



# Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services

2023-2024 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.

We provide culturally congruent child, youth and family well-being for Indigenous children, youth and families in the districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound and the Greater City of Sudbury.

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services are members of the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS).

### WHO WE SERVE:





Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services began activities as a pre-designated Child Well-Being Agency in 2016. In November 2018, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services was incorporated as a non-profit organization. On April 1, 2021, we achieved our designation as an Indigenous Child-Well Being Agency. This designation was historic, as it is a necessary step in reclaiming jurisdiction over child well-being services to the First Nations we serve, and by resolution of the Council of Chiefs to support servicing of all Indigenous children, youth, and families in the districts of Nipissing, Parry Sound and the Greater City of Sudbury.

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## PRIVACY STATEMENT

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## Board of Directors



**Marnie Anderson**  
President  
Wahnapiatae First Nation



**Candace Geroux**  
Treasurer  
Shawanaga First Nation



**Denise Restoule**  
Vice President  
Dokis First Nation



**Gimaa | Chief  
Lloyd Myke**  
Board Member  
Magnetawan First Nation



**Grace Contin**  
Secretary  
Henvey Inlet First Nation



**Shane Tabobondung**  
Board Member  
Wasauksing First Nation

## Elders Advisory Circle



**Joyce Tabobondung**  
Head Elder  
Wasauksing First Nation



**Tony Tyson**  
Wahnapiatae First Nation



**Irvin Contin**  
Henvey Inlet First Nation



**Veronica Dokis**  
Dokis First Nation



**Audrey Tabobondung**  
Wasauksing First Nation



**Leslie Noganosh**  
Magnetawan  
First Nation



**Patricia Pawis**  
Shawanaga First Nation



# MAAMWI GDOO- NCHIIKWAANAANIG ENCHIYANG

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR OUR FAMILIES













## Chiefs



**Gimaa | Chief  
Gerry Duquette  
Dokis First Nation**

**Gimaa | Chief  
Larry Roque  
Wahnapiatae First Nation**



**Gimaa | Chief  
Warren Tabobondung  
Wasauksing First Nation**

**Gimaa | Chief  
Lloyd Myke  
Magnetawan First Nation**



**Gimaa | Chief  
Wayne McQuabbie  
Henvey Inlet First Nation**

**Gimaa | Chief  
Adam Pawis  
Shawanaga First Nation**



## Message from the Executive Director

**Joanne Koehler, BSW, MSW**

Welcome to the Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Annual General Meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to share an update on the steps we are taking to build stronger and more positive relationships between our child well-being services and communities. Our shared goal is to ensure the well-being of children and families, while respecting and incorporating cultural values and perspectives. We are grateful to have opportunities to be in the communities providing in person, face-to-face programs and services.

In these difficult times with potential changes in government, we remain adaptable and work closely with our Board of Directors, and Chiefs to ensure Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services is funded appropriately to continue delivery of high standard services and programs to indigenous children, youth and families. Niijaansinaanik works in constant collaboration with community leaders, Elders, and community service providers. We ensure our services are culturally grounded and responsive to the unique needs of each family.

With active personal and community engagement, we strive to provide services that reflect traditions, knowledge, and experiences, while building trust and



mutual respect. Our Elders Advisory Circle, Board of Directors and Chiefs continue to provide guidance on the direction of the Agency. We are grateful for their wealth of knowledge, and for always working diligently in the best interests of their communities.

Our staff, including a dedicated Cultural Services Director, are deeply committed to learning and sharing Indigenous teachings, ensuring that our services promote cultural identity and support the healing of families from intergenerational effects of colonization, and to better support from a trauma-informed perspective. We intrinsically understand the importance of community-based solutions and plan towards increasing local involvement in decision-making processes. We create services that are guided by the community and for the community by listening to your voice and wisdom.

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services are here to serve in partnership with you, and we deeply value the ongoing dialogue, input, and trust you have extended to us. Together, we can continue to build a future where children and families thrive in safe, supportive, and culturally abundant environments.

Chi-Miigwetch for your continued collaboration and trust.

## Strategic Plan



Now in our last year of executing the three year Strategic Plan, we are happy to say progress has been made in all key areas. Prevention and Protection Planning remains a key priority that aligns with Ministry Standards and exceeds those standards and requirements based on a Niijaansinaanik Level of Service Standards Framework. Planning priorities is a central focus of the Internal Working Group for the 2022-2025 Strategic Work Plan for Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services.

## Eagles Hub



Candace Geroux, Grace Contin, Shane Tabobondung, Chief Lloyd Myke, Irvin Contin

As our Agency continues to grow post-designation, we were fortunate to move more than 50 staff into a new building at the Eagles Hub at 81 Hwy 17B, North Bay,



Natalie Payette-Chevrier, Joyce Tabobondung, Joanne Koehler

ON. On June 19, 2024, a small ceremony was held to open the new location. Niijaansinaanik now has nine offices and three Parenting Time/Access Centre locations.

