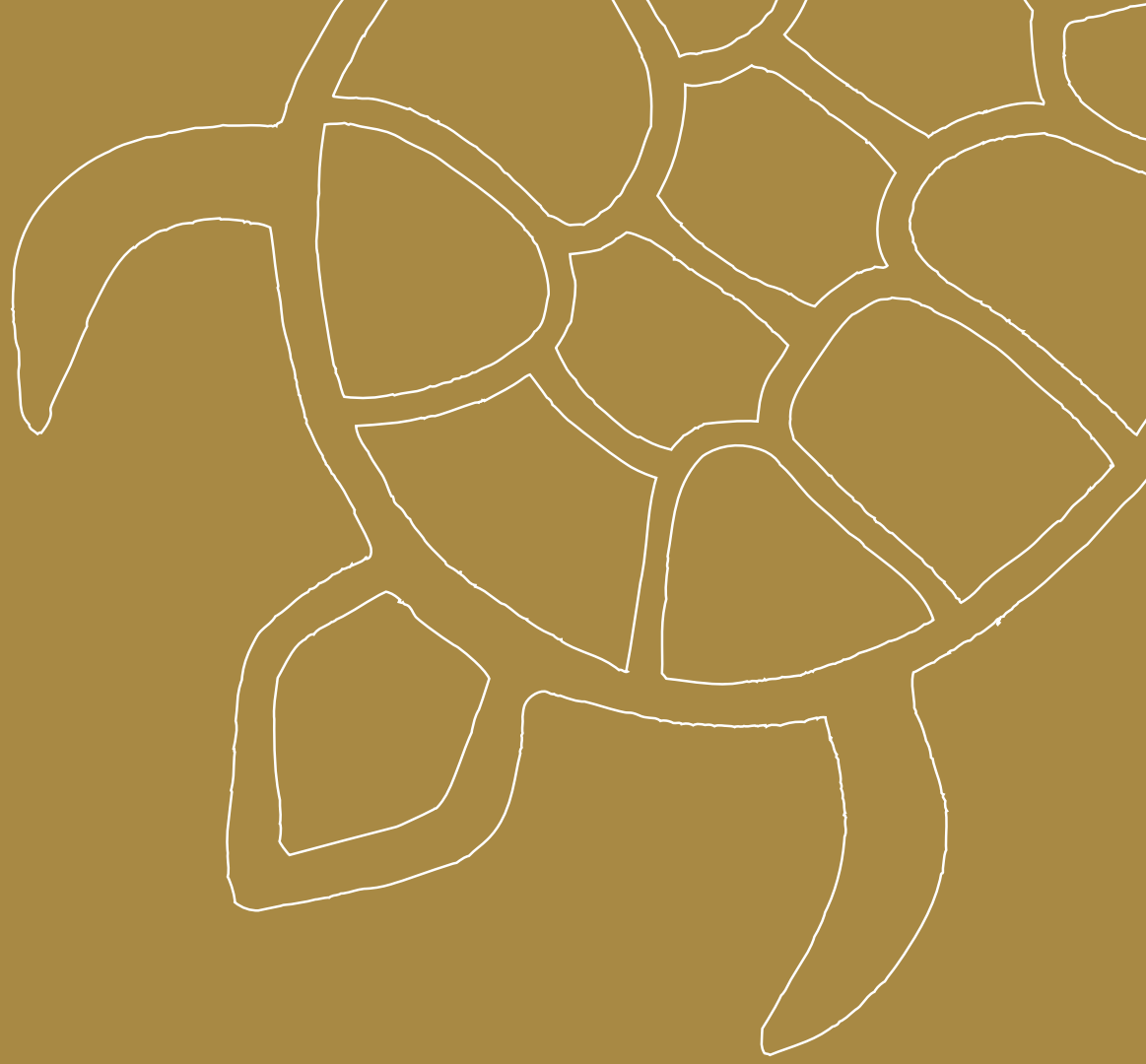


NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021





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.

2020-2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mae Maracle, President
Dr. Barbara Fallon, Vice-President
Dr. Richard Cummings, Treasurer
Heather Levecque, Secretary
Alain Bartleman
Lise Chabot
Stephen Lindley
Kaitlind Peters
Robert Pruitt
Erica Riley
Tanya Rumble
Bryan Winters

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND WELLNESS

Aanii Boozhoo Gizhe Manidoo,

Miigwech maanda gaamiizhang Mino Bimaadiziwan. Chi miigwech maampii eninkii'yang maaampii Binojiinh Gamik. Daabiwezenmigo maanda giizhgak wiikwanmang maampii enkijjik miinwa ogimaajik wena wiigenaanmoyang miinwa wiikowanmang ninda binojii'ik miinwa indoodemik. Daabawezenmigo wiinaandeyang miinwa mingaaneyang maanda enenmang, niyaw miinwa jibay megowa wiinaandegizad miinwa wiiminaaneyad gaynawa maampii Anishinaabec endaajik. Mii maanda ebiwezenmigo maanda giizhgak.

Kina Nindaawenmajik,

Miigwech

Greetings Creator,

Thank you for the Good Life that you have given to us. We thank you for the work that we do at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. We ask you this day to watch over the management and workers that work together for the care and protection of our children and families. We ask you for the healing and wellness of our minds, bodies, and spirits as we work toward the healing and wellness of our Indigenous community. This is our prayer today.

All My Relations,

Thank you

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mae Maracle

Another year has passed, and it has been a very interesting year. A year of learning how to work from home, how to operate at zoom meetings and how to stay connected to all the various people in our lives.

As a Board we were so accustomed to meeting once a month in the boardroom at 30 College. It did not take us long to get used to the new normal during this pandemic. We learned how to hold constructive meetings online and to continue to support the good work of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST).

During this year as Board members, we attended the All Agency Circles that were held for staff so that we could understand what some of the difficulties might be for staff working in a vastly different environment.

We also attended a virtual Christmas party for the children in care at NCFST. I did not attend virtually but I did receive a kit for making a gingerbread house. This was the first time I have ever made a gingerbread house and I worked with my sister to complete it. I could see how this simple process can be great fun and teaching moment for families.

We attended the virtual opening of the Mino Bimaadiziwin Healing and Prevention Centre, and the Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre. Even during a virtual coming together, ceremony is important.

The launch of the Indigenous Spirit Fund, the fundraising committee of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto was another virtual gathering that had a good reach and impact on the broader community. Awards were presented to some of the youth, and I was happy to be able to be part of the show announcing the award winners. It is interesting that even during COVID-19 restrictions there are ways to gather and honour the community members.

The work of the Board was ongoing. The Finance committee dealing with the ongoing finances of NCFST, insurance, the financial audit, risk management and cyber security. I want to thank Dr. Richard Cummings for his leadership of this committee and Stephen Lindley, Lise Chabot and Robert Pruitt for ensuring they made time to attend and contribute to this work.

The Governance committee has been active this year. It had before it the hard task of reviewing the bylaws of NCFST and ensuring that they were updated and in step with the current operations. They also had to ensure that the Supplementary Letters Patent had been updated. Native Child and Family



Services of Toronto has changed a lot since these Letters Patent and Bylaws were updated in 2008 and the Board members worked hard along with the Executive Director and our legal advisors to accomplish this task. I would like to thank Alain Bartleman for his leadership in starting this huge task and Heather Levecque for ensuring that the job was finished in a timely manner. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer, Executive Director for his work with our legal advisor to ensure the letters patent were complete. My thanks go to Stephen Lindley and Bryan Winters Board members with great experience with By Laws and they gladly contributed their time and knowledge to the process.

The Indigenous Spirit Fund Committee of the Board also met several times as we work towards creating a fundraising entity at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. I want to thank Dr. Barbara Fallon, Dr. Richard Cummings, Tanya Rumble and Wayne Spear. All these individuals have knowledge about fundraising and have been helpful to the Native Child staff who are involved in the creation of fundraising at NCFST.

As Board members we also work with staff on various projects, and I would like to thank Kaitlind Peters who worked with staff on various research projects.

We are always looking for Board members that bring extensive knowledge and experience with them regarding various aspects of the world at large. Experience in the Indigenous way of life either lived or learned, human resources, education, governance, financial, research, health, child welfare, artistic and the list of qualifications can be longer depending on the individual.

Serving as a Board member of this Agency has been a privilege and I hope to continue to contribute to Native Child and Family Services of Toronto as it continues to provide exceptional services to the Aboriginal community.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer

Our last year as an Agency, community and nation were complicated by the immense and dynamic challenges of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only did COVID-19 have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous and racialized

peoples in the City of Toronto, but it also unearthed significant intergenerational trauma related to previous waves of pandemics experienced by Indigenous peoples in the initial phases of contact and colonization. Furthermore, this pandemic created the most risk for older generations, threatening the lives of Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are fundamental to the continuity of languages, ceremonies, knowledge, practices and other core aspects of both ancestral and contemporary Indigenous society and culture. All of this occurred against the backdrop of rising calls to address the pervasive systemic racism threaded into every major Canadian institution, with specific calls targeting the transformation of healthcare, policing, education and child welfare. This context created a perfect storm for so many of the community members we serve. It is with great humility and gratitude that I can say that everyone at NCFST worked tirelessly to adapt, pivot and innovate to support community through what continues to be understood as one of the greatest global challenges of the last century.

As the 2020-2021 fiscal year began, our services were radically transformed in response to necessary public health orders designed to minimize the spread of COVID-19. While many of our face-to-face services pivoted to virtual delivery, our status as an essential services provider enabled us to innovate critical face-to-face service interventions to support Indigenous children, youth, families and seniors throughout the pandemic. This annual report details the work done across our multiple locations and service areas to pivot, adapt and innovate within the shifting ambiguity of rising and falling case numbers, on and off stay at home orders, various states of provincial lockdown, and ever-increasing community uncertainty and need. Within this dynamic equation we provided stability within chaos by staying grounded in the service model and values of Native Child and Family Service of Toronto.

