



Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services

2020 ANNUAL REPORT





Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services

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

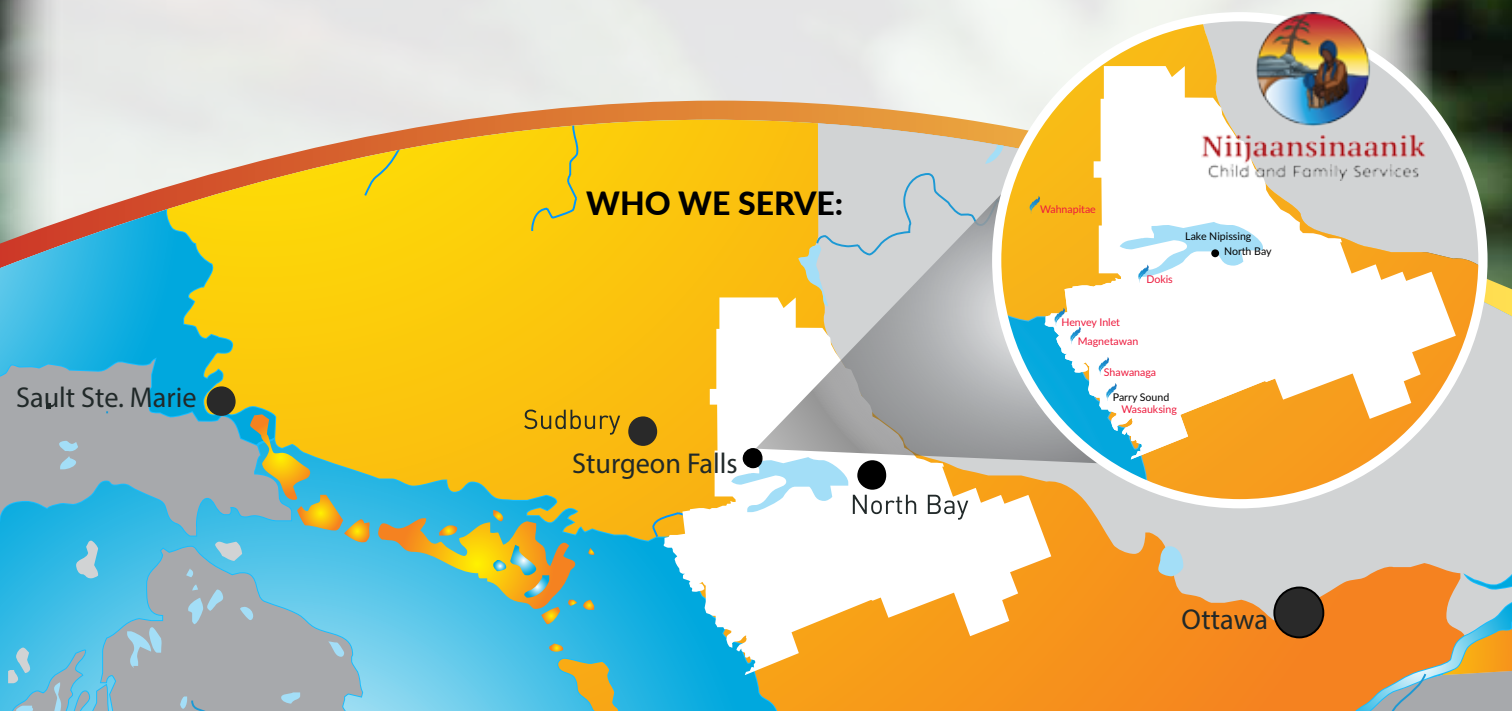
About Us

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 districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound and Greater City of Sudbury, in:

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



Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services became a designated Child Well-Being Agency on April 1, 2021. 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, Parry Sound and Greater City of Sudbury. We began activities as a pre-designated Child Well-Being Agency in 2016. 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

Joanne Koehler, BSW, MSW

The year 2020/21 can now be regarded as a historical time for the First Nation communities of Wasauksing, Shawanaga, Magnetawan, Henvey Inlet, Dokis, and Wahanapitae.

On April 1, 2021, Niijaansinaanik received Designation approval from the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services (MCCSS) as a Child Well-Being Agency. Every Child Matters was the driving force made by the Council of Chiefs to regain control over child welfare matters for their communities. This decision was prior to the atrocity of the recent and ongoing discoveries at residential school grounds across the country. As a newly designated child well-being agency, Niijaansinaanik has newly inspired hope to change the rigid dichotomy between culture and colonialism associated with delivering services to children, youth, and families.

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services have met the required threshold to be recognized as a Child Well-Being Agency, however, capacity building will continue for some time. Capacity is not specific to ministerial guidelines, but more so to a level of meeting the service needs of the citizens of the communities we serve. The Covid-19 worldwide pandemic has accounted for an interruption in the scheduling of community forums where the hope was to inform community members and acquire feedback from citizens on service delivery. During the fiscal year of 2020/21 Niijaansinaanik staff operated primarily from home offices while continuing to meet both cultural and Ministry standards. Respecting the identified community emergency lockdowns challenged our staff to develop creative practices to ensure the safety of children was paramount in service delivery, and remain child, youth and family focused.

Our journey to designation had our frontline staff working very diligently to maintain the cultural component of service while ensuring the provincial standards were maintained. The standards that a

designated agency is required to follow demonstrate the final outcome reflected in a compliance rate for service as per Ministry standards.

The work the frontline staff completed daily was the primary focus of the Ministry Capacity Assessment Review Tool (CART) that was conducted in October 2020. The agency achieved a high compliance rate from the Ministry of Children Community and Social Services. The second part of the CART usually has the Ministry attend on-site and complete interviews with staff, management, Elders, Chiefs, transferring Children's Aid Societies, and the Board of Directors. Once again, Covid-19 being a significant barrier prevented the on-site review to occur. A collaborative approach was developed whereby the Ministry provided the questions they would have asked at an in-person interview and a video was created to respond to the questions. The purpose of this portion is to get an informed sense of varied levels of the organization and other stakeholders of Niijaansinaanik's readiness to assume full responsibility as a Child Well-Being Agency. We will be developing a new Strategic Plan in the spring of 2022 that will identify the next three years as a designated agency. The initial Strategic Plan was done in the pre-designation stage that reflected the work that needed to be completed to get the agency through to approved designation.

I would like to say Chi-Miigwetch to three board members that have moved on from the Niijaansinaanik Board of Directors. They were part of the original Board of Directors appointed by their communities. Dale Copegog of Wasauksing First Nation, Patricia Pawis of Shawanaga First Nation, and William Diabo of Magnetawan First Nation.

As we move forward into our first year as a designated Child Well-Being Agency we will rely on the voice of our Elders for guidance and seek to pause and reflect on our actions as we move forward. Culturally congruent services have been, and will remain the cornerstone of practice that we seek to achieve.



Service Report

This past year has brought some very exciting times in our agency's growth. Not only have we continued to develop and progress in the service fields of the Cultural Services Program, Quality Assurance, Child Protection Services, and Children Services, we have added the services of Kinship Services, Prevention, Family Support, and our Volunteer Drive Program.

All these services work together for the safety and well-being of our children, youth, and families while keeping them connected to their families, communities, culture, and identity.