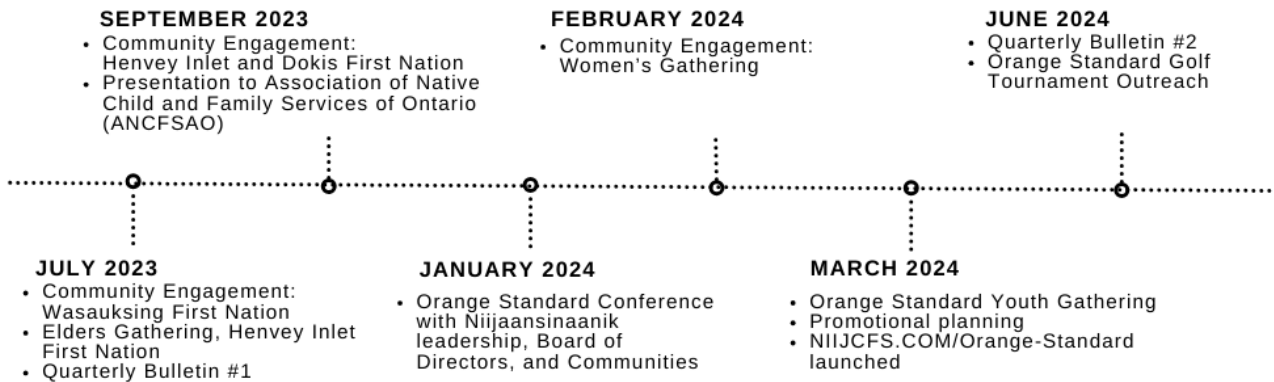


# Orange Standard

In 2023-2024, the Orange Standard team focused on community engagement and continued research and design on governance. During Strategic Plan meetings during 2023, the Orange Standard was discussed by participants as a high area of priority. This year, the team grew, completed Transfer Stage and started moving towards Phase II. In Phase II,

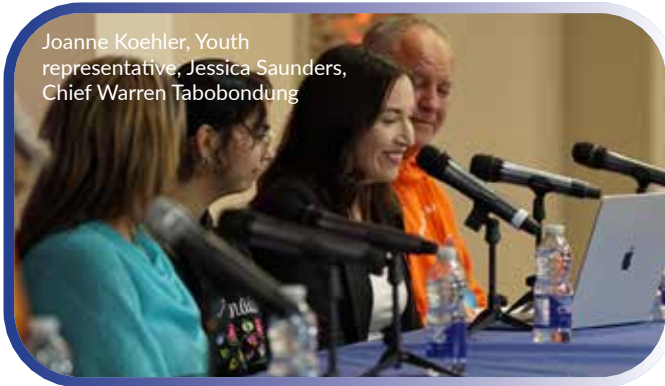


the Board of Directors had decided the process should be designed and scaled back to ensure a community-paced environment allowing communities to move forward at their own speed. Throughout Phase II, events, engagement sessions and planning, educational and promotional activities occurred, including:



Community work focused on further defining and socializing the Orange Standard. During this phase communities have been learning about the Orange

Standard. The activities have moved from concept design to community discussion to ensure participation is built on community direction and understanding.



Joanne Koehler, Youth representative, Jessica Saunders, Chief Warren Tabobondung



Joanne Koehler, Joyce Tabobondung



# Orange Standard Golf Tournament

In June 20, 2024, Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services Orange Standard team hosted a Golf Tournament for fundraising for food security for the First Nations, as well as for awareness and promotion of the Orange Standard initiative. It was a beautiful

day to come together and learn about the Orange Standard while enjoying weather and sport for a good cause. Chi-Miigwetch to all those who attended and supported to a great cause.



Winners of the Golf Tournament. Melvin McLeod, Dave Shawana, Rolly Restoule, Charlie Restoule



Marie-Joelle Roberge and Jessica Brazeau



Head Elder, Joyce Tabobondung



## Cultural Services



Cultural Services continues to support children and youth, families and communities on their healing and life journeys by providing individual and group activities. Cultural Services works closely with all departments at Niijaansinaanik to ensure that culturally centered protection, prevention, advocacy, care and values are forefront to help grow healthy communities. Our

Culturally Based Service Model is framed around caring for our children, and based on Mino Bimaadiwizin – the Good Life, diversity, our Elders, the Clan system, Accountabilities, culturally restorative practices and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

In addition to the many referrals, requests, and activities, the Cultural Services Team also has been actively involved in the development of the Anishinaabewin nikayaa nkoobnigay – Our Anishinaabe way of raising our children – The Orange Standard.

We look forward to the implementation of Cultural Parenting Programs, and development of staff cultural awareness training, ceremonies, workshops, programming. Other teachings and programming delivered this year include:

- Anishinaabewmowin Bingo
- Hand Drumming
- Singing
- Wampum Belt teachings
- Shkini-Kwe – New Woman Berry Teachings/Fast/Celebration
- Monthly teachings, recipes, workshops in Alternative Care Newsletter

Our team continues to provide support for the Indigenous Authorized Worker, and Heart and Spirit Pre-Service Training, to new workers and new caregivers. Cultural Services team meet regularly with the Elders Advisory Circle to ensure they have input into the steering, development and delivery of services to the member communities. Our team prioritizes generational connection through storytelling, listening and facilitation connection with the natural world, as Anishinaabe people and honouring the roles and responsibility of caring for each other, lands, waters and all of creation.



L-R: Dennis Goulais, Brooklyn Sawyer, Echo McLeod-Shabogesic



L-R: Julie Hunter, Renee Boyce





# CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

2023-2024

123

Requests & Referrals  
(Recipients, Agency,  
Stakeholders)

15

Family & Talking  
Circles

12+

Workshops: Ribbon Skirt,  
Shaker, Bundle, talking  
stick, Medicine Walk, etc.

3

2-night Culture Camps  
for children and youth  
(separate)



Seasonal Moose  
Hunt Camp

1

Drum Social & Full  
Moon Ceremony

14

Naming Ceremony &  
"Closing Blanket" (Closure of  
Protection File and Family  
Reunification) Ceremony.