I have profound gratitude for so many of our staff who continued to work face-to-face on a daily basis. These staff were responsible for ensuring continuity in services such as our transition houses, healing lodge, daycares, Aboriginal Head Starts, child and family well-being, facilities and many back-office functions including administration, finance, IT and HR. Our pivot to virtual services would not have been possible without huge investments and an incredible amount of work achieved by our growing team in information technology. We also saw numerous service innovations emerge to respond to the pandemic, including but not limited to food security and cultural engagement programming, On the land service innovation, an after-hours mental health line, and many other programs and services detailed within this report.



Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the energy required to respond and innovate in child centred, family focused and community driven ways, we also continued to grow as an Agency over the last year. We leased a new space in Scarborough for our newly launched integrated child and family wellbeing team, completed the leasehold improvements and formally launched our Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, continued the development of the Mount Dennis Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, and purchased a new home to offer below market housing to youth transitioning out of care and others in the community connected to NCFST. The development of new sites and pandemic response services resulted in an 11% increase in staffing and a significant increase in our budget- further increasing the funding we allocate to prevention and support services.

None of this would have been possible without strong partnerships with sibling agencies and associations within our sector, as well as with all levels of government and the multiple other supporters and funders acknowledged in this report. I would specifically like to acknowledge the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC), the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO), the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), and the many funders listed at the end of this report.

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto was developed by the Indigenous community to respond to the intergenerational impacts of colonization, residential schooling, mainstream child welfare and ongoing systemic racism experiences by Indigenous peoples. Though COVID-19 response was undoubtedly our largest challenge over the past year, we were not idle with respect to our community mandate to decolonize child welfare and deliver integrated culturally-grounded support services that keep families together while at the same time creating multiple pathways to prosperity and wellness for Indigenous

children, youth, adults and seniors. To that end, we had several engagements with the Chiefs of Ontario and the Assembly of First Nations focused on our role as an urban agency in supporting the jurisdiction of First Nations and other Indigenous governing bodies over child welfare within the context of Bill C-92. We continue the work of supporting mainstream Children's Aid Societies to identify Indigenous families they are serving- in many cases working towards transferring those cases over to NCFST, so that families can receive integrated and culturally grounded wrap-around services (spanning holistic services and child and family wellbeing). We continue to focus our work of decolonizing the tools and approaches that govern the child welfare portfolio at NCFST, and work to support Indigenous families to connect to their home communities- wherever they might be.

One of the silver linings of COVID-19 has been the way this pandemic has revealed the multiple shortcomings of so many of our systems. Within the context of child welfare, and human services more broadly, it has revealed persistent colonial features that require decolonization achieved together with community. While there is immense fatigue present in all of us on the heels of 16-months of intense pandemic response, I must also acknowledge the passion for advocacy, innovation and change that remains at the heart of our work. We look forward to continuing to walk alongside community as we continue COVID-19 response and the decolonization of the systems in which we work to create a brighter future for our children- the sacred bundles we keep at the centre of everything we do.

HOLISTIC SERVICES

SIOBHAN MCCARTHY, DIRECTOR

On March 13, 2020 service to our community as we knew it changed forever. We went from being an Agency that worked with community in circle, providing support in a myriad of ways that centered around meeting community where they were at, both figuratively and literally. Suddenly, we were unable to open our doors, to welcome children into our childcare, to support a struggling teen with a hug and a hot meal or to provide a family with the kind of intensive counselling and support that begins with a smudge.

Staff were challenged to become videographers, virtual therapists, craft creators and above all, to support a community that had never been so isolated and afraid. As the data shows, the majority of the urban Indigenous community in Toronto lives below the poverty line, with few financial resources and supports, often with many children crowded into small apartments with little access to the land. Our task became to find a way to support these families while keeping them and our staff safe. Below are multiple examples of staff's creativity, dedication and hard work to do exactly that. It has been an honor to watch the staff, supervisors and managers of Holistic Services not only rise to this challenge, but to surpass it.



WORK THAT REMAINED IN PERSON

Our transitional housing programs remained open and stable throughout the past year. Due to shelter support and housing requirements to reduce room sharing, we were able to reduce our numbers at the transitional housing programs and expand our capacity at the city's hotel program. We were able to provide support to those most in need of support at a time when their housing was at risk.

We were able to open a new transitional housing program with capacity for eight community members, within weeks of purchasing the property. This program was located beside many of our other programs, allowing us to expand our support services to this newly opened program.

Mdewgaan Healing Lodge remained open for the duration of the current cohort. We were the only Healing Lodge able to do so and successfully graduated our three community members. Over the course of the past year while the Lodge had to remain closed, the team has redeveloped the Healing Lodge programming, utilizing culturally grounded approaches to understanding balanced wellness through the four quadrants of the medicine wheel.

ON THE LAND WORK THROUGHOUT COVID-19: SCARBOROUGH CHILD AND FAMILY LIFE CENTRE (SCFLC)

A bicycle club was developed for youth ages 12-15, who were previously engaged in face-to-face programming at SCFLC. This program provided each youth with a bike and allowed them to travel the city with a worker to support their knowledge of medicines and land, and to encourage physical activity. This initiative was developed by Justin Moore who was our Youth Outreach worker at the time, who provided ongoing support to the youth throughout the pandemic. Justin has now moved to the Native Youth Resource Centre as a Youth Program Supervisor where it is anticipated he will bring his many skills grounded in his wealth of knowledge of culture. Our EarlyON staff engaged in ground-breaking trauma Informed On the Land programming in three sites across the city to support children and families who were suffering from isolation, and lack of cultural and social supports. On the Land programming provided youth and families with culturally specific programming through land connections and experiential learning. This program was supported through all levels of leadership. The families and community expressed their gratitude to the cultural responses around mental health, connectedness to land and the breaking of isolation and pandemic fatigue. Quality Assurance and Decolonization team provided a rapid assessment of the program that confirmed our hypothesis, that families would benefit from face to face culturally grounded On the Land activities.



INNOVATIVE SERVICE PIVOT INITIATIVES (VIRTUAL WORK) AT SCFLC

Due to the suddenness of the lockdown, our EarlyON and Head Start staff were required to pivot on a dime and develop virtual programming for children. While it was challenging for folks who do not normally feel comfortable on camera, we quickly learnt who was a shining star in engagement and ukulele playing. Staff learned to develop Indigenous craft making videos, with boxes of materials that were sent home to children so that they could play along. Cooking videos were also popular with the children and planting medicines were also made available to the children.

SCFLC EarlyON, Youth and Community programs excelled at virtual programs and social media. They collectively reached a wider audience virtually on Zoom sessions- nationwide from British Columbia to Quebec and various parts of Ontario. The realities of the pandemic demonstrated the need for educational supports for middle years and youth community members. Supplies such as iPads, laptops, and cell phones were provided... supplies were provided to community members who did not have the means to support online learning. Virtual tutoring, and one on one sessions were implemented for homework help, test preparation and extra lessons.

Throughout this year, SCFLC recognised the need to bring youth voices to the table to assist with planning and development of youth specific programs. SCFLC Peer Mentors are a big success in our youth and community programs. Indigenous youth from the Scarborough community were provided with training and development opportunities, youth led programs, and facilitation. The results of investing in youth voices and guidance led to stronger and confident youth who are showcasing their skills through successful summer jobs, taking the lead on youth group facilitation and social media engagement.

Social Media engagement numbers

- Youth 375 accounts reached out of 248 followers per month
- EarlyON 480 followers, 131 accounts reached



AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM/DAY CAMP

Individuals Served: 35

- Programs/Services provided: Homework Help Drop In, Wednesday Wellness: 9-12 years old specific activities, Friday Fun Day- 6-12yrs, Day Camps (6 weeks) offered to children in care and after school program children, Spring Break (1 week) offered to children in care and ASP children.

INDIGENOUS YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM

Individuals Served: 77 youth under the age of 21

- Special Event: East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club Back to School Event: 300 community members

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DROP IN AND RECREATION AND WELLNESS PROGRAM

Individuals Served: 180

- Programs/Services provided- Skateboards, 12 days of Christmas, Christmas Photo Scavenger Hunt, Commit to Fit, Lemon Cree (bounce fit, nutrition and me, Indigenous sharing circle, strength and stretch) Well for Culture, Indigenous Wellness fair, Vans Shoe Design, Youth Drop-In programs, Games Night, Arrowhead Bike Club,
- Special Events -Scavenger hunt - 32 participants, Virtual fair 22 participants, Pow Wow Taco Giveaway: 180, Virtual Winter Solstice: 150

ABORIGINAL SKILL BUILDING PROGRAM/ CASE MANAGEMENT

Individuals Served: 28 youth 18-29 years old.

- Programs/Services: Smart Serve Certifications, Life Skills, Cultural programs and workshops, GED, CPR First Aid, Harm Reduction, Mental Health First Aid, Food Handlers Certification, Financial Literacy programs, Internal referrals-housing, counselling, Ninoshes, Pre/post natal services.

SHKABEWIS CULTURAL PROGRAM

Individuals Served: 30

- Programs and Services: Trivia Night, Traditional Arts and Crafts, Book Club, One on one community supports,
- Special Events: Family Bingo Night-30 Movie Night- 25, Culture Night-10

SCFLC EARLYON

Individuals Served: 709

- Programs and Services: Drop In, Traditional Storytelling, Traditional Drumming, Community Council, Family Matters, Child Development, School Readiness

GED DROP IN

Individuals Served: 15

HOLISTIC HEALING SUPPORTS

New Programs

The Clinical teams creatively provided clinical support virtually to children, youth, and families throughout the past year. Numbers of families and individuals served increased significantly, due to the stress and loneliness of the lock down and the pressure on parents to work and provide school support to many of their children. Extra funding of \$31,000 from a variety of sources allowed us to purchase tutoring that we provided to children and youth from February to March 2021 who were challenged by in-home/virtual learning. Parents reported that this has been a great help to them and to their children, one of whom is succeeding academically with in-home virtual learning and virtual tutoring support.