The past year has presented some challenges due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. Staff continued to work remotely from home, abiding

by all health and safety recommendations such as the use of PPE, hand sanitation, social distancing, and following the Covid-19 protocols that had been developed with each community. The restrictions did not stop our growth and development as we continued forward with business matters through virtual meetings, circles, and even held some virtual community presentations when we were unable to gather. As the restrictions were lifted on May 25th, 2021, staff returned to work in the offices and face-to-face gatherings in communities resumed, such as Cultural Days for our children and youth in care and Alternative Care recruitment BBQs. We continue to plan events for the next year to inform communities of all the services Niijaansinaanik has to offer.



History & Designation

Niijaansinaanik means “Our Children” in Anishinaabemowin. Before Niijaansinaanik came to life, communities, Elders, Chiefs and Councils saw a need for a reimagined Child and Family Services for their people. In 2016, Chiefs mandated Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations (WBAFN) to pursue the development of an Indigenous Children’s Services Agency for the First Nations of: Wasauksing, Henvey Inlet, Wahnapiatae, Dokis, Magnetawan and Shawanaga. Operating under WBAFN, we began to serve the communities, and were gifted our name – Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services in March 2019. As Niijaansinaanik began to grow, we completed all required Ministry stages, including the last stage, during the global pandemic of Covid-19.

As of April 1, 2021, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services became a designated Indigenous Child Welfare Agency. Our network of staff, Board of Directors, and Elders Advisory Circle with representation from all of the communities served worked extremely hard towards this designation. We

are confident in our agency; built to serve and provide culturally congruent care services to the families, clan, community and Nation.

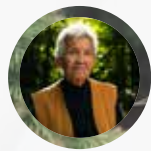
These photos are from a small celebration on April 1, 2021, and a larger one with dignitaries present on August 26, 2021, on Wasauksing First Nation Traditional Grounds. We were presented with our Grandfather Drum on April 1, 2021, and the flags and Eagle Staffs (3) on August 26, 2021.

Chi-Miigwech to the Staff, Management, Board of Directors, Elders Advisor Circle, First Nations, Chiefs, Affiliated Agencies, and Stakeholders. Together we have built a strong agency dedicated to walking with children, youth, and families on their path to Mino-Bimaadiziwin. Our Agency and all involved truly understand the historical impacts on our people generationally, and the importance of indigenous values at the forefront to facilitate healing and health for direct benefit of the children, youth and families.

The Honourable Jane McKenna, Associate Minister of Children and Women’s Issues, Joanne Koehler, Executive Director, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services

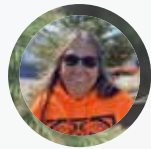


Elders Advisory Circle



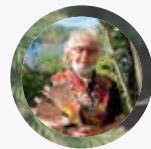
Joyce Tabobondung, Head Elder

Elder Joyce Tabobondung was born and raised on Wasauksing First Nation. She worked for the First Nation for many years in various positions, including Economic Advisor for the Highway 69 Corridor, Ratification Officer, Elder Advisor, and serving the community as Chief. Joyce was instrumental in the forming of the Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations Tribal Council, the Parry Sound Native Friendship Centre, and was Grand Chief of the Robinson Huron Treaty. Joyce was the Chief of Wasauksing First Nation during the formation of Gzaa-Gaah-Naa-Nig Anishinabek Child and Family Services in 1992. Throughout her years of service, she has always been involved with children, youth, and families and was on the developing team of Gaazoonanic (Those We Love) Child and Family Services and carried on with Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services (Our Children).



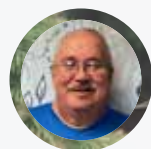
Grace Contin, Henvey Inlet First Nation

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 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. She is very much involved in their lives and is a proud Nokomis!



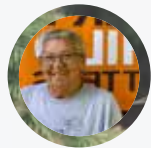
Audrey Tabobondung, Wasauksing First Nation
Biidawbonook, (Before dawn) N'dizh N' Kaaz, Ngig (Otter) N'doodem (Clan)

Audrey worked as a Native Child Welfare Worker for ten years in the Kenora area. There, she met Elders who helped guide her in her spiritual healing mission and she received her vision to pursue traditional teachings, one being the Jingle dress. Audrey is also an artist who combines traditional methods with new technology to create one-of-a-kind Anishinaabe inspired creations. Audrey serves as Elder, grandmother, and Nokomis to the children attending the Wasauksing's Migizoons (Little Eagle) Child Care. Audrey is a proud mom and grandmother!



Tony Tyson, Wahnapiatae First Nation

Tony Tyson is proudly from Wahnapiatae First Nation which is where he currently resides. He has been married to his wife for 40 years and they have four children and six grandchildren. Tony has worked for N'Swakamok Native Friendship as the Life Long Care Worker for 21 years. In his role, he organizes and offers programming and services to the Elders in the community. Tony is a Fire Keeper, Eagle Staff Carrier, Pipe Carrier, and Traditional Dancer. He is also a member of the Cultural Advisory Committee - Wahnapiatae, and a Board Member for Native Housing in Sudbury.



Veronica Dokis, Dokis First Nation

Veronica "Meegis Kwe" - Bear Clan, is a first degree Midwiwin Elder. Veronica was born and raised on Nipissing First Nation, and comes from a family of 12 siblings. Her parents are Gabriel and Flora Beaucage from Nipissing First Nation. Veronica has six children and is a Gookimis to eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Family is of the utmost importance to Veronica. A skilled crafts person, Veronica enjoys leather work, beading, basket making, coats, ribbon skirts/shirts and more. She enjoys the outdoors, hunting, fishing gardening, and yard work.

Board of Directors



Denise Restoule, Vice President - Dokis First Nation

Denise has an extensive 30 year career in community health. She started at Health Services in Dokis First Nation as a Family Health Aide, which evolved into the Community Health Representative (CHR) Program. She was the Acting Interim CHR Coordinator for the Ontario region, a Drug and Alcohol Prevention Worker, and served as Health Director. Politically, Denise served as Councillor for many terms, and in 2006 was the first female to be elected Chief, where she was re-elected for five consecutive terms, retiring in 2016. Denise was also Deputy Chief. In May 2018, Denise was appointed by the Minister of National Defence as Honorary Lieutenant Colonel (HLCOL) with the Algonquin Regiment in North Bay.



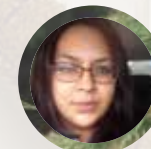
Marnie Anderson, Treasurer - Wahnapiatae First Nation

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.



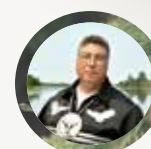
Grace Contin, Secretary - Henvey Inlet First Nation

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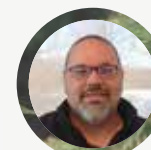
Candace Geroux, Board Member - Shawanaga First Nation

Candace is from Shawanaga First Nation, where she and her family currently reside. She has more than 18 years of experience in Finance, and has worked in Health for the last six years. She is currently a Councillor with Shawanaga First Nation and holds the Health, Child, Cultural and Finance Portfolios within her community. Candace has been active within her community in recent years helping with the Annual Pow Wow through the Healing Centre and other events. Candace enjoys being out by the bay fishing or creating handmade beadwork in her spare time.



Lloyd Myke, Board of Directors - Magnetawan First Nation

Lloyd Myke was elected in as Chief of Magnetawan First Nation in 2021. Previously Lloyd held roles with Council as Chief, Deputy Chief, and Head Councillor. Lloyd studied at Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology and worked with Boart Longyear Drilling Services. He was involved with the Anishinabek Nation Education Secretariat Anishinabek Educational Institute Leadership Council, and Chair of the Kinoomaaziwin Education Body (KEB). As a Portfolio Holder, Lloyd was involved in the creation of the Land Code Development, and Election and Community Ratification for Magnetawan First Nation. In 2015, Lloyd and colleagues received a Community Builders Award - Environment Category for the effectiveness of mitigation measures used to prevent reptile mortality on Highway 69 through Magnetawan First Nation and Burwash.