3





# Quality Assurance and Measuring Impact

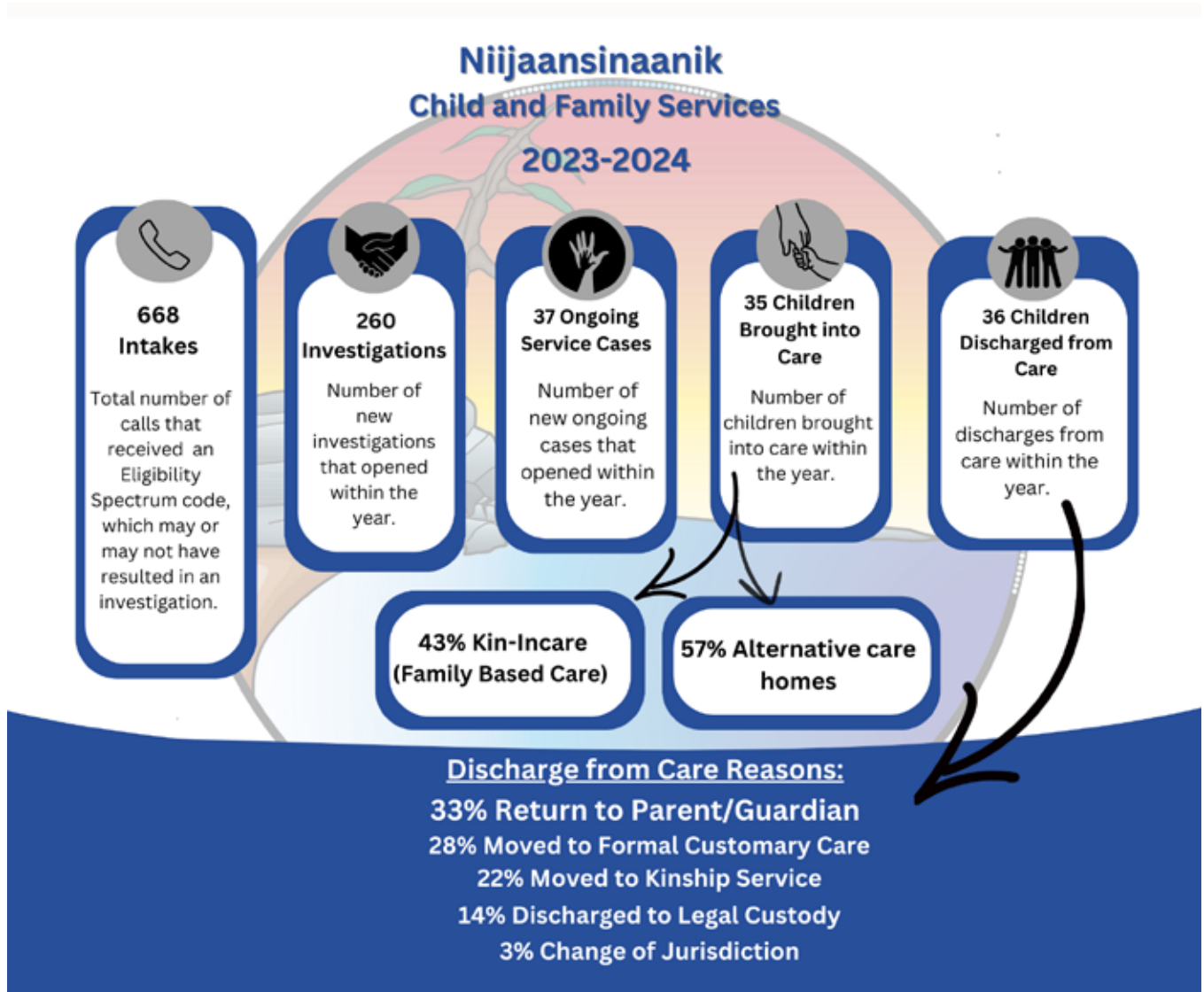
The Quality Assurance (QA) department is an essential part of supporting the delivery of our regulatory framework and clinical services. The QA activities are designed to track and demonstrate the elements of our programs to achieve the high-quality of care delivered to our First Nation communities and the families we serve.

Fundamentally the evidence-based outputs demonstrate accountability and provide outcome measurements from various data collection methodologies. The data goes beyond performance monitoring and reporting as the information provides insights to our case management systems and where functionality can improve efficiencies in our procedures. The QA team has participated on a

variety of sector working groups in order to enhance our recording techniques and introduce Indigenous well-being outcomes and indicators that promote connections to kin, culture, and community.

We continually strive to instill a privacy culture to safeguard the confidentiality of our service recipient's information and the integrity of our services. The First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) is a recognized standard for data collection which are guiding principles embedded in our agency functions.

The QA team will continue to advance our quality improvement measurements and accountability mechanisms to support the delivery of high-quality and culturally relevant care.



## Children's Services



The child/youth is always at the centre of all planning and decision-making and has a dedicated Children's Service Worker to advocate for them and/or to stand by their side to ensure their voice is heard. The Children's Services Team continues to promote working collaboratively with community partners, service providers, and children and youth, to ensure that families are informed about and connected to other community services they may require, while keeping the child/youths holistic well-being at the forefront of all planning. The Children's Services Team has grown for many reasons, one being the lens of focus on Customary Care and increase in Voluntary Youth Service Agreements (VYSA) and Continued Care Support Youth (CCSY).

### The Children's Services Team Consists Of:

- 9 Children's Services Workers
- Educational Liaison
- Case Aide
- 2 Team Assistants, and
- 2 Supervisors.

We are happy to support children and youth and provide advocacy, assistance with academic and/or post-secondary education, budgeting, life skills, and connections to supports for their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs through life stages. We aim to provide as much one-on-one support as possible, as each child/youth is unique, and assistance and needs vary with situations they are faced with while in alternative care or learning to live independently as a young adult.

Our Children's Services team assists in acting as liaison for the child/youth to make linkages with appropriate and/or required community services such as assessments, counselling, and educational resources for the youth and helping them complete paperwork, appointment transportation, and other duties.

Recommendations and guidelines from the **Ready, Set, Go Program** were implemented in February 2023, where agencies across Ontario began helping children/youth plan for the future at an earlier age. Starting at age 13, they begin learning practical life skills and planning educational goals. At age 15, the





Deverick Ottereyes-Rupert

emphasis expands to financial literacy and preparing for a career, including managing personal finances, setting up a bank account, grocery shopping, resumé building, and how to access other supports.

