



# Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services

2019 ANNUAL REPORT







# Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services

**Niijaansinaanik means “Our Children” in Anishinaabemowin**

### About Us

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services is a culture-based organization responsive to the holistic needs of all children, youth, and families. We provide services that reflect values, beliefs, and principles rooted within the Anishinabek culture. We believe that the care of children and youth is the responsibility of an entire community. While working in the present, we acknowledge history and its impact on our people in relation to outside influences and strive to build a strong, healthy future for all children, youth, families, and communities. We are committed to providing culturally centered protection, prevention, advocacy, care, and cultural services for all children, youth, and families. Our fundamental values emphasize maintaining strong culture and language values, that teach us how to live *Mino Bimaadiziwin: The Good Life*.

We operate around a culture-based Service Model framed around caring for our children and youth and based on Mino Bimaadiziwin – The Good Life, diversity, our Elders, the Clan System and accountabilities, culturally restorative practices, and the seven Grandfather Teachings.

Providing culturally congruent child welfare services for indigenous children and families in the Nipissing-Parry Sound District in:

- Alternative Care
- Customary Care
- Cultural Services
- Kinship Care
- Prevention and Protection Services



We began activities as a pre-designated Child Well-Being agency in 2016. This designation is historic, as it is a necessary step in reclaiming jurisdiction over child welfare services to the First Nations we work with, and by resolution of the Council of Chiefs to support servicing of all Indigenous children and families in the districts of Nipissing and Parry Sound. Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services was incorporated as a non-profit organization of the province of Ontario in November 2018.

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### PRIVACY STATEMENT

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## Message from Executive Director and Board President

Joanne Koehler & William Diabo

First, we would like to recognize the work of our Service Supervisors, frontline staff, and culture team that has continued to work through COVID-19 and provide in-person service to some of the most vulnerable people; our children, youth, and families. Chi-Miigwetch!

This year has been productive and challenging. We remain committed to continuing building capacity as an Indigenous Child Welfare Agency that respects and honours the inherent rights of Indigenous children, youth, and families. Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services staff are working purposefully to carry on the work that our predecessors of Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig accomplished in the 1990s. Ingrained in our mission statement, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services aims to stay grounded in culture, and be keenly responsive to the holistic needs of all children, youth, and families.

Our cultural programming continues to remain a paramount anchor of the organization. Our cultural team consists of Cultural Services Manager - Perry McLeod Shabogestic, Cultural Services Coordinator - Janice St. Germaine, and Cultural Services Helper - Dave Rice. This amazing team has been developing and delivering services that bring our children and families back to the land for teachings, circles for men, women, and parenting knowledge sharing. They strive to ensure our children and youth have a connection to their culture on the land and in the virtual world, we are finding ourselves in more and more.

Our Board of Directors brings a vast amount of experience to their roles. They recognize that respectful collaboration is the hallmark of good board discussions. They have demonstrated the ability to communicate strategic objectives in good times and in times of crisis such as Pandemic Planning for operations. They engage the Seven Grandfather Teachings and practice each of them in all development towards developing an organization to best meet the needs of indigenous children, youth, and families and capacity building within the Agency. Our Board of Directors shows every day that they are respectful, brave, truthful, honest, wise, and humble. They have remained dedicated to their roles and committed to being an integral part of developing an organization to best meet the needs of indigenous children, youth, and families. Chi-Miigwetch!

Due to COVID-19, we have not been able to meet with our Elders Advisory Circle as regularly as scheduled but will be finding ways to reach out virtually. We would like to honour them and say Chi-Miigwetch to the representatives. Our Elders are; Head Elder, Joyce Tabobondung from Wasauksing First Nation, Audrey Tabobondung from Wasauksing First Nation, Lila Jones from Shawanaga First Nation, Rose Cardinal from Magnetawan First Nation, Grace Contin from Henvey Inlet First Nation, Veronica Dokis from Dokis First Nation and Tony Tyson from Wahnapiatae First Nation.

In October 2018, we received a Chiefs Resolution, which has given the organization direction to service all Indigenous children, youth and families within our service jurisdiction. In November 2019, our leadership team and the Board of Directors took part in Strategic Planning. The two days of planning was facilitated by the DeAgazio Corporate Consulting Group of Thunder Bay. A two-year plan was completed that focused on tasks priorities and key accomplishments of the organizational along with strategic planning techniques. Prior to March 2020, we met with Mushkeogwuk Tribal Council, Temagami First Nation and Tungasuvvingat Inuit to further plan to provide services to their membership as we build capacity towards designation.