Increased funding in response to the COVID-19 crisis also allowed for the expansion of Holistic Healing services to five teams including the newly created Holistic Intake Team and Anti-Human Trafficking Team. NCFST now has the only Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking team in the city. We have been able to focus on increased outreach and clinical support as well as providing ongoing education and support to staff within and outside of NCFST on the indicators of Human Trafficking and the best way to support vulnerable youth and women.

Increased funding has also supported the launch of an After-hours Clinical Support Line to assist community members with issues and concerns that occur outside of regular business hours. These calls can range from challenges with managing family members' upset, to family breakdown, to questions regarding how to access support services. We have successfully secured funding to carry this program on throughout the 2021/2022 fiscal year as well. This program was also developed to be the precursor to our proposed NCFST Crisis Response Team, in response to the City of Toronto's request for alternative responses to police intervention in crisis situations. NCFST is preparing to provide our proposal to the City when the requests for Indigenous Specific Crisis Response proposals are requested.

Individuals served through Holistic Healing Services - 988







Food Hamper Program in the MALVERN ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE

Food Security as told by Barbara Wilson, Scarborough Child Care and Aboriginal Head Start.

When the pandemic started last year, and they closed the Province on March 13th our lives were forever changed. When the childcare and EarlyON programs were closed the People and Culture Team acted quickly to ensure our team would be able to work from home. Most of the team continued to work from home until the beginning of May.

In the meantime, the Agency identified that the community was experiencing food insecurity. NCFST developed a Food Hamper Program to help support our families during these unprecedented times. Samantha Fawns-Thistle and Val Kerr worked incredibly hard to establish a program with a few Assistant Supervisors and a Manager. No one on the team had ever done this kind of work before. All we knew was our community needed our help and we were going to work together to make this happen.

When the rest of the team started to work at the site in May, the food hamper program had really grown, and their help was needed. Although the two teams at the site had not really worked together in the past, they were working side by side to serve the community. The work we did as a collective helped to build relationships with the two teams and allowed an opportunity to get to know each other.

I am so grateful for the work the People and Culture Team did to ensure my team would be able to work from home and not find themselves without a paycheque. I am so honoured to be a part of an agency who truly care about their families and their staff. I needed to be a part of something for my own spirit and the work we did helped to keep me inspired

Second Harvest

From September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020, Second Harvest delivered 28,189 pounds of food to Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Scarborough Child and Family Life Centre, a donation valued at \$80,902

YEAR	HAMPER REQUESTS
2020	4,906
2021	1,072
TOTAL	5,978

EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS WEST

Aboriginal Head Start

Shaawnong – 21 children served

Epnigishmok – 24 children served

Kiiwednong – 17 children served

Each site received funding from the Federal Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC) grant. This money was used to update ongoing programming items such as a new printer, stove, classroom developmental toys and cultural items.

To provide extra support through the pandemic, staff received guidance from the Parent Council to create take home craft kits, cooking and planting kit and personal protective equipment (PPE) packs. Traditional storytellers, dancers, drummers and teachers were hired to do cultural and language videos so families and staff could participate in these teachings in the safety of their homes.

Kiiwednong Aboriginal Head Start prepared for their big move to the new Mount Dennis Aboriginal Child and Family Centre. In the interim, families were relocated to Epnigishmok

Childcare

Dundas Kinder Enrichment – 50 families served

Childcares in schools were deeply affected by the Provincial government COVID-19 Locks downs. It was a year where we closed and reopened five times. Throughout all this staff were either re-deployed or chose to stay at home to support their children with virtual learning.

New COVID-19 guidelines set out by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Education defined the new way we were to deliver programming. We had changed the layout of the classrooms to permit social distancing, screened families before they entered the building. As well, singing and other cultural materials were deemed unsafe within the guidelines. While this impacted our standard service delivery, we worked to maintain a cultural connection with families in a myriad of ways.

A major highlight involved partnering with Mount Dennis to host a virtual Winter Solstice. There were break out rooms for families to do traditional crafts, our guests included Métis Jigger, Ethan Lannigan and Cree language teacher, Chris Hunter. Our Master of Ceremonies for the evening was, recording artist Crystal Shawanda.





INDIGENOUS LEAD EarlyON's

Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

- Families with children ages 0 to 6 – 103 served
- Families with children ages 7 to 29 – 36 served
- Male Caregivers and their children –
16 Caregivers and 28 children served
- Seniors – 33 served

In June, three of our EarlyON centres began an On the Land project to support families in being outside and engaged with the land as a means of connection to culture and mental health wellbeing. Our community was excited and engaged in the On the Land programming throughout the coming Summer, Fall and Winter months.

The Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre became the hub for our food hamper program near the end of last year as we developed new positions to support the food hamper program initiative.

In mid-December we transitioned into our new centre at the Malvern Mall, leaving a special place in the hearts of the community at Grey Owl Public School where we were able to start to grow our roots.

Mount Dennis Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

- Families with children ages 0 to 6 – 53 served.
- Families with children ages 7 to 12 – 35 served.

In June, we began an On the Land project to support families in being outside and engaged with the land as a means of connection to culture and mental health wellbeing. We also worked to track the impact this program had on families. Our community was excited and had a lot of fun at Fergie Brown Park and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. We continued programming for the remaining summer months and are developing year-round On the Land programming.

On December 31st we said goodbye to Bala Jr Public School as we transitioned into our new beautiful Mount Dennis building on Weston Road.

Our virtual Summer Community Gathering in August brought traditional dancers, drummers, storytellers and crafters right to our families and community homes

30 College EarlyON

In January 2021, the new Supervisor and RECE spent a great deal of time gaining knowledge and inspiration from all the incredible work accomplished by the other NCFST programs in order to develop programming for the site, including On the Land programming. We continue to prepare the space to welcome in-person visits when it is safe to do so.

Zhishay Mobile Fathering Program

The Zhishay Father Support Worker pivoted during the pandemic to offer virtual men and boys support groups along with 1-1 zoom meetings. Group programming included Dungeons and Dragons virtual adventuring, TIK TOK staff Kean Buffalo dance series, cooking with Big Bear, music and Indigenous historical tours of the city. The Zhishay also worked to support the On the Land programming at Mount Dennis.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the year, the Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre and the Mount Dennis Aboriginal Child and Family Centre staff worked diligently to develop community councils to advise the agency on program development and to support self determination regarding all activities in the Aboriginal Child and Family Centres. When they were unable to meet in person, the councils quickly pivoted to virtual meetings.

When the City of Toronto began to consider that an alternative to a police response to community crises was needed, NCFST held multiple virtual community consultations regarding our proposed pilot crisis response project. The community provided essential information regarding what they needed and wanted to see from a crisis team specifically for the Indigenous Population in Toronto Police Divisions 42 and 43. This information has greatly impacted our proposed program.

YOUTH SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

Native Youth Resource Centre

- 47 former youth in care supported through our Youth in Transition program.
- 19,053 youth referred to supports and services to assist in holistic well being.
- 1,054 in person youth drop in visits.
- 19 youth completed the downtown Aboriginal Youth Employment and Education Skills Building Program.
- 16 youth obtained their GED.
- 74 Individuals were successfully housed.

Centennial College Office Administration Program

- 12 students graduated the office administration program.
- 4 students obtained full time employment and 1 student obtained part time employment in the office administration field.
- 3 students have applied for post secondary education.

Testimonial:

“I birthed my drum today with my family on my reserve. It was quite beautiful, and I cried. I wanted to give you my deepest miigwetch’s from the bottom of my heart. It has brought tears to my father I have done this for myself, it also brought tears to my uncle. I have been going through the hardest time in my life the past six months. I almost thought this life wasn’t for me, but I wanted to keep going and become closer with the spirit world. It gets hard at times but I know this drum will help me.”

7th Generation Image Makers

Active since 1996, 7th Generation Image Makers has aimed to provide supports, programming and mentorship to Indigenous youth as it related to the field of visual arts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had success in providing quality programming to a smaller number of youths. With this smaller number we have been able to work closely with individual youth, where we can meet their needs around creative expression and education in a more focused way.

Youth in Residence (Partnership with University of Toronto Scarborough and Doris McCarthy Gallery)

Two of the 7th Generation Image Makers’ core youth participants were invited to participate in an artist residency at the start of 2021. Both youth successfully completed this residency and are now working to prepare their work for exhibition. For one youth participant, this will be his first official solo-show in a gallery setting.

ReGENerate

The program focuses on providing participants with all of the business and technical skills needed to navigate the arts and cultural sector as a young professional. We have worked closely with six of our core youth participants, providing both arts professional development training and mentorship from 7th Gen alumni artists. Youth are currently being supported as they create their final pieces for the program, to be displayed in a virtual setting.

Urban Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Urban Indigenous Ways of Knowing (UIWK) is another program that fosters professional development and portfolio building where youth will be invited to contribute to a collective mural project. Eight youth artists participating in this program have using this knowledge to contribute to the development of a new mural in the NYRC Drop-in space.

Here on Turtle’s Back

Up to 16 youth have received support and mentorship as they have worked to create their personal sacred bundles. We saw a total of 18 youth complete their hand drums this year, with six of these youth moving on to create their own personal Sacred Bundles.