The Ready, Set, Go Program also allows youth to remain in care until the age of 23, up from age 21. Monthly financial support also increased to provide youth better quality of life and safer housing opportunities so they can focus on their studies or working.

The Voluntary Youth Service Agreement and Ready, Set, Go programs are offered to children and youth in Alternative Care and to older youth from age 16 to 23 who live independently. They are offered through the Voluntary Youth Service Agreements and the Ready, Set, Go Program, in which a youth works with the agency to receive these services and supports.

Over the past year, the Children's Services staff have been involved in several events, including:

- Cultural Camp
- Youth-Specific Retreat
- Youth assisted with facilitating a Youth Gathering for the Orange Standard initiative.
- Graduations attended, assistance with helping youth prepare for post-secondary education.
- Assisting youth exiting Ready Set, Go, with encouragement for employment and empowerment, confidence of living independently and healthily.
- Assistance for youth in acquiring and maintaining safe and appropriate independent living arrangements.

The Children's Services Team diligently ensures that all the children/youth served are registered with their prospective First Nation communities. We are happy to report the role that many Children's Services Team workers had in reunifying several children with their families, working with band representatives to reconnect them to their communities, families, and culture. Of course, this very important work would not be achieved without the collaboration of the Band Representatives and communities we serve, as well as all other programs and services within Niijaansinaanik that intersect with the Children's Services Team.

# Customary Care

## Ganawenjigaazo – Taking Care of Children and Youth

Customary Care is built upon the inherent practice that, *“It takes a community to raise a child”*.



The Customary Care Agreements are created without the court process deadlines but rather annualized reviews that prompt the family, agency, and the First Nation to review the progress of the children/youth and the biological parent(s) and determine potential amendments that plan for reunification.

A Customary Care Agreement eliminates the need for court and/or mandated timelines of how long a child can be placed outside of a parent’s care and further eliminates the focus of permanency through way of the courts. While in a Customary Care Agreement, interim support is offered to the children and caregivers. Customary Care continues to be the preferred method when exploring long-term care of children who cannot

reside with their parents at the time. This method also continued to be supported should the parent, caregiver and First Nation all be in agreement of the Customary Care direction.

Nijaansinaanik currently has three Customary Care Team members. The team works to ensure any agreement developed, or being developed, creates a foundation of service, support, and review all in the best interest of the well-being of the child/youth, and family, while collaborating with the First Nation. The department continues to grow and evolve as best suited for the families and communities we serve. We believe Customary Care is and should be one of the truest experiences of working together.



## Kinship Care

### Inodewiswin Bami'aawaso – Families Caring for Children and Youth

Kinship Services are when a known caregiver (other family members, individuals familiar to the child/youth, or parent/guardian) provides in-home care to a child/youth who requires an out-of-home placement, intended to be short term, but always planned for the well-being of the child/youth.

Kinship Caregivers/Providers ensure that child(ren)/youth remain connected with their family, extended family, heritage, culture, and traditions. This helps build a sense of belonging, safety, and security for children. It is the Agency's goal to have children/youth remain with families and in their communities.

Kinship Service providers are eligible to receive temporary care allowance through Ontario works, the Child Tax benefit and are further supported by a Kinship Service worker who will help guide them through the process. Workers will assist Kinship Providers to access subsidized daycare, and Jordan's Principle Funding, if eligible.

Niijaansinaanik has a team of three full-time Kinship Services Workers, who develop care plans with the child/youth, and provider and complete a Kinship Assessment to ensure a plan is in place to help the provider positively meet the child/youth's needs for their well-being, routine and stability. These workers help build positive support networks for the child/youth, family and kinship provider. Kinship Care has been shown to have multi-layered benefits to child(ren)/youth and families during times where out-of-home placement is required and is explored first for child(ren)/youth in need of protection.

A positive trend shows that Kinship Services placements have been increasing since 2019.