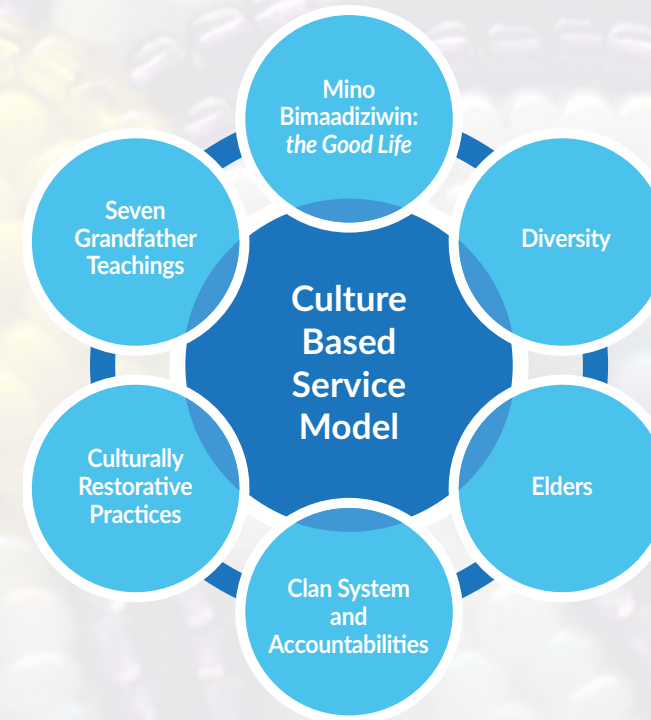
Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) Deputy Minister, Janet Menard forwarded written confirmation on December 12, 2020, approving Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services move into Stage C of the designation process. At the time this was written, we are in the last stage before becoming a provincially designated Child Welfare Agency. We were set to be designated in October 2020, however, COVID-19 affected operations that now have us acquiring designation on April 1, 2021.

The organization could not have reached this accolade without the very dedicated hard work of our staff. I would like to recognize all departments and staff: Administration, Cultural Services, Communications, Facilities, Frontline Workers, Finance, Human Resources, Leadership, and Information Technology for their commitment, experience, enthusiasm, and ambition to bringing this agency to Stage C of the designation journey.

## Niijaansinaanik Service Model

All children are sacred. It is believed that each child chooses their parents. Parents have been given responsibility from the Creator to love and protect their child(ren). We (kinship, community, clan, and Nation) have a collective responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Our current service model is built upon caring for children and youth. The objective of the service model is to keep children and youth safe and healthy and within our communities.

Our Fundamental Beliefs are included in our Culture-Based Service Model:



We aim to cultivate hope, belonging, and connectedness to family, community, and the land. Our familial relationships provide meaning to life, and an understanding of purpose. Anishinaabe children must be surrounded by layers of support, not limited to family, extended family, community, clan, and Nation. We also aim to be informed and practice according to the knowledge and understanding of the following eight Culture-Based Service Delivery Principles.

- 1. Trauma-Informed** - Views symptoms as adaptive coping mechanisms. Understands the inter-generational impacts of colonialism and that people are resilient and have strengths.
- 2. Strengths-Based** - Focuses on the strengths and abilities of people. As personal awareness of strengths increases so does self-empowerment.
- 3. Restores Balance** - All the strengths and resources needed are already present within our communities and in our cultural teachings, ceremonies, and practices.
- 4. Spiritually Grounded** - The use of Elders, traditional teachers to help us use ceremonies, sweat lodge, fasting, and land-based teachings to ground and center the spirit.
- 5. Culturally Safe** - Service providers seek to address the effects of colonialism by ensuring that they seek to understand and protect the cultural identity of the individual, are aware of how their power and privilege may affect the relationships and trust of people they work with.
- 6. Engages Community** - Everyone within the community is valued and restored to their place within the circle.
- 7. Reciprocal Relationships** - Internal and External protocol agreements, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and Service Delivery Agreements map out various roles and responsibilities.
- 8. Accountable** - All parts of the service delivery system are accountable to one another. The clan system is tied to accountability.



## President and Board Members

The President and Board of Directors provide direction, guidance, and oversight. Oversight and governance are provided by the diverse body of individuals carefully selected for their varying backgrounds and unique skill sets. The President and Board represent those we serve and their best interests and ensure the organization is on the right path concerning meeting its goals, as well as working on and implementing policies in support of those goals.

Chi-Miigwetch to our President and Board of Directors for their unwavering leadership, input, and commitment.

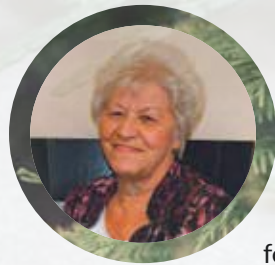


**Board President – Board Member - Magnetawan First Nation**  
William Diabo

William grew up in Toronto, Kahnawake and Dunkirk, New York, until he was 18 years old. He returned to Magnetawan in 1990, and has since been working for the people. William brings a wealth of experience in health, governance, community, politics, information technology management, police services, child and family services, and more.

William holds an Honours Management Certificate. For almost 20 years he served as Volunteer Board Member and Working Group Representative for Magnetawan First Nation. He has served as Board Director, Secretary, and for the past 11 years, and President of the Board of Shkagamik: Kwe Health Centre. William served as President of the Board of Gezhtoojig Employment and Training for seven years, and Board Director and Finance Committee Chair for Aboriginal Police Services for eight years. Acting as Area Health Board Director for four years, William stayed very active in health and governance. He was also on the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) Child Well Being Law Working Group from 2016-2018. William is still committed to the UOI Governance Working Group which he joined in 2016, and has also been Board Director and President on the Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services since then.

William is currently on his fourth term as Chief of Magnetawan and has served as Band Councillor for one term.

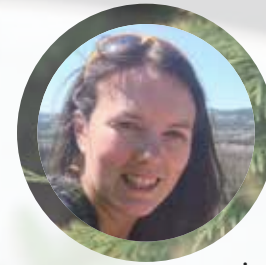


**Vice President - Board Member – Dokis First Nation**  
Denise Restoule

Denise has an extensive 30-year career in community health. She started at the Health Services for Dokis First Nation as a “Family Health Aide” which evolved into the “Community Health Representative” (CHR) Program. She was the Acting Interim CHR Co-Ordinator position for Ontario Region, spokesperson and a Keynote Speaker at the first National CHR Conference.

