships with Chris Lee, Bill Wong, and Sharifa Khan who once again presented the Chris Lee Golf Classic in support of our summer camps program. This event is significant in ensuring our camp can continue to provide equal access to kids who need the summer camp experience. We recognize that this initiative comes to us from Toronto's Chinese community and wish to acknowledge the good relations we share.

The past year also saw us roll out our Sharing Hearts; Building Bones community engagement series; an informal talk on the condition of Indigenous children today. Kenn Richard, ISF Director with over forty years of experience, tells a compelling story of his journey in the service of Indigenous children and their families. Followed by a light Indigenous meal, the talk is designed to foster enhanced relations between the ISF and potential supporters. It is now also available virtually and we welcome requests to present to all who are interested in the good and welfare of Indigenous children.

Finally, we wish to publicly thank the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto for generously granting a portion of the proceeds of the Teddy Bear Affair to our Fund. They recognized the action component of Reconciliation and we look forward to continued collaborations to the benefit of our community.

At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic is compromising many, including our initial plans to publicly launch the ISF with an in-person celebration of Indigenous Spirit. As appropriate, we have pivoted towards an electronic launch, which should be coming in fall 2020. The current disruption caused by the virus may represent an opportunity to change the charitable sector in ways previously unimagined.

We are hopeful.

For more information, to get involved, or to donate, contact Kenn Richard, Director, Indigenous Spirit Fund, at krichard@nativechild.org.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

ALFDC - Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle Funding
Canada Council for the Arts
Children's Aid Foundation of Canada
City of Toronto, Children's Services
City of Toronto, Arts and Culture Services
City of Toronto, Employment and Social Services
City of Toronto, Hostel Services
City of Toronto, Housing Stability Policy & Strategic Investments
City of Toronto, Social Development, Finance and Administration
City of Toronto, SSHA, Homeless Partnership Strategy
Family Services of Peel
Hydro One
Indigenous Services Canada (former INAC)
Kinark Child and Family Services
Métis Nations of Ontario
Ministry for Women and Gender Equality
Ministry of Canadian Heritage
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services /IHWS
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services /PATCO
Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG)
Ministry of Tourism , Culture and Sport
Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training
Ontario Arts Council
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Public Health Agency of Canada
Ryerson University
Scotiabank
Service Canada / Government of Canada
The Toronto Star
Tippet Foundation
Toronto Arts Council
Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN)
Toronto Foundation
Toronto Public Health
United Way Toronto & York Region
YMCA of Greater Toronto



CANADA'S WONDERLAND FIELD TRIP
Jaylne Michael, Jacob Qiyuataq,
Lezah Flynn, Cora Lentinello, Michael Ellis,
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