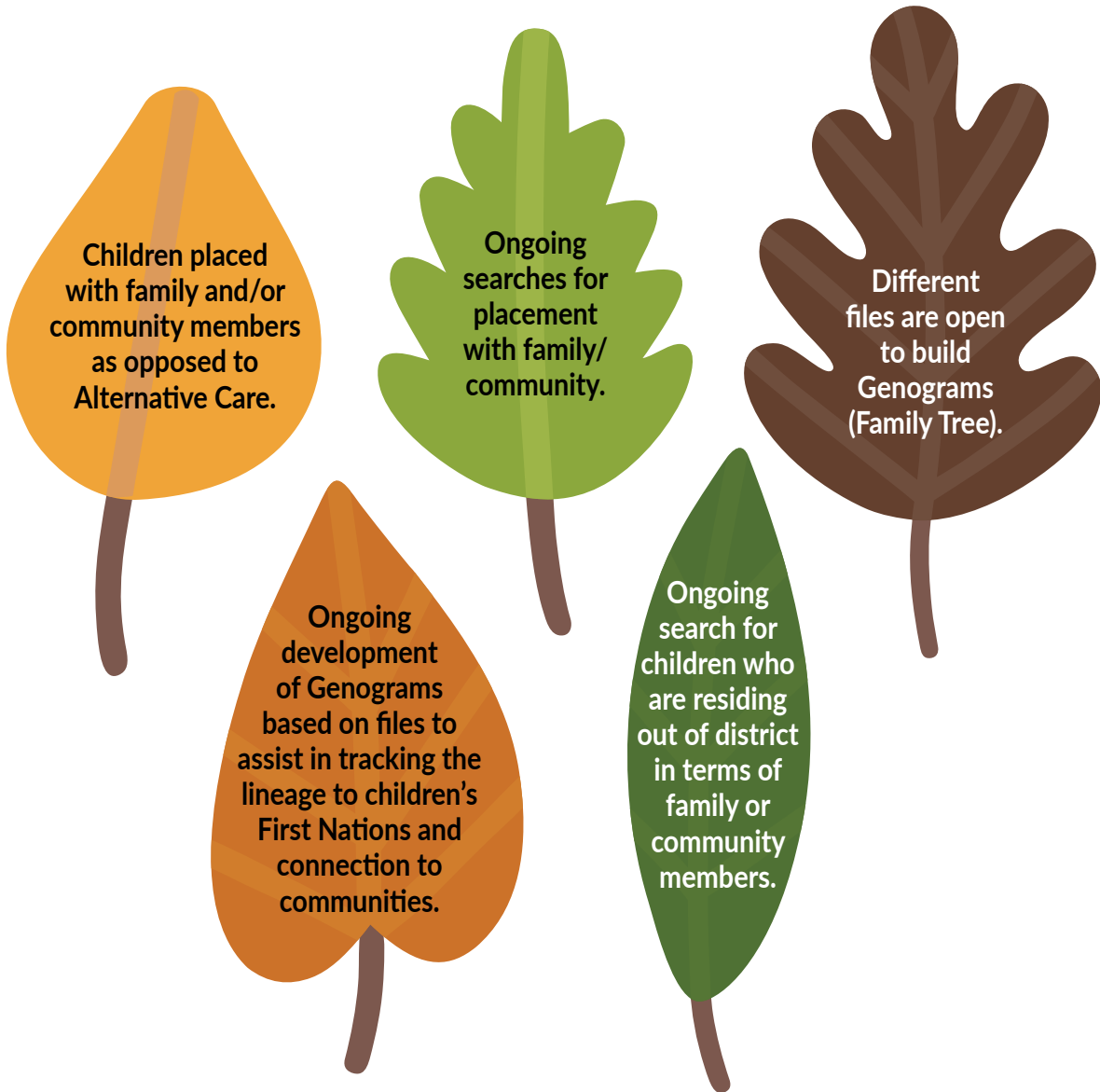
# Family Finding

Family Finding is a program and commitment from the Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services to build a “familial and/or community network” to assist our families in need. Each family’s needs vary from family to family, some need help reconnecting, some need a familiar face, some may need assistance to temporarily care for a child while a parent seeks help.



The Family Finder Worker will assist and work with parents and First Nations to build upon their family tree (Genogram) and attempt to find connections to assist families in building their supports. The worker will help facilitate those phone calls that so many parents struggle to make, as a first step of finding help.

Since the program’s development we have seen successful outcomes including:



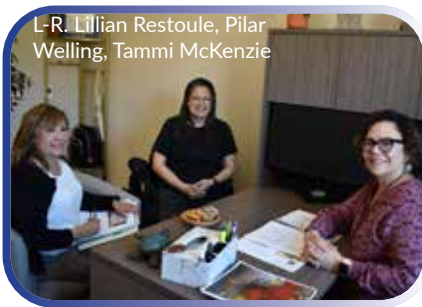
To date, Nijjaansinaanik has one person attending to the family search needs of the Agency. The Family Finder research with families and frontline staff, encourages more successful outcomes for children, parents and communities.



## Alternative Care

### Ganawendaawaso – Taking Care of Children and Youth

Alternative Care previously was referred to as “Foster Care” within the non-Indigenous child welfare sector. The name change was a signal of the revitalization and infusion of culture into the way children and youth are cared for, and to show the prioritization of reunification, keeping families together and community. Sometimes children and youth require temporary homes when a family is working through a crisis. Alternative Caregivers provide the temporary home for a child/youth from the community and provide care, love and support. Niijaansinaanik always aims to first place children/youth with family and community. The Alternative Care Program provides out-of-home placement inclusive of customary care, community care, and kinship care.



As of March 31, 2024, Niijaansinaanik had 29 approved Alternative Care Homes.

The Alternative Care Department has made significant strides

in supporting Alternative Caregivers. Each caregiver is assigned their own Alternative Care Worker who meets monthly to receive updates, address concerns, and assist with expenses. These efforts have led to positive impacts, creating supportive environments for the children in each community and building capacity in our member Nations.

In February 2024, The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) conducted their annual audit of Alternative Care files. The Alternative Care department must meet and follow provincial regulations pertaining to approving alternative care homes and processes required when a child/youth is placed. The Alternative Care homes are required to meet provincial standards, including:



The audit was successful, and the Alternative Care/ Foster Care licensing was renewed without conditions.

**Trainings offered to Caregivers between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, included:**

- Spirit Pre-Service
- Non-Violence Crisis Intervention
- Car Seat Safety Training
- Lifebook Workshop

**Home Studies completed:**

- Place of Safety Home Studies
- Foster/Kinship in Care Home Studies
- Alternative Care Inquiries

**Events facilitated/participated in:**

- Children’s Christmas Party
- Alternative Care/Volunteer Recognition Dinner
- Monthly Family Engagement Contest
- Monthly Children’s Colouring Contest

The Alternative Care Department aligns with the Seven Grandfather Teachings and understands the importance of culture within the services provided to Alternative Caregivers. The Alternative Care team works closely with the Cultural Department, ensuring caregivers and service recipients know the available services and programs. A monthly caregiver newsletter outlines upcoming cultural events and services for Alternative Caregivers and children and youth.