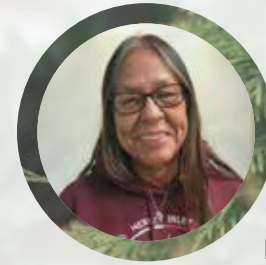
She has worked in Dokis as Drug and Alcohol Prevention Worker and then the CHR position. Denise coordinated, developed and negotiated for Dokis, Nipissing and Bear Island (Temagami FN) for the Transfer of Health Services from Canada, for the First Nations to assume administrative responsibility of their health services. She has served as Health Director of Dokis First Nation.

Denise has an extensive political career, serving as Councillor over many terms, and in 2006 was the first female to be elected as Chief of Dokis and was re-elected for five consecutive terms until retirement in 2016, and later as Deputy Chief. As Dokis Chief, she oversaw development the Okikendawt Hydro Project, helped Dokis achieve the “Pollution Probe Award”, presented by the Premier of Ontario. In May 2018, Denise was appointed by the Minister of National Defence as Honorary Lieutenant Colonel (HLCOL) with the Algonquin Regiment in North Bay.



**Treasurer- Board Director - Wahnapiatae First Nation**  
Marnie Anderson

Marnie currently works at Laurentian University for the Aboriginal Children’s Health and Wellbeing Measure (ACHWM) where she shares it with communities across Ontario and Canada. She holds a Bachelor of Physical Education at Laurentian University, specializing in Health Promotion and Indigenous Studies, and achieved an advanced diploma in Physical Fitness and Leisure Management at Cambrian College. With several years of experience in planning, conducting, evaluating and implementing programs for First Nations in several different areas both on and off reserve, she is eager to participate and assist Wahnapiatae with her knowledge, as it builds on her personal interest in Indigenous children’s health.



**Secretary – Henvey Inlet First Nation**  
Grace Contin

Grace was a board member for the previous pre-designation agency Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child and Family Services for the entirety of their existence. In her home community of Henvey Inlet First Nation, she was the Child Welfare Prevention Worker for eight years and was a daycare worker for five years. She remains a strong advocate for children and families in her community. Grace is a mother of three adult children and has six grand children and three great grandchildren. She is very much involved in their lives and is a proud Nokomis!



**Board Member - Wasauksing First Nation**  
Dale Copegog

Wawasquene n’dizhn’kaz, Migizi dodem, Wasauksing donjaba.

Dale has worked in the social field for many years at Wasauksing Administration office, focusing on the areas of Ontario Works, child welfare, youth services, restorative justice and community wellness programming.

Dale has been a contributing member on many committees/boards such as: Board of Manotsaywin Nanotoojig; a member on the Advisory Committee for B’sanibamaadsiwin Native Mental Health; a member of the Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association and, most recently, was involved with Waabnoong Bemjiwong’s development of a Child Well-Being Agency. Dale is looking forward to contributing as a board member during an exciting time for our nations as we work towards operating our own unique agency that meets the needs of our children and their families.



**Board Member – Shawanaga First Nation**  
Patricia Pawis

Patricia grew up in Shawanaga First Nation. She holds a Social Work diploma from Confederation College in Thunder Bay, ON. Patricia spent five years as President of the Parry Sound Friendship Centre Board, which she was involved with as a Board Member for 20 years. She currently serves as Councillor in her 19<sup>th</sup> year of service, and was Chief of Shawanaga First Nation for two years. She stays active and involved with many community committees and different boards. Patricia has been employed as Service Administrator at the Shawanaga First Nation Healing Centre, and was involved with Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Child & Family Services. Patricia takes great pride and fulfillment by being involved with community and family.



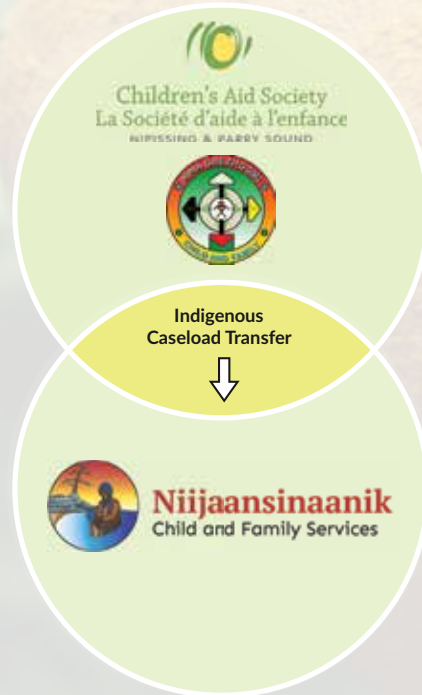
# Service Report

Over the last year, all service fields including the Alternative Care program, the Cultural Services Program, Quality Assurance, Child Protection Services, and CPIN have continued to develop and progress. Along the way, there have been some unique challenges in servicing children, youth, and families, as well as conducting business matters due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

In March all staff commenced working remotely from home while adhering to community health and safety recommendations at all service delivery levels. All communities provided Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services with a COVID-19 Protocol for their respective community for safety measures as it pertains to child welfare matters. Niijaansinaanik values and appreciates the untimely tasks respective community leaders must endure during COVID times, and are thankful for the protocol measures they provided for both Niijaansinaanik and Nipissing Parry Sound Children's Aid Society (CASNPS). These protocols continue to remain in effect.