Shane Tabobondung, Board Member - Wasauksing First Nation

Shane Tabobondung is of Ojibwa and Pottawatomi ancestry and is a member of Wasauksing First Nation. Shane holds a Master's Degree in Indigenous Social Work studies from Wilfrid Laurier University. He has been professionally involved in health and wellness for the last 20 years. Shane has recently taken on the position of Director of Social Wellness in Wasauksing, where he works to professionally harmonize western medical approaches to health and the Indigenous wellness paradigm. Early in his career Shane served as elected Chief, and has served multiple terms on Council.

Cultural Service

Cultural Services Programming

The Cultural Services Program staff has grown to a team of six this year: Manager, Cultural Services Coordinator, Cultural Helpers (two), Team Assistant, and Program Planner. We have learned to conduct meetings, ceremonies, and family circles via Microsoft Teams. As restrictions were reduced we were able to meet face to face with individuals and families in their communities. We hope to offer in-person activities in the fall.

The Cultural Services Teams has been very active in offering support and connecting Teachings to individuals, families, and the departments of Niijaansinaanik. We have also built partnerships with our First Nation membership to conduct ceremonies such as Men's Groups and Full Moon Ceremonies.

Our team has been able to use Hand Drum Teachings with children and families to continue their healing and journey together. The hand drums have had a very positive impact on the children and families by lifting their spirits during struggles and celebrations. The Cultural staff has lit and attended Sacred Fires at the request of families to feast loved ones who have

passed on or family celebrations. The Teaching of the Celebrating Life and Sending-On-Ceremony were shared to build their understanding and the practice of their teachings for a better life. The Wabano Parenting Bundle continues to be beneficial and has been adapted into online presentations to be delivered via Teams.

The Arbour has been constructed as a desired location to connect and reconnect to our Teachings. Our team continues to respond to requests for knowledge of Names, Clans, and Colours. We facilitate many kinds of circles from simple openings to more challenging Family Circles. The Arbour is also used to support our staff in a time of need or for more formal meetings. We hope arbours may be built in all communities in the years to come to have suitable locations for children, youth, and families to continue their learning and healing journeys.

The Cultural Services Team continues to be guided by the Niijaansinaanik Elders Advisory Council. This guidance includes the Eagle Staff Bundle for our agency as well as the direction of our Cultural Program. The Cultural Team is guided by a work plan that was developed using the moon cycles, seasons and with leadership from the Elders Advisory Council.

TL-R Back Row Myles Tobobondung, Carrie Tobobondung, Chief Warren Tobonondung

L-R Front Janice St. Germaine, Audrey Tobobondung, Kimberly Beaucage, Joyce Tobobondung



Referrals

Participants

Circles
(Planning,
Family,
Debrief,
Sharing)

Traditional
Parenting

Ceremonies

Cultural
Support
Requests

Staff
Training,
Agency



Ceremonies:

- Pipe
- Spirit Name
- Fire
- Full Moon
- Life / Welcoming
- End of Life
- Grief and Loss
- Memorial
- Sunrise
- Sacred Fire
- Odedemowing (Clan)
- Sweet Water
- 4 Medicines
- Smudging
- Berry Fast
- Vision Quest

The Cultural Services Team had a very busy year again. We were thankful for our growing team which assisted in helping stay organized with referrals coming from inside and outside the agency. In respect to the communities and provincial health and safety guidelines, many ceremonies and other requests (including Pipe Ceremony) took place online. We appreciate our children, youth, and community's innovation and patience to work together for honouring sacred needs and requests in a new innovative way! We are looking forward to seeing our community members in person soon and safely!

Traditional Parenting: Wabano Parenting Bundle / Stages of Life

Teachings: Drumming, Regalia, Ribbon Skirt/Shirt, Shaker Making, Hand Drum, Dancing, 4 Sacred Medicines

Cultural Agency Support: Staff training, Heart and Spirit, Indigenous Family Development and Assessment Program, Pathways Indigenous Authorized Worker Training, Restorative Justice, Elementary and Secondary School, Friendship Centres, and more.

Culture worked to introduce the Grandfather Drum to the Agency on April 1, 2021. This winter, Dave Rice, Cultural Services Helper, received the vision for a Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Eagle staff to represent the agency and the Six First Nations served. We started gathering hand prints of children who are from the six First Nations, and was presented on August 26, 2021.

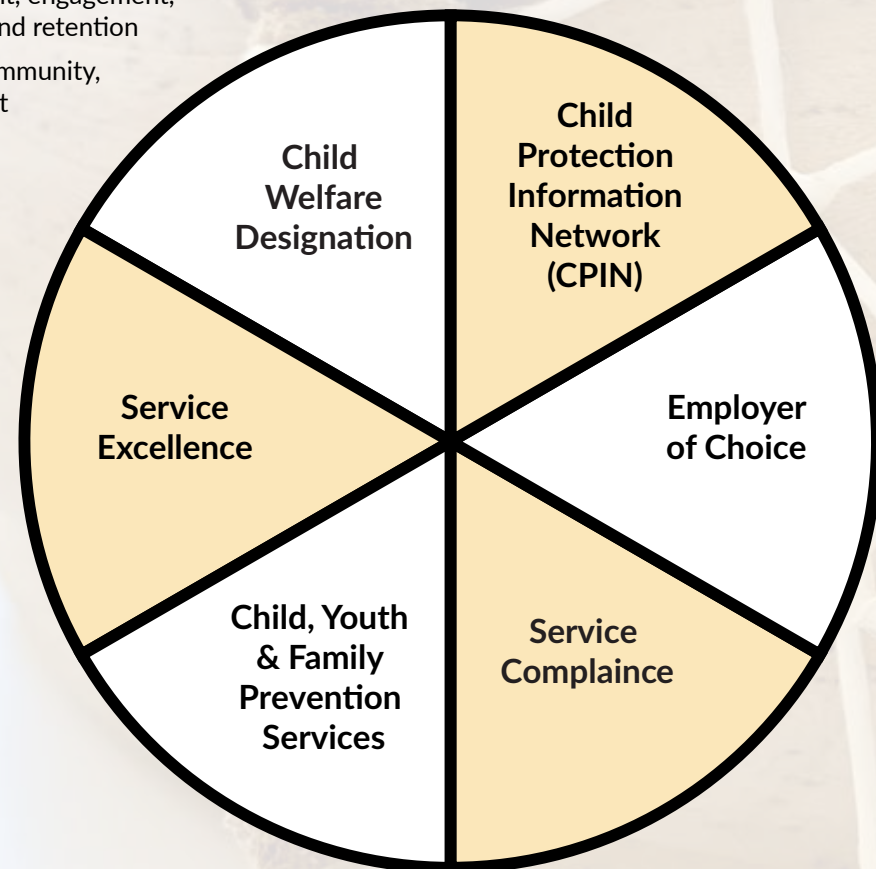
Community Supports/Events: Jordan's Principle, Networking Community Support, Eagle Staff - Vision, Creation and Organization, Grandfather Drum

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan (January 1, 2020 – March 31, 2022) was formulated in November 2019, with facilitated discussions amongst the Elder's Advisory Circle, the Board of Directors, and Management.