# Prevention Services

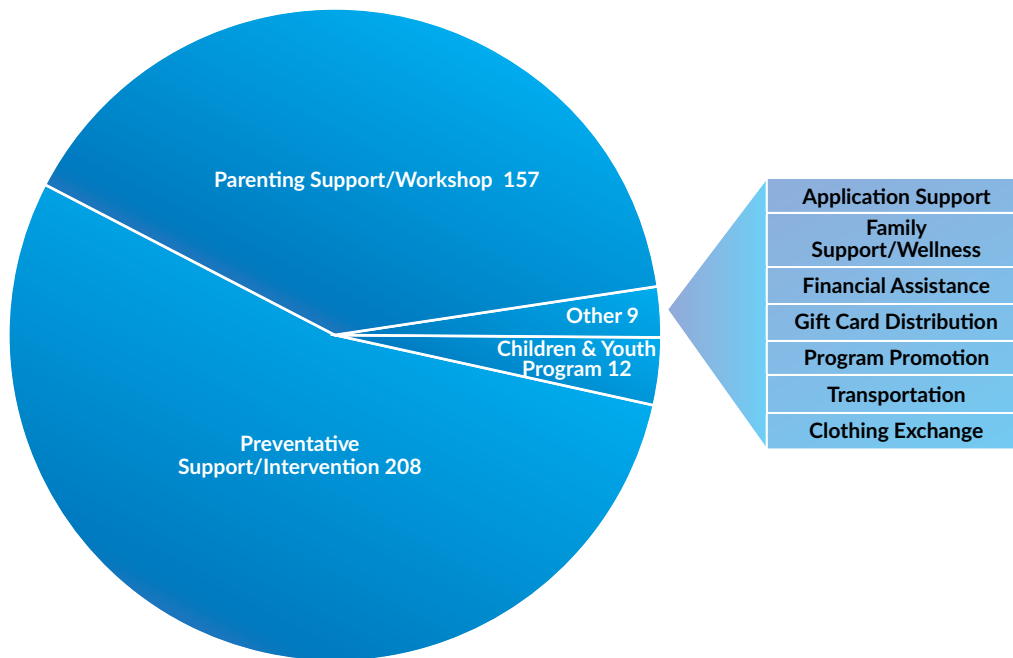
## Onaakonan Mino-Awaawinan – Planning For Wellness

Prevention Services supports, promotes and works alongside existing community programs. Niijaansinaanik’s commitment to culturally centered care, advocacy, and services reflects the prevention team’s dedication to the holistic well-being of the communities they serve.

The Niijaansinaanik Prevention team vision is centered on meeting the unique cultural and individual needs of each community through various programs. These include the **Sacred Shell Concept**, which offers personalized support to participants, and the **Slow N’ Steady Program**, focusing on aftercare with plans tailored to individual needs. This year a written plan of care has been

included in the case management process. This involves the worker and participant to agree upon priorities that the participant wants to work on. The Prevention team offer goal-setting programs, stress management, home organization, children’s school schedules and appointments, mentoring and budgeting that are all designed to foster Mino Bimaadiziwin: *The Good Life*.

### 386 Prevention Programs and Activities Completed in 2023-24



This year the Prevention team participated in the Santa Claus parade in Parry Sound and Shawanaga First Nation with floats put together by the team.

The three-day Women’s Retreat was another highlight this past February. It was attended by nine women who are involved with Prevention Services. All Prevention workers attended and provided transportation to Spirit Point. The venue was perfect for the atmosphere and the purpose of the retreat. This year Elders attended the retreat which added a much-appreciated dimension to the group. Cultural knowledge, teachings

and discussions were shared throughout the time at Spirit Point. The Elders participated as presenters and provided guidance to the women throughout the three days.

The retreat is an opportunity for women to take a much-needed break from their everyday responsibilities of being caregiver to children, youth, family, and/or community. The group was grateful for the break, and excited to get back to their families after tending to their own spirits and well-being. Turtle Concepts came for a day and did an amazing job of building the women up,



with lively interactions, storytelling and games/activities. The Prevention team is committed to relationship building with member communities and collaboration. The Prevention team together with Shawanaga and Henvey Inlet First Nations, offered two courses within their communities, the Stay Safe Course – Home

Alone Safety and babysitting course. Shawanaga's courses were offered in July, and 13 youth attended the babysitting course, and eight youth attended the Stay Safe Course – Home Alone Safety. In August the babysitting course was offered in Henvey Inlet First Nation and 10 youth attended the babysitting course.

## Protection Services

### Ganawenjige Binoojiinhag – Protecting Children and Youth

Child Protection is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and/or violence that is suspected, may occur, or has occurred against child(ren)/youth. Every child/youth has inherent rights to be recognized, respected, and protected, and cared for so they will thrive and grow physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually/culturally.

After working with a partial complement of child protection staffing, we are grateful to be almost at full complement of protection workers, supervisors, and managers in the Nipissing-Parry Sound, and portion of the Greater Sudbury jurisdiction. Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services provides protection Services to the First Nations we serve, as well as the Indigenous and Inuit population in the jurisdictions. We continue to collaborate and actively engage our First Nation partners with regular Band Reviews, family-based conferencing and Band Representatives. The Protection Team works closely with the Prevention and Cultural departments to ensure any child/youth in protection has their care plans prioritized for any out-of-home placements to be with family, or kin and always planning towards safe and therapeutic reunification, and addressing needs of caregivers and parents.



**The Indigenous Pathways to Authorization (IAW)** training has been a crucial part of training new workers, to familiarize them with the jurisdiction, communities, and current social/health issues faced by many communities. IAW also showcases the cultural diversity of families and communities and provides responsive programs/services for the child/youth and family.

We look forward to an updated Anishnaabe Children and Youth's Bill of Rights, which will be a constant reminder of the layers of support: family, extended family, community clan, and Nation that will provide hope, a sense of belonging and connectedness to culture for our children and youth in care. The Rights of Anishinaabe Children and Youth are inherent and forever in all care practices.

## Family Support Services

### Doodemag Enji Maawnjidjik – Family Visiting

**Our team provided support for more than 850 family visit this year reflecting a 59% increase from last year.**

These visits ensure the children and youth can bond with their parents and family during periods of separation. Our workers work together with the families to enhance their skills and build capacity that will help them achieve the goal of reunification.

This year we added an additional space in Parry Sound for family visits. This reduced the amount of travel time children and families for the those living in this area. Although we now have three locations that we can host family visits, we continue to encourage families to meet in a more natural environment which may be in the community, beaches, parks, and at community events and public recreation facilities and attractions whenever possible.