As restrictions have lifted for families being serviced in urban

areas, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services have resumed more face to face interactions when meeting with children, youth and families while abiding by recommendations surrounding the use of personal protective equipment, hand hygiene, and social distancing.



The health and safety restrictions have resulted in some delays with recruitment and the hiring of staff, however efforts resumed and the Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Team has grown significantly in the areas of the leadership team, protection services, children's services, and human resources. The new team members are in process of completing Authorization Training through OACAS, as well as being trained on the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) at Nipissing and Parry Sound Children's Aid Society.

One protection worker and one supervisor have recently been seconded to Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services to commence planning for servicing families in the Sudbury jurisdiction.

Although staff continues to work remotely, there have been



Photo: L-R Chief Larry Roque, Wahnapiatae First Nation, Chief William Diabo, Magnetawan First Nation, The Honourable Associate Minister Jill Dunlop, Joanne Koehler, Dave Rice

opportunities made for each team to gather for a day of cultural teachings led by the Manager of Cultural Services. A basic understanding of the medicine wheel has been introduced to workers to gain insight into Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services service model approaches with families.

The Children's Services Team was initiated on January 27, 2020. The Children's Services Team is seconded to Nipissing Parry Sound Children's Aid. Part of the team includes a dedicated Customary Care Coordinator who works with the children services workers to ensure that at the onset of any possible admission that the families we serve have the opportunity to enter into a Customary Care Agreement (CCA) as opposed to entering into court proceedings.

In a very short time, the Children's Services Team has transferred and assumed care of 44 Indigenous children who were residing under a variety of scenarios with Nipissing Parry Sound Children's Aid Society to our Children's Services Unit. As well, we continue to receive all incoming admissions for any Indigenous children. Niijaansinaanik's children service workers ensure that the communities play an integral part in all planning for the children so the children remain connected to their culture and their identity.

On Child in Care Day on May 25, 2020, the children services staff prepared and delivered dream catcher kits and homemade pizza kits to all of the children who are being supervised by our agency. The team is working with the Cultural Services team to facilitate children's groups and outings for our children who are living away from their communities to provide cultural teachings.

Ongoing meetings with the Ministry have continued, in a virtual setting, as the work continues on the designation work plan. Reviews that had been scheduled for June were deferred until late November. Protocol development

with education, hospitals, and police services are underway to ensure the inclusion of protection measures surrounding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, human trafficking, and the cease of birth alerts.

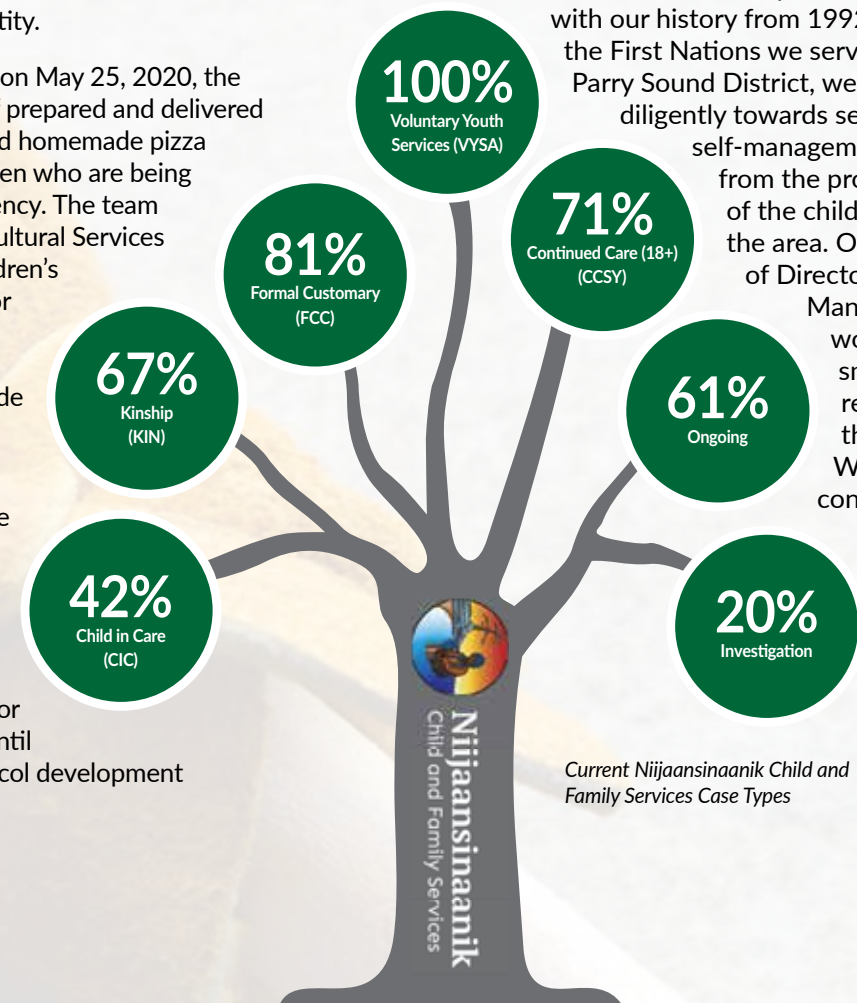
Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services CPIN team continue to meet with the Ministry CPIN team, in making key decisions around how Niijaansinaanik will conduct day to day operations within the CPIN system, ensuring that cultural considerations are made at each step.