~ Here on Turtle’s Back 2020 Participant

Camps

NCFST responded to pandemic closure of in-person and overnight camps by developing a virtual camp experience. Each camper received a box of supplies which were utilized during camp. Given the success of virtual camp, Camp Services decided to run a weekly ongoing camp program throughout the remainder of the year.

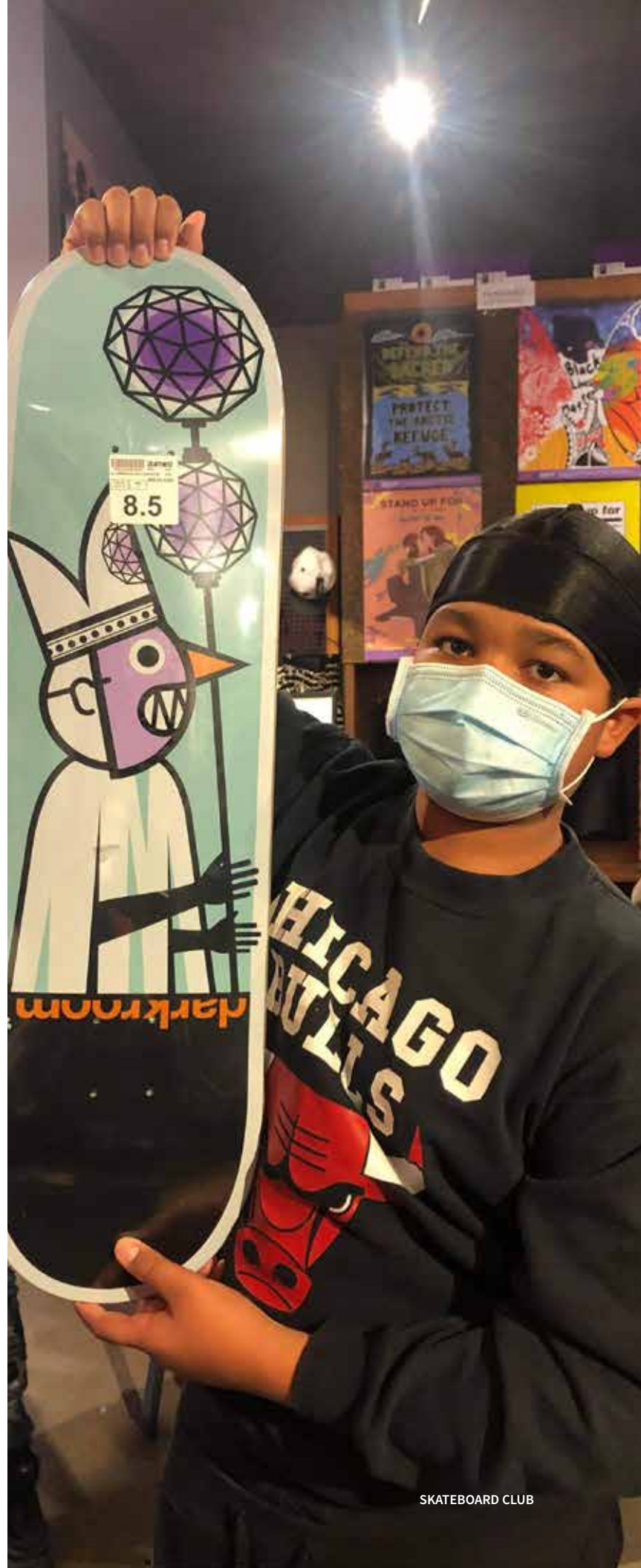
- 25 campers attended 6–9-year-old virtual camp.
- 25 campers attended 10–12-year-old virtual camp.
- 25 campers attended 13–16-year-old virtual camp.

Face to face camp launched in mid-July (after virtual camp began). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only seven campers were able to participate in face-to-face camp at a time. A smaller than average percentage of regular campers were able to attend in-person camp, related to caregiver concerns with in-person sessions given COVID-19, or residing outside of Toronto.

Testimonial

“ It was a wonderful program. I was impressed with so many different things to do over the internet. The staff were fun and I enjoyed everything. Dancing, playing games, painting and learning new things along side our youth was lots of fun. I am very grateful for all the help this camp provided in this time of isolation. I appreciate all the group. Wonderful camp!! Thank you for taking the time to organize this, the children loved it!! Thank you to everyone who made this happen! ”

- Camper



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

DAVID VAN OVERDIJK, DIRECTOR

As the pandemic continues, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our staff for going above and beyond to ensure that all our families, children and youth remain safe and thriving, during these difficult times. Many of our services have necessarily needed to continue to provide face-to-face services throughout this past year.

Child and Family Well-being, Children's Services, Family Supports, Tikinagan Pre and Post Natal and Family Finding have all continued to provide supports to our most vulnerable community members.

Keeping the child/youth at the centre of all our work has remained paramount, as does our commitment to provide wrap around services to keep families whole and where necessary, provide alternative care with extended family, including repatriation to home communities.

During this past year we have also continued to innovate as exemplified by the development of our Scarborough Integrated Team. This initiative has seen both Child and Family Well-being and Holistic Services staff brought together under a single team and located in a newly developed facility in the Kingston Road area.

I would like to highlight just two examples of the extraordinary work and dedication where our staff have supported community members and children which is a testament to the actualization of our service model in breaking down traditional silos amongst service delivery teams and departments.



JAMIE AND BABY

JAMIE'S STORY

“NSCFT became a part of my life when the Children’s Aid Society apprehended my baby at birth, (2010). My file was transferred to NCFST when my daughter was one month old. My first child was adopted out, (January 29th, 2014). I have been involved/ participated in programming and services with NCFST ever since. I currently have a five-month-old baby born, (May 2020) and is actively receiving support services from NCFST. I struggled with my first child and protection concerns. However, since becoming a parent for the second time, support services has been absolutely amazing in supporting my parenting goals. With the support of Susan, Amanda, and Trish I have been able to not only reach my parenting goals but I have maintained them successfully with no child protection involvement.

I was helped and supported in the following areas:

- Provided education/awareness
- Parenting support
- Pre natal support
- Developing a healthy life skills practice
- Preparation for birth and delivery
- Supportive counselling

When I found out I was expecting my second child I experienced anxiety and concern due to past trauma with the apprehension of my first child. Susan, Amanda, Trish and supported my journey above and beyond to ensure that I felt confident and safe in working towards my parenting goals in ensuring that I was going to bring my baby home this time.

The best thing that has happened in my life since working with NCFST was when I got to bring my second child home. I was not only prepared but supportive in a nurturing and loving way by staff at native child.

I would tell someone considering going to NCFST that support services are amazing and that they should have a Ninoshe in their life. Support Services are there to support and help. Native Child has helped me turn my life around.

Just because you are involved with support services through NCFST does not mean you’re a bad parent. Native Child is not just child welfare, it’s a balance of everything to support you.

I want to thank the following people for believing in me, supporting me and never giving up on me. Susan, Trish, Amanda, Jessica, Natalie, and Anna. ”

FAMILY FINDING

Our Family Finding team, funded through partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, was developed to actively search for extended family where a child was requiring alternative care. To this end, Family Finding has been able to provide over 30 families with concrete supports, including startup costs and ongoing financial assistance to prevent these children entering the child welfare system. In addition, this team has also been actively engaging with youth in long term care to promote and find connections to, not only their own extended families, but also their traditional communities where these connections and relationships may have been previously lost.

AB's story is an excellent example of the collaboration between Family Finding and Children's Services which culminated in this child being placed with family in Nevada.

This is just one of many circumstances of where Family Finding and Child and Family Wellbeing has worked diligently to ensure that children and youth are re-unified, repatriated and maintain connections with family and their communities.

FAMILY FINDING ACTIVITY	NUMBER
Children served in the reporting period	162
Total unique connections found	71
KIN assessment	26
Offering respite	6
Offering family relationship/permanency (non-residential)	42
Financial supports/Other Assistance	12
Per Diems provided	9

ODE'I MIN HEALTH CLINIC

During this pandemic, Our Ode'i Min Health Clinic, supported by the Inner-City Health Authority and run weekly out of our 30 College location has, under the leadership of Dr. Suzanne Shoush and our Family Supports Team, pivoted to provide virtual health consultations. These have proven to be extremely well received although all involved are clearly looking forward to continuation of in person supports. Looking ahead into this year, development is already underway to expand the clinic to include provision of both psychological and pediatric services.

FAMILY TIME/ACCESS

Native Child has always maintained the necessity of maintaining family connections as parents/caregivers address issues related to circumstances which found their children requiring alternative care. During the initial/1st wave of COVID many of these alternative/foster caregivers expressed reluctance in bringing children to access visits despite the stringent protocols that the Family Supports team had put in place under the guidance of Toronto Public Health. To alleviate these anxieties, a committee was established and through ongoing dialogue and education, visits, at the time of this writing, have continued unabated.

HOME VISITING PROGRAM

Ninoshe/Zhishay program supports families with advocacy, connections to community resources, in home supporting families with meeting personal goals, child developmental milestones, healthy nutrition, and support with referrals. During the pandemic, the team had to quickly adapt while continuing to meet the needs of the community. The Ninoshe/Zhishay's program engaged in virtual visits, telephone check in's, meeting in outdoor spaces and in some cases continuing to support families in home with strict COVID-19 policies and PPE procedures in place with little to no disruption in services to the families.

AB'S STORY

“ Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) has been involved with AB since 2017, prior to his actual birth.

Initially brought into in care due to multiple parental concerns, NCFST placed AB with extended family

in Saskatchewan where AB was a member of a First Nations there.

Unfortunately, by 2019, Saskatchewan authorities in Regina determined that AB was no longer deemed safe with his extended family in that province which necessitated his return to Toronto. Shortly thereafter, AB's mother passed. While his father continued to see his son via access visits, he was unable to present a plan to care for AB on a permanent basis.