# Anti-Human Trafficking Conference

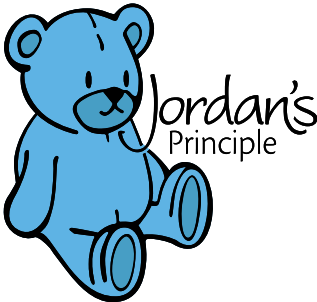
Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services together with Anishinabek Police Services (APS) held a 1-day conference on Anti-Human Trafficking, It Takes a Community – Debendaagzjig Gnawenindiwag (Community Members Protecting Each other) on March 5, 2024., at the Best West Conference Centre in North Bay, ON. The Conference was the launch of the joint billboards, and featured well known speakers including:

Dr. Diane Redsky, Shoal Lake First Nation #40, Dr. Lori Haskell, and an especially poignant speaker, Survivor - Karly Church. The Conference was funded in part by Ontario Supporting Victims and Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence, Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation. Billboards were installed at two locations on Highway 69S in March 2023.



## Jordan's Principle

### Aaswaakwa'igaade Dibishkookaw – Equal Support



The Jordan's Principle Coordinators worked with many families that were referred to us and helped them through the process of the application requirements and identifying what would best meet the needs of their families. The coordinators provided many one-on-one appointments to complete applications both in the applicants' homes and in our First Nation communities.