Our Priorities and Accomplishments

- Obtain Child Welfare Designation
- Stakeholders communication
- Protocols with partners
- Cultural wellness
- Alternative Care resources
- Stable funding
- Staff recruitment, engagement, development, and retention
- Health staff, community, and government relations



Analysis to identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as understanding the environmental forces that are facing the organization helped to guide decision making in terms of identifying priorities. The Strategic Plan focuses on Pre-Designation and Post-Designation goals and priorities to guide the organization over a two-year period. Development of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) were prepared in accordance with ongoing monitoring of progress toward the Strategic Goals.

In total, six strategic goals were identified, of which, the first four goals were the same for both Pre-Designation and Post -Designation:

The Children's Services Team is comprised of six Children Service Workers, a Case Aide, as well as a Team Assistant. Children or youth, upon entering into Alternative Care, they are immediately assigned a Children Services Worker. The role of the Children's Services Worker is to ensure that while the child or youth is living away from their family, all of their needs are met at an optimal level. Although this encompasses a very large range of duties and responsibilities for the Children's Service Worker the main focus is ensuring that while in Alternative Care the child or youth has all of their physical, emotional, cultural, and academic needs met.

Children Service Workers are the advocates for children and youth. They provide a range of services, including scheduling appointments, advocating for services, collaborating with service providers, and at times, day-to-day duties such as transportation, emotional support, and guidance. The Children's Services Team has also been working diligently on ensuring all of the children we serve are registered with their perspective community.

These services are not only offered to children and youth in Alternative Care but also to older youth aged 16-21 years who are living independently. These services are offered through the Voluntary Youth Services Agreement (VYSA) and Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY) Program in which a youth contracts with the agency to receive these services and supports.

The services offered to these youths are advocacy, assistance with post-secondary, budgeting, life skills as well as the above-stated duties of ensuring the youth's physical, emotional, cultural, and academic needs are met.

Children's Services Team

Staying Connected, Reconnecting and/or Reunification

As the children and youth are at the center of all planning, this inherently places the Children's Services Worker in direct collaboration with all other departments in planning for the needs of the child and playing a role in the reunification process.

Over the past year, the Children's Services staff have been involved in several success stories and have traveled several hundred miles to ensure children are repatriated to their community and families. Staff have travelled to Toronto, Moosonee, and everywhere in between to reconnect children to their culture, community, and families. We have reconnected children with their communities and in one instance, reunited a sibling group with their home community which they had never been to, and meeting several extended family members for the first time.

The team also supports several youths who are living independently. We have two youth working in mines in Northern Ontario, youth securing their driver's licenses; and one youth graduate from high school who did not believe they would ever achieve this. Children's Services Workers are in direct contact with the children and youth regularly through the good times and the bad, celebrating their successes and supporting them through the difficult times.

Of course, this very important work would not be achieved without the collaboration of the First Nation Band Representatives and communities we serve as well as all other programs within Nijjaansinaanik which intersect with the Children's Services Unit.

Quality Assurance and Measuring Impact

The Quality Assurance (QA) department supports the development and implementation of agency-wide strategies that inspire compliance and privacy culture. Our team takes pride in supporting compliance fundamentals from a respectful place of practice, as we learn and develop together. Our primary focus is the safety and protection of the children, youth, and communities we serve and developing evidence-based data to measure impact and improved outcomes.

Our QA department supports the adherence of quality standards and compliance that align with the provincial regulatory framework to coincide with our agency's values and cultural practices. We compile statistical analyses related to the organizational efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services to First Nations children, youth, and families. Since launching the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) in April, we have introduced due date trackers, progress reports, and the quality improvement progress (QIP) reports to support ministry compliance measures and an efficient tracking method for our frontline staff. We provide one-on-one support to address compliance-related issues and mentor staff through data fixes that directly affect compliance or CPIN functionality. Our service teams have expressed an interest in sustaining a compliance culture and our first-quarter results are a positive reflection of that goal!

To remain current with industry standards, our team participates in various forums in collaboration with other agencies to promote knowledge and resource-

sharing along with creating synergies across the sector.

We participate in the following:

- Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) QA Networking Circle
- ANCFSAO Privacy Community of Practice (PCoP)
- Harmonized Business Practice (HBP) reviews
- CPIN User Group
- CPIN Lead Network
- Nijjaansinaanik internal Disclosure and Privacy Committee
- The consultation and working sessions for the Indigenous Child wellbeing tools
- and various Ministry training sessions

Our Agency is actively participating in the landscape design for the Indigenous Information System (IIS) sponsored by ANCFSAO and facilitated by Convergence.Tech. The vision is to create a shared Indigenous Information System that integrates privacy and data governance by design. The goal of the IIS is to safeguard indigenous child welfare information to support the primary purpose of enabling the well-being of children. The scope includes prioritizing the integration of OCAP Principles and Privacy harmonization.

L-R Thea Sebastiany, Jessica Brazeau, Tammi McKenzie



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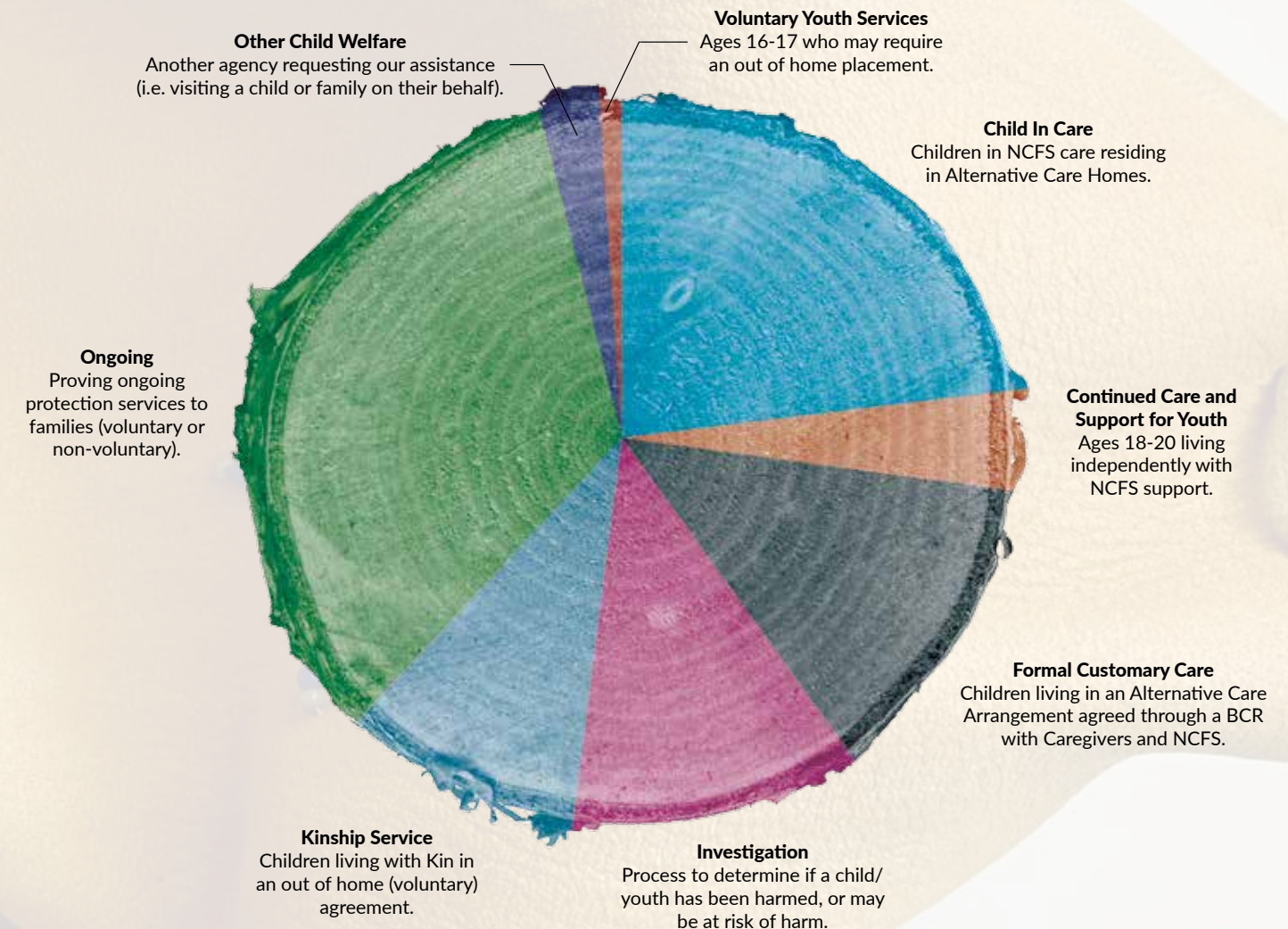
Our agency is in the process of completing Phase I of the current landscape review which includes understanding the data infrastructure, exploring reporting and data usage, determination of Critical Data Elements (CDE), cybersecurity and privacy, end-user pain points, and the interpretation of data collection and related risks. The IIS must encapsulate the need to improve outcomes as well as the need to grow and preserve Indigenous culture and traditions.