Enter two of our extraordinary staff, Sarah N. from Children's Services and Fiona W. from our recently developed Family Finding team.

AB did have connections via a half-sibling that was living with extended family in Nevada, USA. Fiona and Sarah were able to locate, discuss and have this family 'authorized' to provide care for AB as well.

International placements are always encumbered with bureaucratic necessities and yet despite these obstacles, both Sarah and Fiona persevered and obtained the documentation required to place AB with Kin in his home community.

Despite COVID-19, both Sarah, Fiona and AB, braved it all (including necessary quarantines) to have AB finally placed with extended family and in community.”

Excellent work!



CAPC – CPNP/PARENTING PROGRAM

These programs have historically been delivered in person. This past year we had to look at new ways to deliver programs which meant moving away from face to face. The team quickly developed the skills required to deliver groups virtually, while also connecting with families one to one. Programs were offered through NCFST social media platforms by uploading pre-recorded videos as well as virtual real time programming through Teams and Zoom. Staff provided kits for the families which included cultural activities/books, sacred medicines, activities meal kits and resource information. This was a great way to keep the community engaged and connected and the program was able to continue providing informative, cultural, and meaningful content to families throughout the pandemic.

TIKINAGAN (PRE POSTNATAL SUPPORTS):

The Tikinagan Team has grown immensely since the program was first launched in 2019. The program responded to the community members needs by implementing a multidisciplinary team that is servicing over 90 families.

Tikinagan Housing Case Managers supported 31 families with their housing needs and were able to successfully house 18 families.

Tikinagan Indigenous Midwifery continues to build relationships with hospitals, community health centres, physicians and other midwifery practices as we focus on increasing access to pre postnatal health care to community members.

CS' STORY

“I don’t know where I would be without the help from the Tikinagan Team. I started with a case manager who drove me to most of my midwife’s appointments and grocery shopping. I was scared to take a bus or Uber because of COVID. I was homeless at the time mostly staying with my baby’s father, friends or family when I was able to. She introduced me to the Tikinagan Housing worker. OMG she helped me so much. She drove me to look at places and helped when landlords didn’t want to rent to me because of who I am. Last October I finally got an apartment and was able to bring my baby to our home. They offer so many different things. Then I heard about the doulas. Where would I be without her. I really recommend having a doula. She taught me a lot during my pregnancy as well as a mom of 2 children. I have a counsellor too now and also loved the counsellor services and how she really helped me manage some difficult moments. Thanks for helping me so much from the baby supplies, food cards and especially the team.”

Miigwetch





In addition, cybersecurity has been dramatically improved in the last year to include next generation anti virus services and a fully managed 24/7 Security Operations Centre. This solution performs threat analysis, prevention and hunting services agency-wide regardless of staff locations and is integrated into the daily support services of the evolving service desk and change management capabilities implemented this year.

Although the digital transformation is still well underway, most of the primary objectives are fully implemented and operational. Remote access, cloud storage, decommissioning of on-premises assets, multi-layered security, increased performance, network resilience at all agency buildings and electrical power disaster recovery solutions have been successfully implemented, underway or will be completed this year just to mention a few initiatives in this area.

Currently, NCFST is operating about twenty projects in the IT area. The new service desk system has also helped to organize and resolve more than 7,000 requests and is being expanded upon to take on change control and project management. With a fully implemented suite of cloud services, the Agency has reduced single points of failures, removed risks from unauthorized access and established centralized monitoring and alarming. A

new telephony solution leveraging current investments in centralized collaboration and sharing has begun and will be completed in 2021.

The Data Quality initiative officially began late fiscal Q4 with the objective of establishing full documentation creation sets for critical data elements needed to prepare for Data Governance and Management changes that are planned to incur significant modifications up until late 2024. The dedicated Data Team in the Information System, Information Technology (ISIT) Department is also tasked for taxonomy

and records management guidance while funding and projects are secured throughout the remainder of 2021 to expand all ISIT systems at NCFST.

Currently, we have more than 120 programs in place from about 57 different funding sources. NCFST's budget increased with 28% compared to last financial year. As a result, our operation is much more complex than it was couple

of years ago. Elevated resources and additional programs required more effort from the Finance Team and all their commitments are greatly valued. I acknowledge their good work in showing true financial stewardship. It should also be noted that automation in accounts payable process helped a lot to adapt to working from home and made the approval process easier with electronic approval.

“ We truly appreciate our funders’ efforts to provide us with additional resources so that NCFST could run new programs and finance new positions to serve our community members better in these unprecedented times. ”



TOBACCO HARVEST FROM THE NCFST ROOFTOP GARDEN

I want to thank the tireless work that the Facilities Team has done throughout the year. It was an exceptionally busy year in this area. Although we can't deny the disruption of COVID-19, it is great to see how much this team has accomplished during the last fiscal year. Also, personal protective equipment such as face masks has been sourced properly and care to protect staff and clients throughout the year. Proper signage was posted at all facilities to comply with Toronto Public Health measures and directives.

“ Together we have made great progress in this last year. This would not have been possible without our staff's ongoing commitment. Thank you to all of my fellow coworkers, the Board and the Senior Leadership Circle for your dedication and outstanding work. NCFST is certainly poised to grow in the years to come. ”

The administration team also continued to excel despite the headwinds and quickly pivoted to home-based support of teams. They took on a lot of additional tasks this year, such as supporting the virtual camps, hamper program and vaccine clinics. To illustrate their dedication, four admin staff helped put together camper kits for the first ever virtual camp from making the boxes, portioning vinegar and paint, to hand delivering the kits to children.

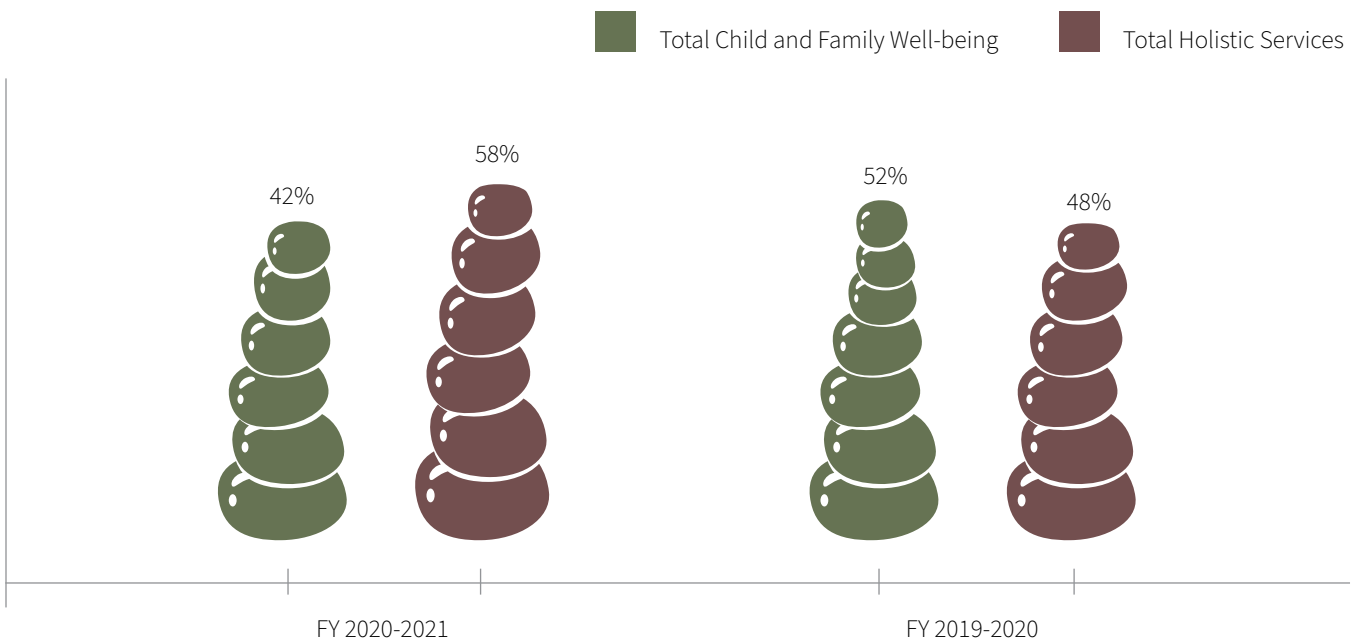
- Leased Units 8 and 9, 3785 Kingston Rd., completed leasehold improvements at the end of August and moved the integrated Team in on September 14. The facilities team painted the space throughout as part of the leasehold improvements.
- Completed leasehold improvements for the Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre EarlyON at the Malvern Town Centre, at the end of January. The project was funded by Children's Services, City of Toronto.
- Completed interior renovations at our property at 1290 Weston Rd, at the end of March. The facility will house the EarlyON Centre and Kiiwednong Head Start. The project was funded by Children's Services, City of Toronto, Indigenous Affairs (Ontario), Ontario Trillium Foundation, and Public Health Agency of Canada.

FUNDING

Funding for fiscal 2020-21 increased by 29% compared to the prior year mainly due to the increased level of funding received from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), City of Toronto and COVID-19 funding from various funders resulting in a 10% increase in preventive services provided by the organization.

Total funding for fiscal 2020-21 was \$53,116,707 that includes Child Welfare funding of \$22,405,852 and Prevention funding of \$30,710,855 (including \$2,019,898 gain on sale of Keele property).

	% of Total Funding		
	FY 2020-2021	FY 2019-2020	Variance
Total Child and Family Well-being	42%	52%	-10%
Total Holistic Services	58%	48%	10%
	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%



The comparative total in the fiscal year of 2019-2020 was \$41,268,847 which included Child Welfare funding of \$21,349,624 and Prevention funding of \$19,919,223.