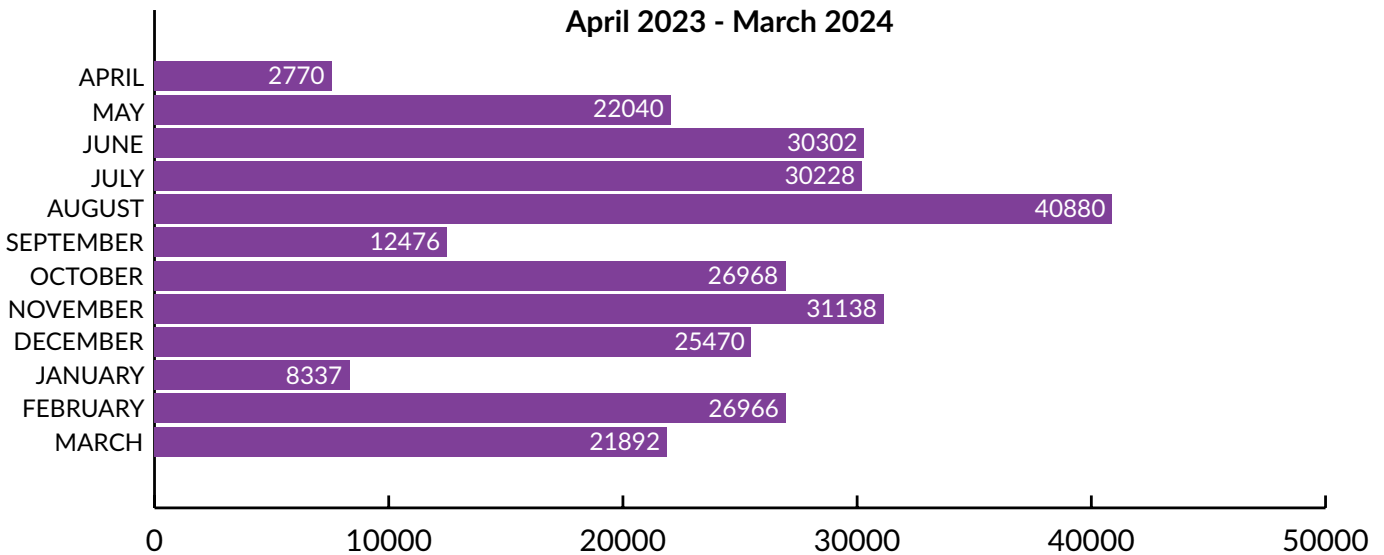


## Volunteer Services

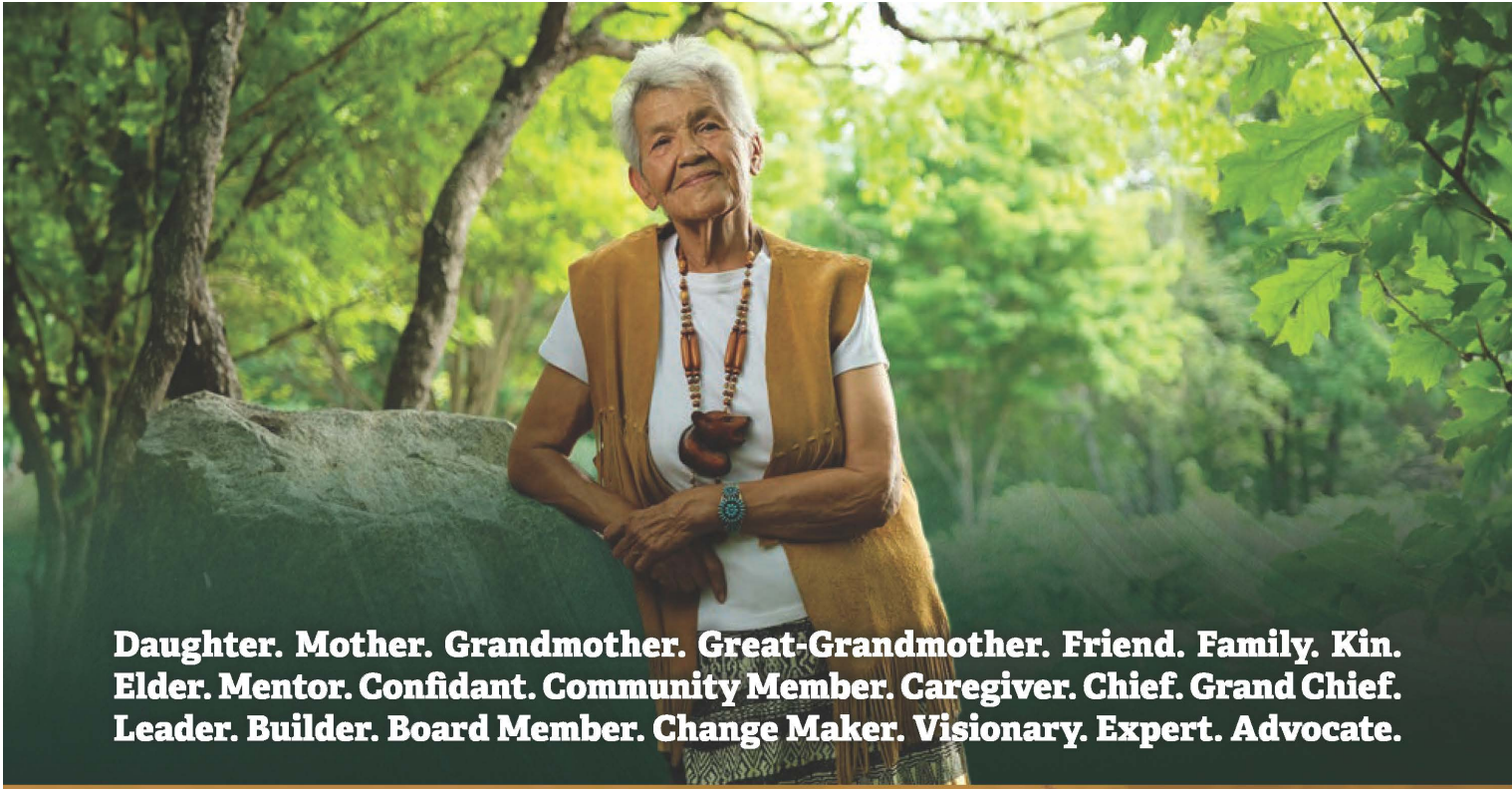
The Volunteer Services Coordinator worked with the volunteer drivers in coordinating over 1,800 drives this past year, transporting children, youth and parents. These drives permitted families to attend family visits, appointments, cultural events, camps and many extra-curricular activities that they may not have been able to participate in otherwise. We have onboarded many new volunteers this year, making these drives possible. These drives include 284,272 km throughout our regions and province, an increase of 68% from last year.



**Total Kilometers Driven**  
April 2023 - March 2024



Volunteer Services, with Alternative Care, organized the annual Volunteer Appreciation Event on October 19, 2023, at the Wasauksing Gathering Place. This event provided the opportunity to say Chi- Miigwetch/Thank you to the number of caregivers and volunteers who make a difference in the lives of the children, youth, and families we serve.



**Daughter. Mother. Grandmother. Great-Grandmother. Friend. Family. Kin. Elder. Mentor. Confidant. Community Member. Caregiver. Chief. Grand Chief. Leader. Builder. Board Member. Change Maker. Visionary. Expert. Advocate.**

**These are just a few titles that Joyce Tabobondung, Jaabaakwe (Cook), 86, of Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario, Canada, holds proudly.**

Joyce loves her family, community, and nation, and is revered for her work for Wasauksing First Nation, Child Well-Being Agencies, Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations, Friendship Centers, and in many Indigenous leadership and Board of Directors positions. Joyce was the Chief of Wasauksing First Nation for 2 terms and was the former Grand Chief of the Robinson Huron Treaty in the late 90's. Still, she actively advocates for Indigenous children, culture, connection, and community, as Head Elder at Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services.

Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services is an Indigenous Child Well-Being Agency serving six First Nations in Nipissing-Parry Sound and the Greater Sudbury Jurisdiction, including Wahnapiatae, Dokis, Henvey Inlet, Magnetawan, Shawanaga, and Wasauksing. Niijaansinaanik provides culturally congruent child, youth, and family well-being services for prevention, protection, and family support programs. Niijaansinaanik 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 Well-Being services for the First Nations.

Joyce's mother, Florence (*Flora*) Tabobondung (*Baa*) was chief of Wasauksing First Nation for 27 years, was a Grand Council Elder, and is lauded as a visionary in Indigenous Child Well-Being. *Flora's* vision is depicted in the Niijaansinaanik logo. Taking a similar path, Joyce continues to advocate for better outcomes for

Indigenous children, youth, and families. Together with the Niijaansinaanik Elder's Advisory Circle, Board of Directors, and six First Nation Chiefs that make up Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services, Joyce provides input on traditional ways, teachings, and guidance. Currently, Giima (Chief) Warren Tabobondung, (Joyce's son) continues the leadership legacy and has been Chief of Wasauksing First Nation since 2013.

Recently, Joyce and the Elders Circle have been part of the Agency development of the *Anishinaabewin Nikayaa Nkoobnigay* - Our Anishinaabe Way of Raising Our Children, also known as the Orange Standard. The Orange Standard is redesigning approaches to providing well-being services, focused on the Rights of the Child, Funding Equity, Heritage and Culture, and an "Every Child Matters" framework of Excellence. "Part of bringing back balance to our families starts with the children and showing them healthy ways, community, and unity," said Joyce. "The unity that the Chiefs and Board of Directors have shown coming together for one designated agency serving them, is a giant step for our families walking together towards *mino-bimaadziwin* - the good life."

**Author: Shayla Brunet, Communications Coordinator**



**Niijaansinaanik**  
Child and Family Services

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# Niijaansinaanik

Child and Family Services



Culture  
Family Support  
Prevention  
Protection  
Jordan's Principle  
Orange Standard

Delivering the *Orange Standard* of Indigenous Child and Youth Well-Being.

Serving the First Nations of Wahnapiatae, Dokis, Shawanaga, Henvey Inlet, Magnetawan and Wasauksing, and Indigenous children, youth and families in the jurisdictions of Nipissing-Parry Sound and City of Greater Sudbury.

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