Photo: Deputy Minister Janet Menard, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and Perry McLeod, Niijaansinaanik Manager of Cultural Services

## Devolution and Designation

As a direct result of the implication of The Caring Society Case for *Reimagining Child Welfare Systems in Canada* specifically towards First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) children, youth and families, combined with our history from 1992 in relations to the First Nations we serve in the Nipissing Parry Sound District, we have been working diligently towards self-determination and self-management and devolution from the provincial counterpart of the child welfare services in the area. Our President, Board of Directors and Executive Management team work together for the smooth transfer of responsibilities through the designation stages. We look forward to continued collaboration with First Nations, Children's Aid Society of Nipissing and Parry Sound, Ontario and Canada.



Current Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Case Types



## Care Services and Culturally Congruent Practices in Child and Family Services

### Alternative Care Program

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Service Agency has been licensed by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services as a Licensed Foster Care Operator under the Child Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA), since December 2018. The Alternative Care team completed the first annual review in June 2019 and the license was renewed for another year. This year's review was deferred until November 2020 due to COVID-19. The Alternative Care team is preparing in advance for the review to ensure that we are following Ministry standards and Niijaansinaanik's policies and procedures.

On July 15, 2020, the Ministry officially recognized HEART and SPIRIT as an alternative to SAFE and PRIDE.

It was change agents such as Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Manager of Resources, Carrie Tabobondung, former Executive Director of Mnaasged Child and Family Services, who influenced the mainstream child welfare sector for Indigenous agencies to utilize tools that are culturally safe for the families and children we serve. It's honourable work that began with a team that worked diligently to produce tools that made sense to Indigenous people. The work has been beneficial, and the tools are being used in the system as a way of decolonizing and repairing the strong family systems that define us as Indigenous people. We must do double the work to repair and rebuild our families and communities.

That was the original intent of HEART and SPIRIT. Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services will work with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario to begin refresher training and adaptation of HEART and SPIRIT to each of our First Nation communities child welfare practices.

After the COVID-19 restrictions in March, recruitment came to a standstill. Recruitment has recommenced while adhering to health and safety recommendations while working in concert with the First Nation Chief and Councils, staff, and communities to ensure the capacity continues to build resources to facilitate the growth.

The focus for this year in Alternative Care will be recruitment, training for staff and Alternative Care homes, HEART and SPIRIT refresher training and adaption for Niijaansinaanik communities based on their practice. We will continue to use Safe and Pride until we complete the adaption of HEART and SPIRIT. The adaption will be done by the team along with the participation of the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario.

Pre-service Training that was slated for Spring 2020 did not take place due to COVID-19. The pre-service training will take place as soon as restrictions are lifted as this requires in-person learning specifically in a group setting. We are hopeful to begin training for HEART and SPIRIT in 2021.

## Customary Care

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services mission and mandate is to place children with family and community first with a preference to utilize Customary Care above all other permanency options. Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services desire that Customary Care Agreements be reached before any court applications are required. Respecting that each community has its specific values, beliefs, and own processes, the Agency has developed protocols with each First Nation that outlines the specific steps necessary when proceeding with a Customary Care Agreement.

The focus for this year was to continue to build a more collaborative relationship through education and bringing about more awareness of the Customary Care

procedure. The past encounters of Child Welfare for our Indigenous people have had multi-layers of intergenerational trauma that affect our communities and families. Reaching out and bringing awareness about Niijaansinaanik's Customary Care program will cultivate health and wellness for Indigenous families while honouring cultural identity.

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services currently have 14 Customary Care Agreements signed. There are another five agreements in progress. The agency workers are coordinating, monitoring, providing support, and ensuring all the proper documentation is completed. Successful completion of all agreements has required working collaboratively with the families, First Nations, and Children's Aid Societies.





## Quality Assurance and Measuring Impact

### Prevention Services

The Quality Assurance department is actively engaged in assisting our various work streams in preparing for the successful deployment of the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) in support of our approaching designation. In July, a Continuous Quality Improvement Manager was retained to structure and lead the CPIN deployment. The project management role is instrumental in formulating the mapping, tracking, and coordination of the CPIN integration.

As Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services moves towards designation, our CPIN implementation project plan provides a framework to guide our various committees and sub-committees to complete our activities for an effective CPIN launch.

Our sub-committees examine our CPIN operational items as it relates to case transfer strategy, data migration, service delivery model, infrastructure planning, cultural services, financial service integration, recruitment strategy, resource projections, facility blueprint, CPIN technical standards, communication plan, and interagency relationships in preparation for our readiness assessment. A variety of these working groups have overarching tasks and dependencies within the scheduled project plan. Our agency acknowledges the importance of the partnerships that have contributed information in support of our CPIN deployment. The consultation and collaboration with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO), Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), and the support of other related agencies is an important foundation to our ongoing success.

Efforts continue with the case review and transfer status to maintain system accuracy and to validate that any open and active files are properly identified as First Nation, Inuit, or Métis (FNIM). The combination of report population, case reviews with staff, and refresher training are implemented as a means of preventative measures to help minimize inaccuracies of member identity in CPIN. Currently, Niijaansinaanik has seconded staff to Nipissing Parry Sound Children's Aid Society (CASNPS) and Kina Gbezhgomi Child and Family Services (KINA) and is managing case assignments in preparation for our designation.