FY 2020-2021

	Total Funding	Expenditures	Net Funding
Child and Family Well-being	22,405,852	22,750,182	-344,330
Total Child and Family Well-being	22,405,852	22,750,182	-344,330
Children's Mental Health and Family Well-being	5,687,627	5,699,200	-11,573
Scarborough Enhancement, JT, Mount Dennis and Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centres	2,646,048	2,663,290	-17,2065
Organizational Enhancement	4,902,438	4,531,054	371,385
Transitional Housing	\$2,358,659	2,412,098	-53,439
Pre and Post Natal	\$2,038,874	2,130,360	-91,486
Kin Finding	\$1,043,831	1,043,831	-
Volunteer Drive	\$729,115	729,115	-
Admin	\$2,517,025	2,072,238	444,787
Day Care	\$980,573	1,111,330	-130,757
Head Start	\$1,425,175	1,453,056	-27,881
Youth	\$2,271,637	2,434,763	-163,127
Prevention Services	\$822,601	822,599	2
Social Recreation	\$466,758	471,553	-4,795
Scarborough	\$483,644	518,347	-34,702
Culture	\$316,917	324,930	-8,013
Gain on Sale of Property	\$2,019,898		2,019,898
Total Holistic Services	\$30,710,855	28,417,762	2,293,094
Total Child and Family Well-being and Holistic Services	\$53,116,707	51,167,944	1,948,763

OVERVIEW

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Child and Family Well-being revenue has increased in 2020-21 by 5%. Program costs increased by \$1,418,153 compared with FY 2019-20 due to increases related to staffing and technology costs.

HOLISTIC SERVICES

Prevention funding increased in this fiscal year by \$10.8 million with over half coming from funding from Indigenous Services Canada with funding increases of \$5.4 million for infrastructure, Pre and Post Natal, Kin Finding, culture, volunteer drive, and COVID-related programming. COVID-19 funding provided nearly \$3 million. Program costs increased by \$8.5 million.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Total Children's Mental Health and Family Well-Being funding increased \$611,808 over the prior year due to increased fiscal funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Health, and Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy. Total program costs increased \$613,772 compared with the prior year due to increased staff costs and program related costs.

YOUTH

Total youth funding for the fiscal year 2020-21 increased by \$1,038,828, mainly with COVID supports for accommodations, food, and technology. Total program costs increased \$ 949,027 accordingly compared with the prior year.

SOCIAL RECREATION

Total Social Recreation funding decreased by \$210,037 and program costs decreased by \$208,084.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Total Transitional Housing funding for the fiscal year 2020-2021 increased by \$589,916 due to additional supports from the City of Toronto for a new home. Total program costs increased \$691,349 in relation to the new home compared with the prior year.

HEAD START

Total Head Start funding for fiscal year of 2020-21 increased slightly by 13%, and direct program costs also increased by 17% compared with the prior year due to COVID-19 funding thru the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care and Pan-Indigenous funding from Public Health Agency of Canada.

SCARBOROUGH ENHANCEMENT, MOUNT DENNIS AND MALVERN ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES

Funding recognized increased by \$252,171 for fiscal year 2020-2021 as the centres became fully staffed and as a result the expenditures increased by \$125,852.

DAYCARE

Due to COVID-19, the daycares were closed for a period during this fiscal resulting in a decrease in funding of \$310,113 and therefore program expenses were lowered by \$393,182.

SCARBOROUGH

Scarborough programs funding increased by \$100,398 for enhancing learning development and capacity building, seniors, and food hamper funding. Total program costs also increased \$106,471.

CULTURE

Total funding increased for Culture due to Indigenous Services Canada Funding for programming.

ADMINISTRATION

Total administration funding increased by \$1,064,709.

Total program costs for the fiscal year 2020-21 increased \$1,208,853 mainly due to COVID-19 related programming.



OUR STAFFING STRUCTURE

337

Total number of employees

The staffing complement has increased by 11% from 299 staff in 2019/2020 to 337 in 2020/2021. Staff increase is primarily in the areas of Holistic Services and Child and Family Well-Being. Of the 337 staff, 25% of staff are contract or casual at 83 staff.

A total of 51% staff have self-identified as Aboriginal and 51% of management staff have self-identified as Aboriginal

83

Contract employees

Overall

51%

self-identified as Aboriginal

Overall

51%

of management staff self-identified as Aboriginal



— **58%** of the budget funds positions supporting Holistic Services

— **42%** of the budget funds positions supporting Child and Family Well-being

VARIOUS TRAINING



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Agency continues to invest in learning and development with a focus on delivering culturally centric training.

We believe providing staff with the right tools and key information at the onset of their employment with the Agency will provide for a more culturally engaged workforce. The Agency has always engaged in learning, however, as we begin to build this department, we will build better strategies to support future growth.

The Learning and Development Department added a new Trainer position in order to support the training curriculum that was developed by the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario – Preparing for the Indigenous Pathways to Authorization: Culturally Safe Child Welfare Practice with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Ontario.

The Agency has developed a curriculum for Indigenous Leadership Development and several cohorts have participated in this development. Further program enhancement will include monthly culture centric case study circles, mentorship and time with Knowledge Keepers.

There was a focus on providing both internal and external opportunity for staff growth and development. The training programs strengthen skill and development programs build a higher level of knowledge and capacity.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME PROGRAMS THE AGENCY DEVELOPED AND/OR DELIVERED OVER THE LAST FISCAL YEAR:

CULTURAL TRAINING

Historical Awareness and Current Trends

- An introduction to the unique relationship existing between Indigenous people and Canadians to foster a better understanding and appreciation NCFST's vision and mission to serve community. By providing an overview of self-determination, historical injustices, intergenerational trauma, cultural reclamation and reconciliation.

Foundational Cultural Teachings

- A 90-minute Circle introduces new staff to some of the Foundational Cultural Teachings widely used and understood at NCFST. Staff have the opportunity to participate in a smudge, a conversation about the 4 Sacred Medicines, an overview of ceremonies commonly practiced in this territory (full moon, naming, sweat lodge, fasting) and a Talking Circle grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Indigenous Tools for Living (ITFL)

- ITFL includes 30-hours of training based on Aboriginal Focusing Oriented Therapy in an online format. The training explores Indigenous perspectives, and practice hands-on learning about complex trauma to help keep oneself grounded and more comfortable when in complex situations.

Employee Wellness

- This year the Agency provided specific training sessions that were focused on Indigenous Wellness, COVID-19 Safety and Awareness, Mental Health, Indigenous Mental Health and Employee Wellness.

FUTURE GROWTH

The Agency recognizes the importance of a growth mindset, and further work will be done on developing a culturally centric workforce. We will continue to work with our staff to engage them in a productive way, build cultural capacity and accelerate learning and development with a goal to service our families and youth in a way that is meaningful and purposeful for them.

EMPLOYEE SNAPSHOT

Nearly 88% of our full time and part time employees were born since 1965. Generational shifts brings changes to our work force wants, needs, career interests and skills and in how work will be done. The Agency has created a learning environment in order to support the development of all generations.

GENERATIONS AT WORK

Generations	Percentage in the Workforce
Genz	8%
Gen Y/Millennials	49%
Gen X	31%
Baby Boomers	12%

GENDER OF EMPLOYEES

Gender	
Female	77.74%
Male	21.07%
Non Binary	1.19%
Grand Total	100.00%

EMPLOYEES BY PORTFOLIO

By Portfolio	Percentage by Portfolio
Child & Family Wellbeing	32.04%
Executive	0.89%
Finance & Administration	14.84%
Fund Development & Strategy	0.89%
Holistic Service	45.40%
People & Culture	2.97%
QA & Decolonization	2.97%
Grand Total	100.00%

TYPES OF EMPLOYEES

Job Class	Number of Employees in Each Job Class
Admin	22
Director	7
Executive Director	1
Manager	15
Professional/Worker	252
Supervisor	40
Grand Total	337

RECRUITMENT SNAPSHOT

The People and Culture Department automated many processes over the last fiscal, including recruitment. Despite the pandemic the Agency was quite busy with recruitment activity and interviews were conducted in a virtual environment. In total for this fiscal there were 98 new recruits.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Employee wellness is extremely important and the Agency provides a benefits package to employees. Throughout the pandemic it was more important than ever to ensure staff knew what was available. The department held many information sessions and invested a great deal of time connecting with staff.

We worked with our Insurance Company to enhance our benefits and were very pleased to offer Indigenous services through our plan, and this included access to Knowledge Keepers and Trauma Informed Specialists. We also provided access to the Employee and Family Benefits Program to all staff, including contract and casual. In addition, we sourced out virtual services for access to medical and social services so that staff could access medical care throughout the pandemic in a virtual setting.

ONBOARDING PROGRAM

The department enhanced the Onboarding Program and onboarded on average 8 new staff per month. Due to the pandemic the onboarding sessions were virtual. Included in the enhancement was cultural teachings, benefit sessions, system reviews and covid protocols. In addition, the department has partnered with managers and is in the process of developing modules specific to each portfolio.

NEW HIRES

2020-2021 Recruits	Number of New Recruits per Quarter
April to June	17
July to September	25
October to December	15
January to March	41
Grand Total	98

- **Number of Applications Received through our system 2,092 applications**
- **Average Number of Applications per month 174 applications**

PANDEMIC – COVID-19

The health and safety of our staff and the community is of utmost importance. The department had to shift very quickly to support staff in the transition to work from home.

Throughout the pandemic and lockdown, as an essential service, the Agency continued to service the community and the department supported staff in navigating the uncertainty of the pandemic and ensured safety protocols were implemented.

The department administered employee surveys, developed strategies to support staff and created a COVID-19 Protocol Guide. All staff were trained on the protocols as the department held numerous virtual sessions. The Agency also conducted virtual Covid-19 training sessions for all new staff.