Over the last year, our Information and Technology (IT) department has connected all offices with VPN's (Virtual Private Network), phone systems, secure SharePoint site, and more. Our IT Services is looking forward to launching a help desk ticketing system to provide a better end-user experience that will promote an efficient lifecycle tracking process to expand operational continuity through to resolution. The collection and analysis of tickets will assist in

identifying operational volumes, trends, outcomes, gaps, and areas of improvement to support focused training and streamlining processes.

Our website has been enhanced with important updates to assist visitors in locating important privacy-related information, like Privacy Rights, Website Privacy Information and Notice of Information/Records Disclosure. We respect our service recipient's private information and we continually strengthen preventative measures to protect the confidential information in our care and control. Our Quality Assurance (QA) procedures combined with our Information and Technology (IT) System protocols will serve as safeguards in upholding the confidence in our service and integrity with the regulatory bodies, our stakeholders, and the First Nation communities that we serve.

Case Type Distribution



Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services - 2020 Annual Report

Customary Care



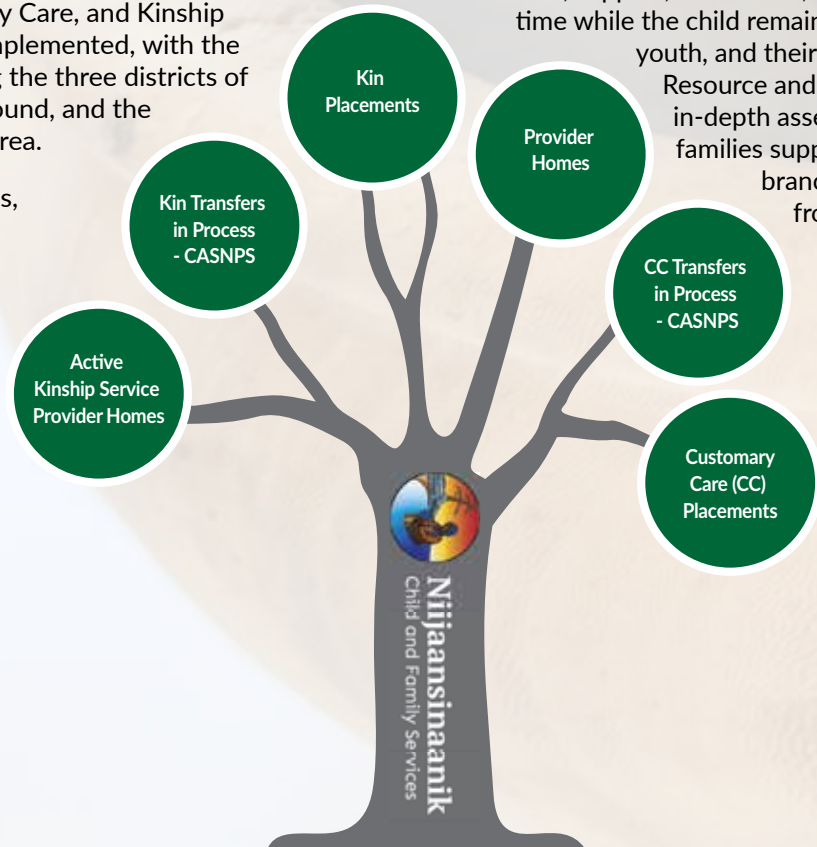
Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services operate from the belief that the care of children and youth is the responsibility of an entire community. Niijaansinaanik will assist children, youth and families seeking connection with their community and family. We also

offer programs to support family and community-based care while parents or caregivers work towards Mino Bimaadiziwin- the Good Life.

Kinship Service, Kinship Care, and Customary Care, all share a similar vision in keeping children with family and community. The programs differ in the approach taken to assess the home and support the children, youth, and care providers during the period of stay. We recognize the effect added responsibilities associated with assuming care of children can have on a family, both emotionally and financially. The level of support a family may need and want helps us determine which program best suits both theirs and the children(s)/ youth's needs.

Upon Designation in April 2021, Kinship Service, Customary Care, and Kinship Care have been implemented, with the agency supporting the three districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound, and the Greater Sudbury area.

During this process, a Customary Care



worker assists with coordination, oversight, and implementation of the program.

The Customary Care Coordinator:

- Works collaboratively with families, Band Representatives, and other Niijaansinaanik departments to develop Customary Care Agreements
- Provides education and awareness
- Keeps all parties informed of the process
- Coordinates and ensures all documentation is completed for implementation of the Customary Care Agreement
- Monitors and assists in regular reviews of Customary Care Agreements.

Parents, Band Representatives, and care providers are full partners through the process, and as such, an Agreement cannot be made without consent from all parties. The process includes obtaining a Band Council Resolution and signatures from the Band in support of the Agreement.

A Customary Care Agreement creates a foundation of service, support, and review, which will pave the path of time while the child remains in the home. Children, youth, and their families are provided with Resource and Child Care workers. An in-depth assessment is conducted, and families supporting their kin along this branch receive financial support from the agency.

Alternative Care

In October 2020, The Alternative Care team began preparations for the annual Alternative Care license review, with the team ensuring the files were up to date and had all the information required. Due to Covid-19, the review was delayed until February 2021. Despite the difficulties managing through Covid-19, we continued to maintain ministry standards with all of the cases and kept all files up to date with the required information for all the children in care along with the alternative caregiver's homes. It is with pride that the Alternative Care team successfully attained Niijaansinaanik's Alternative Care license for another year. It was noted by the reviewer that they "...had never come across the practice of Niijaansinaanik's Alternative Care workers and Children Services workers doing their visits to homes jointly." The reviewer considered this "best practice" and commended Niijaansinaanik for limiting the number of times workers go into the homes, thus lessening intrusiveness.