In August, we conducted a CPIN Decision Making Demo to discuss how Niijaansinaanik will be structured with an added focus on our cultural components. These business decisions will be incorporated into our training materials and will assist in the creation of participant and user guides for classroom training that leverage CPIN Business Harmonization Practices. In support of ongoing learning, tip sheets will be provided to staff and revised as periodic system upgrades occur.

To maintain compliance with the required Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Standards, a progress report and due date tracker is generated for our seconded staff at Nipissing Parry Sound Children's Aid Society (CASNPS). Niijaansinaanik has outlined an internal compliance tracking system organized by the worker/supervisor that will assist in monitoring our progress and identify any improvement opportunities. Regular analyses will be leveraged in sustaining ongoing conformity and assist in identifying any training requirements.



A draft Business Continuity Plan is under construction which will incorporate redeployment of resources during a state of emergency and incident response planning that will include addressing business practices during unscheduled CPIN downtime.

With the recent introduction of *Part X Privacy Protocol of the Child, Youth, and Family Services Act (CYFSA)* in January 2020 that sets out rules for service providers regarding privacy and access to personal information, Niijaansinaanik is in the process of constructing a Privacy Breach Response Protocols document.

The Protocols document will serve as a triage document and outlines roles, accountabilities, risk assessment, scope, event classification, decision

flow, action table, privacy notifications, key contacts, communication, checklist, and containment for the Crisis Management Team.

Our goal is to create a Privacy Culture to ensure we remain compliant with the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information to satisfy the Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) and regulatory requirements by way of ongoing training, education, and communication. The Quality Assurance measures will serve as safeguards in upholding the confidence in our professional service delivery standards and maintain the integrity of our work quality with the regulatory bodies, our stakeholders, and the communities we serve.



## Cultural Services

Cultural services can be provided to support children and families on healing journeys to stay connected or to reconnect with culture and traditions. We respect all healthy spiritual paths and are happy to work with you for other cultural or traditional requests, including:

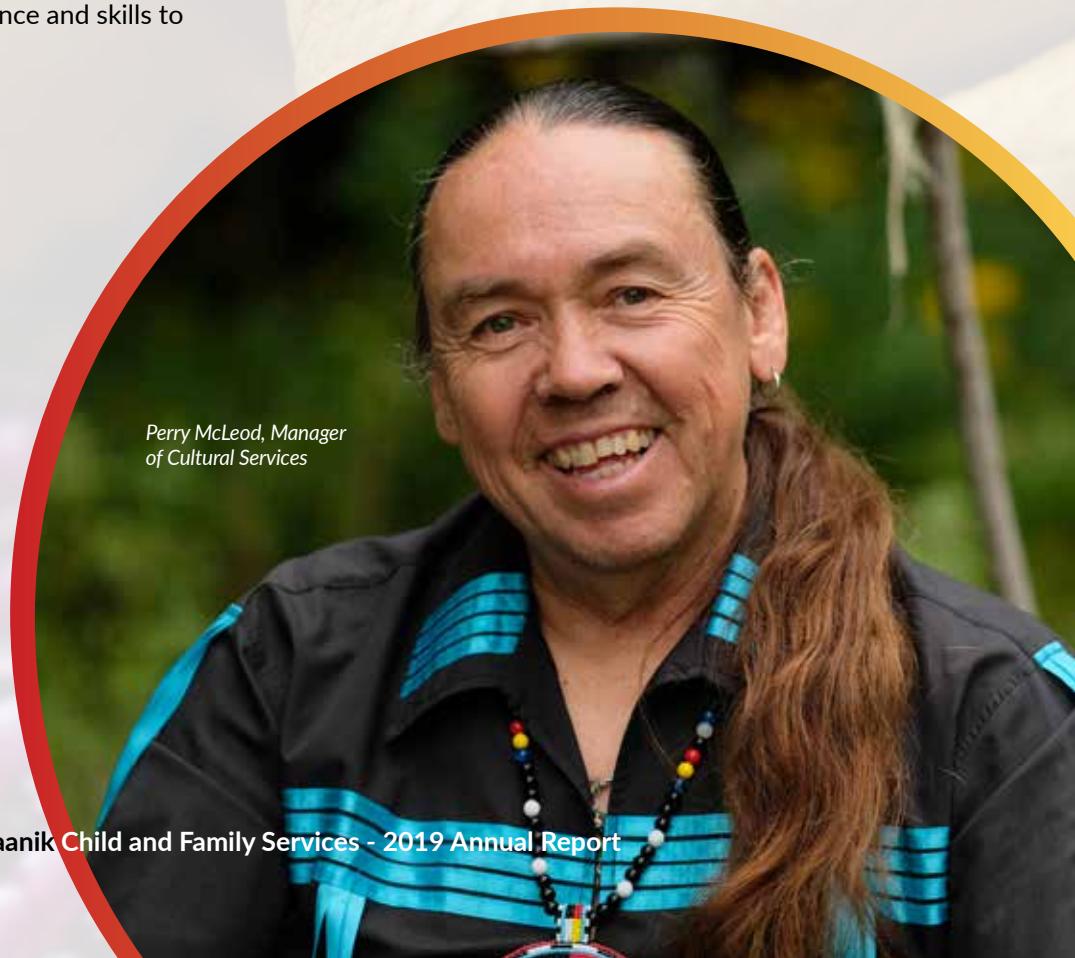
- Sweat Lodge
- Pipe Ceremony
- Naming and Colours Ceremony
- Fasting and Vision Quest
- Welcoming Ceremonies
- Rites of Passage Ceremonies
- Traditional Land Base Teachings
- Family Circles
- Cedar Bath
- Other requests

This year has been a rollercoaster ride of challenges and successes. It began with our Cultural Program adding two more staff during the summer of 2019, increasing our presence and support to our families and communities and then finding ways to continue our growth during COVID-19. Janice St. Germaine was hired as the Cultural Service Coordinator, with Dave Rice being brought on as a Cultural Helper. Each has brought important and vital experience and skills to the Cultural Program and Agency.