In addition, the Agency supported staff by working on various strategies to ensure continued work. All staff were continuously employed throughout the pandemic. Where staff needed to take a COVID related leaves the department fully support staff on working through the process so they were able to receive some income support through Government programs.

In addition, the department was solely responsible for all contact tracing where test positive and/or became ill the department support staff in applying for medical leave as necessary.



CEILING FEATURE AT THE MALVERN
ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DECOLONIZATION

MARK ATANASOFF, DIRECTOR

In 2004 NCFST was directed by the Aboriginal community to accept a child welfare mandate to decolonize Aboriginal child welfare in the City of Toronto. With this mandate came an inherited colonial system built on a worldview fundamentally different from that of the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

Like many other Aboriginal organizations, we have a great deal of work to do in our collective journey to devolve services to Indigenous organizations and communities. The Quality Assurance and Decolonization team is here to support this work by going beyond the traditional scope of quality assurance, building new internal capacity to plan, understand, monitor and evaluate our decolonization efforts. Additionally, we champion the remaking of these inherited structures and processes in ways that acknowledge, respect, and include Indigenous worldview, knowledge systems, values, and approaches. Finally, the journey of decolonizing and Indigenizing requires a commitment to reconciliation and healing. This work is made possible by ensuring we have healthy communication with all our relations. We are pleased to report that our Quality Assurance, Culture and Communications teams have made significant progress in (1) child welfare redesign (2) cultural reclamation (3) branding and campaigns that engage families, staff, and key stakeholders on our collective journey to connect, reconcile and heal. Please read on for more details.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE PROJECT

In January and February 2021, the QAD team conducted 17 group interviews with 28 NCFST supervisors and managers to gather stories to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on NCFST programming and services. Tracing the pandemic through the 9-month timeline, the research team asked, how did staff at NCFST experience the pivot from providing in-person to virtual services? How did you innovate? How did working from home affected your work/life balance? What lessons were learned from the first wave which have helped during the second wave? With qualitative data analysis software (gifted to us from The Catholic Children's Aid Society) QAD was able to gain valuable insights on successes, gaps, and challenges that will inform the direction moving forward. This pandemic response project was funded by a sub-grant from the Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) in partnership with the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Research on Indigenous Health, led by Dr Suzanne Stewart. QAD shared the data with all research participants and the NEIHR team in a presentation on April 15, 2021.

EVALUATION

As a department, QAD has overseen and completed program evaluations for two of NCFST's most innovative programs during the 2020/21 period: the Tikinagan Pre Postnatal Program in the winter of 2020 and the On the Land Initiative in the summer of 2020. Evaluation reports for both programs highlighted the high rates of client satisfaction reported by participants as well as feelings of cultural safety and skill building. Program reports also contained recommendations for ongoing program improvements and quality controls. During fall 2020 QAD began work-planning to evaluate the Mdewgaan Lodge, a trauma-informed supportive residential program for Indigenous women with infants. This evaluation launched in May 2021.



Big Train Drum Group at
CHI MIIGWETCH,
COMMUNITY GIVEAWAY DAY

RESEARCH

The newly formed Research Subcommittee consisting of representatives from QAD, service, and a member of the Board of Directors met for the first time in May 2020. The mission statement of the subcommittee is to “implement a Decolonizing and Indigenizing Research Ethics Policy and Protocol for all internal and external research projects involving staff at NCFST and/or the community we serve. The Research Sub-committee will develop and maintain a decolonized process to evaluate research applications concerning NCFST community that is grounded in Indigenous research methodologies, the Principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®) and the principles of the 7 Grandfather Teachings.” In February 2021, Senior Leadership approved the Terms of Reference. A research matrix monitors all five major research projects with external partners across the agency.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

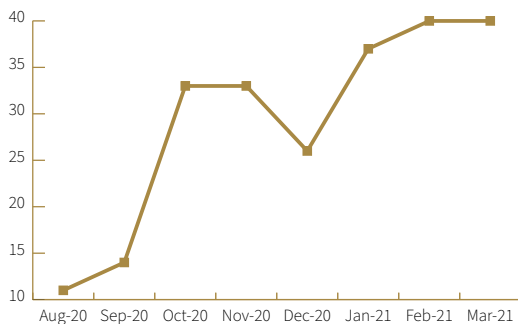
QAD has been instrumental in liaising with the Indigenous community here in Toronto to request feedback about both their thoughts on proposed programs as well as service changes to existing programs and services. During 2020/21 QAD created and managed 4 large virtual feedback surveys (with over 200 responses combined) and supported 8 virtual community consultations involving over 40 community members responding to critical questions involving program development and service changes.



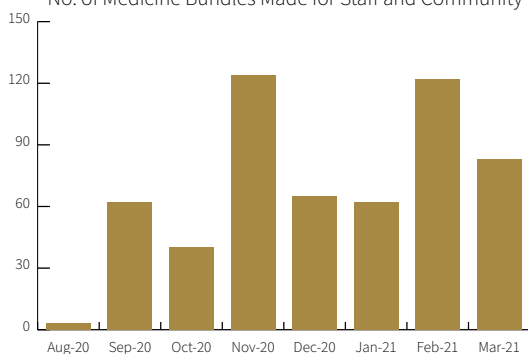
CULTURE AND EVENTS

2020 was a challenging and dynamic year. The pivot to providing virtual services while simultaneously building a team of Traditional Knowledge Keepers was a unique and rewarding experience. The Culture and Community Events Team quickly recognized the landscape of the pandemic was challenging to community on all levels: physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally and quickly pivoted to providing virtual and phone services for one-on-one Cultural support to assist and guide community members through these challenges in a culturally safe and grounded way. While respecting traditional protocols made virtual ceremony a challenge, our team worked together to build engaging educational circles for staff and community alike. By focusing on teaching and sharing cultural knowledge we were able to support folks in empowering themselves to walk a little further in their personal journeys.

Requests for Knowledge Keeper Supports



No. of Medicine Bundles Made for Staff and Community



CULTURAL SUPPORTS

For Community

- Virtual Traditional Knowledge Keeper support provided to over 100 individual community members with weekly or bi-weekly telephone or Facetime sessions where culturally grounded support, teachings, and referrals to NCFST supports were offered.
- Traditional Knowledge Keepers supported community via virtual circles, offering teachings to groups like the Peaceful Warrior Program, Medewgaan Lodge, Virtual Camps/After School program, and Here to Help.
- Over 1500 medicine bundles provided to community and agency staff. Most common requests were for sage and abalone shells however the team also provided sweetgrass, tobacco, and cedar along with over 2000 packages of a Cold & Flu tea.

For Children-in-Care and Foster Families

- Bi-Weekly teaching circles for Foster Families (Internal and Outside Paid Resource) launched in November 2020. Circles focused on foundational teachings for parents and families such as: Aboriginal Worldview, the 4 Sacred Medicines, Indigenous Life Cycle teachings using the Ojibwe Medicine Wheel, and Tikinagan teachings for babies and toddlers.

For Research and Partnerships

Traditional Knowledge Keepers supported with on-going research and partnership projects such as:

- Toronto Police Services (TPS) Race-Based Data Collection Circles: 4 community feedback circles co-facilitated with Quality Assurance and Decolonization team and TPS. Traditional Knowledge Keeper provided medicines, teachings and a cultural presence to support cultural safety.
- 24-Hour Mental Health Crises Response, Community Consultation Circles
- NCFST Children's Village project. On-going cultural support and guidance to ensure the process is culturally grounded.

CULTURAL SUPPORT FOR STAFF LEARNING AND CULTURAL RECLAMATION

Cultural Renewal

These semi-annual weeklong teaching circles have been designed to offer staff an opportunity to add to their bundle of teachings and ceremonial experiences. A successful program that has been offered for many years, reimagining these circles in a virtual landscape was equally challenging and rewarding. A foundation of Cultural Renewal has always been the opportunity to gather in circle On the Land. Creating safe virtual spaces where folks could learn and share was a highlight of the year. By emphasizing teachings that offered hands-on activities that could be undertaken from the office or a work-from-home location, the Culture Team strove to empower NCFST staff with practical teachings to support their wellness.

Spring 2020:

Recognizing that lockdowns, the pivot to remote services, and concern for the community in the context of COVID-19 was creating stress and anxiety for many people, the Culture Team created a Virtual Cultural Renewal that offered culturally grounded teachings and activities to support staff wellness in all areas of the Medicine Wheel. Agency staff came together over 5 days to explore Indigenous Mindfulness and participate in Land-Based, All-My-Relations Experiences.

Fall 2020:

Continuing our theme of offering teaching circles that encouraged staff to look at their holistic wellness during a difficult time, we welcomed Dorothy Taylor to our circle who shared her Giin Gdiban Nim (I Belong To You) teaching. This reflective look at the Medicine Wheel emphasized Love, Compassion, Kindness and Courage and was designed to support NCFST staff with Indigenous Self-Care during COVID-19.

CULTURE COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto's Culture Committee is to improve the cultural experiences of staff and community at NCFST. Grounded in Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Indigenous Cultures, and Indigenous Values, the Culture Committee will advise the Agency on matters concerning Indigenous cultural practice and development. The internal staff representatives will provide advice on traditional knowledge, values and culture to enhance all areas of service delivery and inform important ceremonies or traditions that the Agency delivers and participates in as an Indigenous service provider.

The Culture Committee's collective wisdom and knowledge will reinforce the NCFST Mission Statement and Service Model. Through targeted cultural projects, the Culture Committee will honour the diverse traditional practices of the Indigenous communities that the Agency serves. The Committee members and Knowledge Keeper act as ambassadors to activate and share cultural knowledge within the organization.