On July 15, 2020, the Ministry officially recognized HEART and SPIRIT as an alternative to ministry standard SAFE and PRIDE. This year, the Alternative Care team worked with the Cultural team to roll out Heart and Spirit for the first time at Niijaansinaanik. The teams spent time going through the curriculum to adapt it for the communities served. The pilot began with 4 days of in-service training. There were 13 participants from our alternative care homes that received their full license as a result. The feedback received was very positive and appreciated. Participants spent a great amount of time emotionally processing the effects of history and colonization, and the effects it has had on families and communities for generations.

Recruitment over the past year has been met with challenges due to Covid-19. The Trainer/ Recruiter opted to do information nights over Zoom where we had some participation from communities and managed to recruit some interested members through this format. With some of the restrictions lifted the Trainer/Recruiter could get out to the communities through Pow Wows and other community events. During the fiscal year from March 31, 2020, to April 1, 2021, we recruited another nine homes under Niijaansinaanik's Alternative Care License.



L-R Andrea Pawis, Lillian Couchie, Carrie Tobobondung, Joanne Morrison

The focus for this year in Alternative Care will be recruitment, training plans for Alternative Care homes, Heart and Spirit second pilot training, and adaption for Niijaansinaanik communities based on their practice. We will continue to work with ANCFSAO until the adaption of Heart and Spirit is complete. This will include changes to the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) to accommodate Heart and Spirit.



Kin Service

There are currently four workers available to assist with facilitation, assessment, and support for Kin Service families. Families who work along this branch are assigned one Kin-Service worker who will assess and support both the family and children/youth.

An assessment is completed; however, unlike Customary Care and Kinship Care, families are connected to a community network of financial support (i.e. Temporary Care Allowance, and Child Tax Benefit).

Parents, Providers, and Bands are key to the success of the placement. Although no official BCR is needed, regular circles are facilitated and representatives of the bands are consulted throughout the process.

Family Search

Throughout a family working with us, we will continue to explore family relations and connections to ensure a parent has a support system and, when needed, a child/youth remains either with or connected to their family. We know a child who is being raised within or connected with the family has more opportunity for success than those who are placed outside of their own family.

This fall, training will be offered agency-wide to assist workers with exploring and building familial networks for parents and children. The training will assist workers in framing the conversation, building genograms, and reaching out to families to further build up the familial network.

Prevention Services

Maamwi Gdoo-Bwaajigemin - Together We Dream

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services, in collaboration with its member communities, will assist in supporting, promoting, and working alongside existing community prevention programs. Our vision is to ensure all our member communities have necessary prevention programs that are meeting the unique cultural and individual needs of each community to enhance the lives of children, youth and families. Prevention Services also completes the following:

- Provides departments with supports to assist participants to customize their Sacred Shell Concept and Participant Portfolio.
- All participants will be assigned a Prevention worker, dedicated to customizing the Sacred Shell Concept and Participant Portfolio.
- Prevention Workers will assist and liaison with community partners with Program enhancements and team supports.
- Assist member communities with programming, co-facilitate workshops, and other requests.
- Incorporate new programs in partnership with other First Nation Family Support and Well-Being Workers/Programs.

- Anyone within our Territory wishing to utilize our service can fill out a referral form.

Over the past 10 months our Prevention Services Team has assisted in updating our Universal Turtle Sacred Shell Concept. Currently, the Prevention Services team is servicing 35 families across our jurisdiction.

The team has completed many courses and workshops, including:

- Family Support training
- Inuit Cultural Sensitivity
- Challenges of LGBTQ2S+ for children, youth and families
- Supporting infants and their families in high risk environments
- Other side of the door practice guide
- MMIWG2S conference
- and others.

We have incorporated this knowledge into the Universal Sacred Shell Concept.

Redmane's mCase is the information system used for Prevention Services. We chose a different information system for these services to be inline with the OCAP principals (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession). Having a separate system that is only accessible

to the respective service teams within the agency, their managers, the Director of Services and Quality Assurance ensures additional controls for privacy of information of members accessing our services. We worked with the design team at Redmane to make the system specific to our needs.

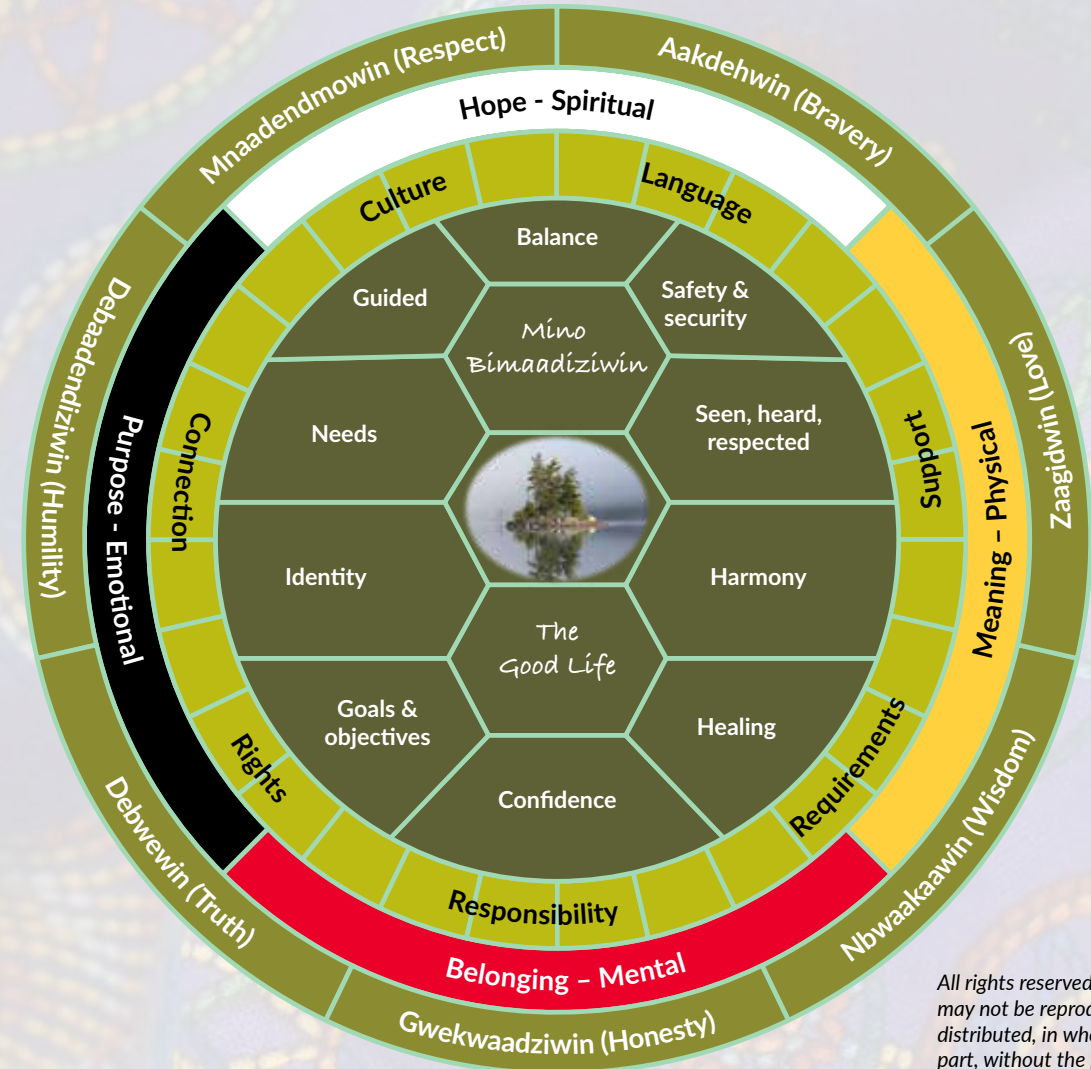
We look forward to offering our Aftercare Program (Slow N' Steady Program). This program will be offered to all participants, and created with the participant at the forefront and designed to suit individually. Participants may choose if they wish to receive services from 1-12 months.