Even with the health and safety provincial contact limitations we now face, our Cultural Program continues to promote our new agency, support families, staff, and develop networking. As we built our staff we expanded our activities to include family training like the "Parenting Bundle Program". This program helps equip parents and caregivers with more skills that support parents and caregivers by using traditional teachings to add to their experience.

Online platforms and videos have been developed and utilized to connect with our children, families, communities, and staff. Virtual teachings and circles are more difficult but this challenge has forced us to be creative in sharing the cultural teachings that are needed for life's uncertain path for all of us. This has allowed us to add to our cultural tool belt to support and reach children and families in a new way. Our new world continues to evolve and we will continue to move and grow with it.

As things begin to open we are now slowly re-establishing face to face activities closely following community protocols. This new way of doing our work has many challenges but as one of our teachers once said... "There is always a way.. you just have to find it."



Perry McLeod, Manager of Cultural Services

## Elders Advisory Circle



Photo: Tony Tyson (Wahnapiitae First Nation Elder) and Lila Jones (Shawanaga First Nation Elder)

The Elders Circle has been well established within the agency with protocols and terms of reference. We had met regularly on a quarterly basis before COVID-19 but have now had to reassess how to meet in order to protect them. Presently we are looking at virtual ways to continue their vital participation in supporting their roles and guidance for our agency.

### Alternative Care Parenting Pre-Service Training

In Fall 2019, we held our initial Alternative Care Parenting Pre-Service Training. This "HEART and SPIRIT" course was developed by Mnaasged Child and Family Services and ANCFSAO, to balance western parenting techniques and knowledge with Indigenous traditional roles, teachings and practices. The ceremony, intellectual, and traditional learning was the basis for this training.

### Family Healing/Guiding Circles

Circles have become an important tool to support families, staff, and communities. There are many kinds of circles and we have used them in different situations to help bring balance to the challenges life and work bring. Family circles have been utilized to help work through the journey children and families experience from colonization and its effects. This tool is more gentle and conducive to our ways than mainstream

processes that often end up in court and promote a more divisive outcome. Our staff has also experienced the circle to help support the challenges this work often creates. Training and cultural learning have also been done using the circle so staff not only learn about the circle itself, but feel its medicine. This allows staff to become more familiar with using the circle so when they are ready they too can begin to conduct them with children and families. The circle has become a central tool of our agency along with other ceremonies and teachings.

### Traditional Parenting Program

In 2019, it was decided to move forward with an appropriate model of traditional parenting program that would be a crucial learning resource for all parents and caregivers of children. Our culture staff decided to work with Wabano's Parenting Bundle - a cultural program designed to reintroduce parents and caregivers to traditional roles and responsibilities of parenting and caregiving. It was developed by the Wabano Parenting Society, comprised of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Grandmothers, and community members. It is a holistic and cultural approach to empowering Indigenous parents and caregivers in their parenting journey.



Head Elder, Joyce Tabobondung

Our Traditional Parenting Program series was piloted in February 2020. The program acknowledges and works through the history of colonization in Canada which has eroded many of the traditional family systems and beliefs in our communities. The removal of children from our communities disrupted the sharing and passing on of important traditional teachings, stories, and ceremonies that are essential to balanced families and communities.





## Departmental Reports

Alternative Care, Customary Care, Child Protection and Prevention, Cultural Services, and Quality Assurance have been covered in the first part of this report. Below, you can find a snapshot of some of the highlights over the past year for our other departments, including: Administration, Communications, Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology.

### Administration

The administration department works to support the departments, management, and Board within the agency. Daily, we ensure and maintain a high level of productivity and efficiency for department and agency tasks and projects, not limited to record keeping, billing, personal, physical distribution, and logistics. We assist in all duties related to forwarding the agency's goals, objectives, policies, and mission. Monthly, we prepare minutes for management and the Board of Directors. When required, we help organize small and large events. Administration duties flex to the current state of events and flow with what is needed from management and the Board of Directors.



Photo: Niijaansinaanik attendance at the Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Conference, November 19th-20th, 2019 in Rama, ON.