The Committee centres its work through inclusivity and is comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. Cultural safety and humility support the work we do together with the understanding that we accept the good intentions and care of all members.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Engaging community events is a cornerstone of the Culture and Community Events team. Providing weekly Culture Nights, leading the annual Community Pow Wow, hosting holiday party's for staff and community and children-in-care, and celebrating large-scale agency events like Grand Openings, the Annual General Meeting and the Indigenous Spirit Fund. In 2020, the pivot to virtual allowed for innovation and connection in new and exciting ways. We were pleased to host the following:

Facebook Live Event: Ceremony and Connection in the Time of COVID-19

A Conversation with Elders and Knowledge Keepers with Alita Sauve, Diane Longboat, Dorothy Taylor, Earl and Derryl Henderson, and Pat Green.

Chi Miigwetch, Community Giveaway Day

4 Sites collaborated to create a memorable day, in the spirit of our annual Community Pow Wow. Close to 1000 NDN tacos plus sage, cold & flu tea, masks, and soaps were given to Community on September 23 and 24.

Children-in-Care Virtual Holiday Party

Over 100 children in care and their families joined us in Zoom for festive fun, crafts, carols, and a visit from Santa. Special Thanks to Traditional Knowledge Keeper Vivian Roy for her Opening Prayer and Storytelling!

Years of Service Awards – Virtual Celebration: Friday December 11

Holiday events looked different this year, but we still found ways to gather and celebrate. Our annual Years of Services Awards were given to staff during a virtual celebration that acknowledged the special anniversaries of 27 agency staff, including Randy Budd who celebrated 20 years with NCFST. Congratulations, Randy!

Virtual Grand Opening of Mino Bimaadiziwin Healing and Prevention Centre (185 Carlton Street)

Over 100 dignitaries, funders, community partners, community members and agency staff viewed this webcast on November 18. The webcast featured prayer, drumming, a video walk through of the site, community testimonials, words of thanks and congratulations from the Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services, MP Pam Damoff, and MPP Suze Morrison.

Facebook Live Event: Live from Attawapiskat A Conversation with Adrian Sutherland

Our second Cultural Showcase on Facebook Live was a huge success. We invited Adrian Sutherland, a Cree musician from Attawapiskat to join us in conversation on December 21. We discussed his music, his early childhood, life on the streets of Ottawa, and how his family and connection to his culture and the land supported him through difficult times.

The showcase has been viewed over 15,000 times!

COMMUNICATIONS

In March of 2020 when the COVID-19 crisis began, Communications at NCFST was challenged to manage an unforeseen crisis that was constantly evolving. Pivoting became a daily task with rapid changes and continued uncertainty. Our priority was to ensure that staff and community were informed quickly with accurate and important information on how to navigate this new pandemic landscape.

The updated website saw a significant increase in traffic and our social media channels rapidly expanded. Many staff soon became content creators and program innovators that required support and guidance as they began to offer their own unique virtual programming.

Our support for internal teams increased to include zoomsupport, photography, video production, graphic design, copy editing, public relations, and conceptualizing a variety of events that we could deliver virtually. Although the pace of the pandemic may have slowed down the pace in our local communities, the online environment increased significantly, and we saw our workforce adapt quickly despite evolving challenges. Our main goal was to empower staff with knowledge, tools and information to support them in our shared journey to continue to meet the needs of the community we serve. We are beyond grateful to the dedicated staff for their willingness to harness the online environment while continuing to hold up our community with compassion, kindness and care during such a difficult time. Below are some comparative stats that show the activity in our online environment.

WEBSITE VISITORS

	2019	2020
Visitors	15,571	33,036
Views	53,277	95,793

WEBSITE PAGES WITH THE MOST TRAFFIC

	2020
Home page	33.160 views
Careers page	17,031 views
About us page	5,734 views

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

Platform	2019	2020
Facebook	374	1.4K
Twitter	1.8K	2.2K
Instagram	51	1.2K
LinkedIn	467	1.3K

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Our Public Relations and media outreach grew with increased interest in our pandemic response to COVID-19 and after the death of George Floyd in late May which sparked a worldwide wave of protests about racial disparities in policing. A growing number of media requests were coordinated between Communications and several media outlets from print, radio, and television broadcasts.

Below are a few of the outcomes of this outreach.

- June 18, 2020, The Globe and Mail - *“Toronto Indigenous organization launches program to help families with mental health”*
- June 16, 2020, Toronto Star- *“Indigenous agency serving Toronto families now offers services in parks.”*
- July 13, 2020, Anishinabek News- *“New trauma-informed land-based program launched to support Indigenous youth mental health during pandemic.”*
- July 24, 2020, Global Toronto- *“More Canadians say racism is a ‘serious problem’ today than 1 year ago: Ipsos poll.”*
- Nov 06, 2020, CBC Toronto- *“Indigenous crisis teams to replace police on mental health checks in Scarborough pilot project.”*

SPECIAL PROJECTS

KENN RICHARD, NCFST FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

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

I am pleased to present to our community, our Board, and the staff at NCFST, this third report on the Indigenous Spirit Fund, its progress, and its challenges, over the past fiscal year.

For those who may not know, Toronto has a large and growing Indigenous population. While many succeed, many do not. Indigenous families are the poorest of all in a city that is already declared the child poverty capital of Canada. The needs are great. While the pandemic has altered plans and practices, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto has shown that it is up to the challenge in meeting program needs among community members that have spiked and that will not likely abate soon.

The Indigenous Spirit Fund (ISF) was created through the vision of successive Boards of Directors and has appeared in strategic plans as far back as they have been created. The pandemic has not stopped our work in the development of an Indigenous entity, the ISF, that seeks engagement, collaboration, and partnerships within our civil society. In this work we hope to include average Canadians, in our case Torontonians, not from government, but from all walks of life.

During this relationship building, we seek to involve corporate and private philanthropy as their support in this new relationship is critical to its success.



Last year the ISF managed to grow considerably and is set to grow more. We are grateful that \$300,000 was raised without a formal campaign. A highlight of the past year was the launch of the Indigenous Spirit Fund's own website. This launch event featured an awards ceremony of historic significance.

The Indigenous Spirit Award exists to provide a unique Indigenous approach that recognizes young people who have triumphed over their personal challenges and barriers. It is especially for Indigenous young people who have shown their Indigenous spirit through not only their achievements, but for displaying kindness and helping others along the way. Four awards were presented; two were granted to children aged 15 and under and the other two awards were granted to youth aged 16 to 29.

These awards touched many who witnessed the event. Recipients were awarded funds and the chance to open an investment account with the services of a BMO, one of the award sponsors. You can view a recording of the awards presentations at <https://nativechild.org/indigenous-spirit-fund-isf-launches-to-support-healthy-outcomes-for-urban-indigenous-youth/>

The Launch event for our website also occasioned the first Oshkaabewis Award. Oshkaabewis literally means "fire keeper" or "one who helps" and will be granted each year in recognition of those in the non-Indigenous sector who have helped further the good and welfare of Indigenous people in the GTA. Whether it be a corporate or individual and whether their contribution is material or otherwise, recipients show leadership, commitment, and generosity in whatever contribution they make. They are leaders but above all are seen as helpers in the most authentic way.

The first award recipient is Sharon Avery, President and CEO of the Toronto Foundation. Sharon has been a tremendous advocate for the Indigenous community. Her work in including the ISF within the innovative Trust Collective initiative, and helping facilitate a large donation

through that project, was very much appreciated. Sharon has supported our agency in her work and has also engaged and included a broad range of relationships showing what inclusion is all about. She is considered a strong ally who has significantly moved things forward in philanthropy and community work.

Going forward the Indigenous Spirit Fund will be consolidating the gains made to date and will move towards enhancing our capacity to engage philanthropy to the benefit of all, especially the children, youth and families who need help the most. Our camping programs will continue to be a focus for our efforts, and we hope to expand the Honouring the Indigenous Spirit Awards in terms of substance and scope. While the pandemic continues to challenge us all we remain optimistic about our future and look to establish a more formal fund-raising approach.

In closing we wish to thank our volunteers at the Board level and all who made contributions and otherwise helped. We especially acknowledge the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, the Toronto Foundation, Until the Last Child, BMO, the Maxwell Cummings Foundation, and those who generously donated through CanadaHelps.

We invite you to visit our website at www.indigenousspiritfund.org and if the spirit moves you can contribute to our work at indigenousspiritfund@nativechild.org.

Miigwetch

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

- Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle Funding (ALFDC)
- Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle Funding Reaching Home
- Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO)
- Canada Council for the Arts
- Canadian Institute for Health Research administered by the Waakebiness-Bryce Institute for Indigenous Health (WBIH)
- Celebrate Ontario
- Children's Aid Foundation of Canada
- City of Toronto, Children's Services
- City of Toronto, Arts and Culture Services
- City of Toronto, Community Investment Funding
- 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
- City of Toronto, Toronto Public Health
- Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC)
- Daily Bread Food Bank
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Family Services of Peel
- Help For Children (HFC)
- Heritage Canada
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Indigo Love of Reading Foundation
- Kinark Child and Family Services
- Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association
- Ministry for Women and Gender Equality
- Ministry of Children, and Community Social Services (MCCSS)
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Health - Strides Toronto
- Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
- Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG)
- Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training
- Miziwe Biik Development Corporation
- MLSE Foundation
- Ontario Arts Council
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Rogers Foundation
- Scotiabank
- Second Harvest
- Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC)
- The Toronto Star
- Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
- Toronto Arts Council
- Toronto Biennial of Art
- Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN)
- Toronto Foundation
- Toronto Foundation
- United Way Greater Toronto





ORANGE SHIRT DAY AT
SCARBOROUGH CHILD AND FAMILY LIFE CENTRE (SCFLC)



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