Programs offered will include:

- Goal Setting Programs
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Self-Care Programs
- Building Strong Foundations- Life Skills
- Time Management
- Stress Management
- Meal Planning
- Budgeting 101
- Coping with Grief and Loss
- Family Trees
- Parenting Skills- Traditional Parenting Styles- Cultural Team
- Intergenerational Trauma

Universal Sacred Shell Concept

Children, Youth and Families Visual Planning Tool



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Protection Services

Niijaansinaanik Protection Services is comprised of three teams, providing services to the regions of North Bay, Parry Sound, and to members of our 6 First Nations who reside in the parameters of the Greater City of Sudbury. There are six Protection Workers in the North Bay region, three in the Parry Sound region, and two in the City of Sudbury, with a Protection Worker located in each of our offices. We continue with recruitments for protection workers in the North Bay and Parry Sound areas.

Specific training is essential to develop the basic analytical thinking needed as a Child Protection Worker. Our child protection workers have completed the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) Reimagined Child Welfare Pathway to Authorization series for new child welfare professionals in Ontario. A new Pathways to Authorization is under development, with a plan to implement the new training mid-fall of 2021. The new training is being developed with our cultural services team and incorporates the history and teachings of our member First Nations communities. We have continued to build our staff's knowledge, skills, and capacities through cultural teachings as well as required Training.

Our supervisors are in the process of completing the following courses: Supervising Child Welfare Professionals, Clinical and Educational Supervision, and Supervising Forensic Interviewing.

On April 1, 2021, we implemented the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) for Protection, Children's Services, and Alternative Care. Although this is a provincial system, we were able to make some decisions surrounding what information was stored within the system, keeping the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles at the front of those decisions.

We recognize the importance of notifying our First Nation partners upon receiving calls of concerns with families. We remain mindful to connect as soon as possible with respective Band Representatives to formulate solutions and mitigate concerns. Covid-19 has deterred our 'holistic approach' of in-person face-to-face connections; however, we have made efforts to connect virtually as an alternative. When lockdowns were enforced, virtual circles were utilized for regular service planning, emergencies, and band reviews with communities. We look forward to the in-person, face-to-face dialogue that starts with our sacred medicines to get everyone to that good space.

Family Support Services/ Doodemag Enji Maawnjidjik

"Doodemag Enji Maawnjidjik" – "Where Families Gather" is a Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services building located in Henvey Inlet First Nation on Highway-69 near Britt, Ontario. It is fully equipped with a kitchen and living room and three smaller rooms for families to have supervised visits with our Family Support Workers. Traditional medicines are found within the main area, which is available to the family and staff as needed. This space functions to support families and provide access to food to make meals while creating opportunities for programming, such as the accompaniment of a Worker who might facilitate cultural activities or be available for additional support.

Family visits are a right of children/youth and their families that are respected by Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services. Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services will ensure that families are provided visits in a timely, supportive, and responsive manner following an Alternative Care placement or family separation.

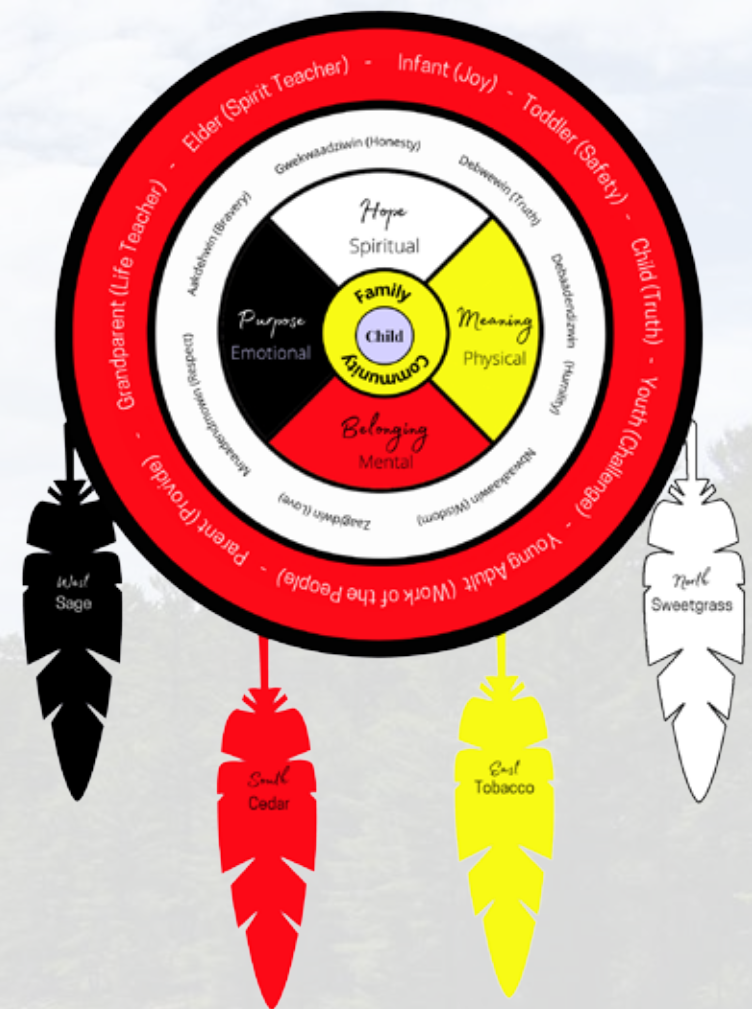
The Family Support team provides services in two key areas:

- In-home family support/reunification
- Family visiting

Anishinaabe children, youth and families are surrounded by layers of support: Family, extended family, community, clan, and Nation.

Anishinabek culture is the foundation for wellness and supports the healing process of family visits. Family Support Services' medicine wheel guides the work of our team.

- Flexible family visits that occur in the family home and community.
- A strengths-based approach to family visits.
- Understanding of historical trauma.
- Anishinabek staff members.
- A focus on removing barriers.



Volunteer Drive Program

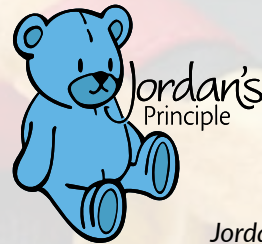
We have initiated our Volunteer Drive Program and currently have four volunteer drivers. The purpose of Volunteer Services is to enrich the lives of families participating in our services through means of connection via transportation or familial support within a culturally relevant framework. We provide the necessary training, guidance, and resources to facilitate support for our families. By participating in this network of people dedicated to fostering community wellness. Volunteers directly impact the lives and well-being of those around them



through their contribution and allow our organization more capacity to better achieve our mission in servicing and supporting families within our Communities. At this time, the Volunteer Drive Program is the only volunteer service that has been implemented. Our Volunteers are expected to act under the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which are the foundation for our organization's operation. These teachings guide Mino-Bimaadiziwin (the Good Life), which we aim to facilitate through our services and programs.