Photo: Niijaansinaanik staff decorate and ride on the float for Sturgeon Falls Parade of Lights 2019

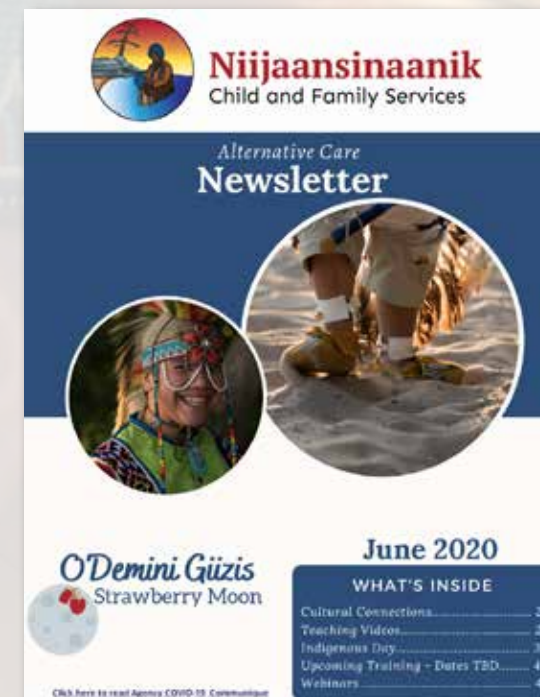
### Communications

The Communications Coordinator provides interdepartmental support to all departments in planning, presenting and monitoring internal and external communications. Communications prepares and delivers public relations and marketing materials consistent with Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Mission, mandate, goals and objectives. Communications is responsible for preparing Communication related Strategies and Policies.

Specifically, the Communications Coordinator is responsible for creation and distribution of the following, but not limited to:

- Website
- Annual Report
- Social Media
- Pamphlets
- Print Materials
- Presentations
- Newsletters
- Calendars
- News Releases
- Graphics
- Photography
- Videography

Additionally, our Communications Coordinator will chair the Communications Committee with CASNPS. The Communication Committee will create joint strategies, requirements and messaging in order to ensure public and client understanding prior to and during full designation of the agency.



Advertisement placed in Great Lakes Pow Wow Guide 2020. Over 15,000 copies distributed throughout Anishinabek territory, and available on-line.

### Facilities

The Facilities Coordinator provides administrative support to the Agency by ensuring the built environment, including offices and satellite offices are safe and functional. The Facilities Coordinator oversees maintaining buildings, landscaping, and coordinating maintenance duties within offices. Currently, we have eight office locations:

- Eagles Nest
- Couchie Industrial
- Parry Sound
- Dokis Satellite Office
- Henvey Inlet
- Dokis First Nation Band Office
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Magnetawan First Nation

One of the most exciting events to occur in 2019, was the purchase of five new fleet vehicles, a new duty for Facilities to assist in organizing. Facilities also manages a key system. It certainly was a busy year for Facilities, when COVID-19 occurred, it changed the way the entire world does business. We stocked up and inventoried all appropriate required items for our staff, and ensured our built locations were safe and met all provincial instructions.



Photo: Staff pose with one of the new fleet vehicles for Children's Services.

### Finance

As our agency continues to grow daily, the finance department is growing along with them! In 2019, we welcomed two new employees to the agency. Our existing Director of Finance, Brenda Hirvilammi, was joined by Dan Nykilchuk, Accounting Supervisor, and Chantal Caron, Finance Clerk.

Our Director of Finance assists in supervising department strategy and collaborates with other management, ensuring actions are in line with legal requirements, monitoring cash flow and oversees many tasks. Our general accountant reviews financial statements, and reconciles ledger accounts and more. The Finance Clerk is responsible for ensuring department staff handles all duties for accounts payable and accounts receivable.



Many processes have been streamlined over 2019, notably with moving to electronic payroll, collaborating with Human Resources, and Information Technology.

### Human Resources

In the last fiscal year, 44 positions were filled. The staff complement at the end of March 2020 was 38 full-time staff and two contract staff. As of August 2020, we have 48 full-time staff. Recruitment efforts came to a standstill in March with the Declaration of Emergency by the Provincial Government for the COVID-19 pandemic. Information Technology implemented Zoom for interviewing, and we began recruiting with this new medium. Departments to hire for include: Legal Services, Support Services, Prevention Services, After Hours, Screening and Disclosure, and team members for Child Protection in Parry Sound. There are a total of 48 positions to fill, all of which have been posted on our website. We are currently 50% staffed up.



August 2020

In correlation with a Consultant, Human Resources has moved ahead with the development of Human Resources policies, procedures, and support in the acquiring of a Human Resources Information System. Manual timesheets were tracked by finance, with year-end totals for vacation carry over, and sick leave for extenuating sick totals provided to Human Resources for input into purely HR for April 2020. Our Human

Resource Policy was reviewed by the Board in sections, with the final policy being passed in August 2020. The staff has been taking on-line mandatory training through OACAS. Management has started using the new Performance Appraisal form for their annual reviews.

Employees are enrolled in both Pension and Benefit Plans. We have a Joint Health & Safety Committee, with three members being trained as Certified Members. It has been a busy year, but with new members being added to the Human Resources team we can effectively respond to the needs of the Agency.

### Information Technology (IT)

The IT department has had a busy year, setting up phone systems, computers cabling, and wifi for offices in Henvey Inlet First Nation, Parry Sound, and at the Couchie Industrial Office. The IT department continues its planning for the set up at the offices in Magnetwan First Nation and Shawanaga First Nation as well to connect the phone systems throughout all of Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services offices.

To protect the confidential information of all the families receiving services, as well as business matters, IT has installed and configured a central anti-virus server, and a server for finance. Setting up a file server for security and shared file access, and developing a plan to connect all offices are all in progress.

During COVID-19, IT has been most helpful in assisting all staff to be able to work from home. To help facilitate the services that Niijaansinaanik completes with families It has setup Zoom and Teams software and provided training to staff.

Configure software was installed to enable IT to remotely support staff.

## Staff Directory

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### Thank You: First Nations and Stakeholders







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