Jordan's Principle

Nijjaansinaanik is safeguarding the best interests of First Nations children to make sure that patterns of disadvantage are assessed and addressed. The in-house Jordan's Principle (JP) coordinator coordinates services for children, youth and families who require services by identifying gaps in products, services, and supports. Our Jordan's Principle



Coordinator works collaboratively with the First Nations and external services; thereby ensuring First Nation children are funded for appropriate services in a way that is reflective of their distinct cultural needs and that meets the children's complex needs.

Jordan's Principle directives are funded by the Department of Indigenous Services Canada.



Departments

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. We assist in all duties related to forwarding the agency's goals, objectives, policies, and mission. Administration duties flex to the current state of events and flow with what is needed from management and the Board of Directors.



Krystal Meawasige, Receptionist

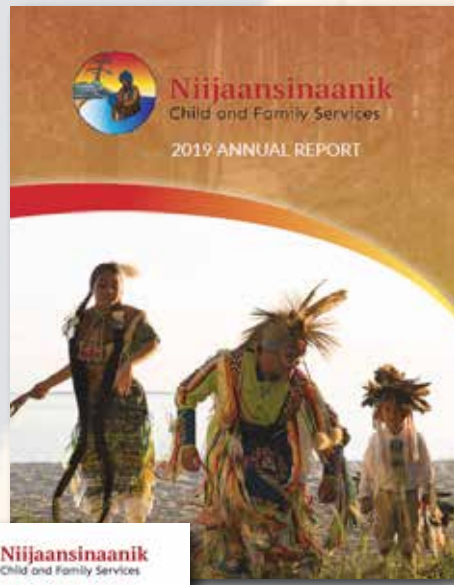
In March 2021, we were grateful to hire a Receptionist to answer and direct all incoming calls. Reception also completes: Room bookings, conference scheduling, inventories and orders supplies, vehicle booking, and provides general office support. Reception works closely with Screening during business hours.

Communications

The Communication Coordinator works with all Nijjaansinaanik departments to create internal and external communications.

- Advertising
- Alternative Care/CPIN Newsletter
- Annual Reports
- Calendars
- Departmental Pamphlets
- Graphics Creation
- Media Liaison
- Photography and Videography
- Posters
- Presentations and Templates
- Press Releases / Communique
- Save the Date's and Invitations
- Social Media
- Strategies
- Website

This year, some large projects comprised updating the website to include newly established departments, ensuring pages were updated to reflect our achieved designation status, and updating the website for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards required. The AODA changes were completed in December 2020. In March of 2021, together with the Alternative Care Team, a television commercial and online campaign was produced and aired on CTV. A large mail-out including a letter of introduction,



and services pamphlets for all on-reserve households occurred at the end of June 2021.

Updated pamphlets for the following departments were completed prior to the end of August 2021: Alternative Care, Customary Care, Kinship Services, Volunteer Services, Prevention Services, Protection Services, Jordan's Principle, Notice of Information Practices, Resolving Client Concerns or Complaints, Cultural Services, and Family Support Services.



Facilities

Facilities oversees the planning of building locations as well as external and internal setup and maintenance. This year, all locations were updated with secure building entrances and new protocols. Facilities also manages fleet vehicle maintenance schedules in coordination with Reception/Administration.

This year, our office locations has grown to 11.

- Eagles Nest – North Bay
- Couchie Industrial Road – North Bay
- McIntyre Street – North Bay
- Henvey Inlet First Nation
- Dokis First Nation Administration Building
- Dokis First Nation
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Henvey Inlet First Nation Access Centre
- Magnetawan First Nation
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Wahnapietae First Nation

Darren Lecompte, Infrastructure and Technology Supervisor



Finance

This year we were fortunate to add another staff member to our team: Finance Supervisor. We also added and staffed the position of Compensation and Benefits Coordinator. The finance team is comprised of a Director of Finance, Finance Supervisor, Compensation and Benefits Coordinator, and two Finance Clerks.

Information Technology

Over the last year, our Information and Technology (IT) department has connected all offices with VPN's (Virtual Private Network) which allows us to access secure IT services from all offices. All office locations have phone systems connected with the ability to dial any office via the extension number. Our agency is set up with a secure document management platform to consolidate and share our files. We successfully transitioned seconded staff over to Niijaansinaanik tech and have hired two IT helpdesk agents.

Our IT Services is in the process of vetting a help desk ticketing system to provide a better end-user experience to promote an efficient lifecycle tracking process and expand operational continuity. The purpose of the help desk is to provide a centralized resource (a first point of contact), to answer questions, troubleshoot issues, and facilitate solutions. The potential for supporting queries from various channels and managing in a central system will ensure the tickets are followed through to resolution. The collection, tracking and organizing of tickets will assist in identifying operational volumes, trends, outcomes, gaps, and areas of improvement to support focused training and streamlining processes.

Human Resources

The year leading up to designation was one of the most challenging but also most rewarding. Our Agency doubled from 38 full-time staff at the end of March 2020 to 80 at the end of March 2021, plus two contract employees. We hired 55 staff in this fiscal year, with minimal turnover.

We completed our CART review with the Ministry and continued to fill job vacancies for positions such as Child Protection Workers, After-Hour Workers, Legal Clerk, and Access Workers.

28 of our staff actively participated in Secondment Agreements with the Children's Aid Society of Nipissing and Parry Sound, where they received training, mentoring, or guidance on their new roles and responsibilities.

The Human Resources Team implemented PurelyHR. The system abolished paper timesheets and is able to track staff credits in real-time. We worked closely with Finance in creating bi-weekly reports for payroll purposes and advised of any required payroll adjustments, and other required documentation. We implemented the new Performance Appraisal system, and all performance appraisals were completed by the end of the fiscal year.

At the end of March 2021, the Agency started new plans with Canada Life and OMERS. We worked hard to build a competitive benefits package for our employees. The administration for the new plans transferred from Human Resources to the new Compensation and Benefits Coordinator in Finance. The transfer of these administrative duties allowed us to add Health and Safety to the duties of the Human Resources Officer role.

The Joint Health and Safety Committee has grown to four representatives, and we have been consistently meeting during this term. Two of our members are Certified, with a third working towards its completion. Senior Management has been quick to respond to any deficiencies that have been identified and addressed.

Legal Department

Over the year 2020, our legal department team has grown to a staff of four: Manager of Legal Services, Legal Clerk, Disclosure Worker and Alternative Dispute Worker. Our legal department works together to ensure the best interest, safety, and well-being of children, youth, and families remains at the forefront. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Lawyer Counsel is responsible for assisting staff with attempting to resolve matters out of court, preparing for court and representing the Agency in all matters prescribed with the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Criminal Code, the Children's Law Reform Act, the Family Law Rules, the Rules of Civil Procedure and any other relevant legislation. Alternative Dispute Resolution is of crucial importance, ensuring any issues are resolved efficiently for families as an alternative to the Formal Legal System. We are grateful for our Legal Clerk who assists the team in keeping organized, timelines, filing and all other matters required in ADR or legal proceedings.

Staff Directory

24/7 1-855-223-5558 • Fax: 705-223-7439

Parry Sound Office

Miigwetch: First Nations





Niijaansinaanik
Child and Family Services

940A Main Street, Dokis First Nation, ON P0M 2N1
Fax: 705-223-7439
24/7 Toll Free 1-855-223-5558

niijcs.com

