



We Value

Safety – Families – Relationships - Collaboration – Being Open & Willing to Change

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE PERIOD November 25^h, 2020 – January 26th, 2021



Happy New Year! I hope each of you had some time to enjoy the holiday season, different as it was.

The pandemic certainly dominated the year and I found it helpful to take a step back and remember the positive non-COVID related work that happened. A few examples of that:

- The Act respecting First Nation Inuit and Métis children, youth and families came into effect January 1st and we have worked hard alongside our partners to understand and start implementing it. The Act comes after decades of advocacy by Indigenous people.
- Part X of the Child Youth and Family Services Act came into effect January 1st and much thought, consideration and work went into training everyone and implementing it. The change provides greater levels of privacy and transparency for the people we serve. Plus we had to figure out how to do ensure compliance while working from home.
- Both Ministry reviews went very well this year – the Extended Society Care Review and the Foster Care License Review. Comments from the reviewers included:
 - You're doing a fabulous job looking after these children
 - Exploring all permanency options was really well done
 - High level of contact between workers and young people
 - There was lots of information regarding identity and it was very well done
 - Our foster parents were very knowledgeable and have good relationships with our staff
 - Our foster parents say that we are doing "fantastic" as an agency
- Neva Isaac-Sands who is a member of Walpole Island First Nation created a mural in the Indigenous area of our agency that is bright, colourful and joyful.
- The locks on the Indigenous room were removed after we worked through some difficult and painful times.
- Equity work continued as a focus and progress is being made. We pushed ourselves harder

following the killing of George Floyd and the widespread protests for justice.

- Staff have participated in the all Black staff provincial meetings and the work of One Vision One Voice continues.
- A new foster parent recruitment campaign was launched with involvement of the community.
- There have been a variety of initiatives and creativity to keep people's spirits up
- And so much more...

There was no shortage of things to reflect back upon in 2020. I opted to write out examples of how I hold white privilege in my life and how I benefit from it. I've been reading *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad and it's one of the reflective prompts that she provides in the book. Each time I do this exercise, I see new things. I share this to provide encouragement to keep reflecting, learning and growing – it should never stop regardless of how much we've already learned and what position we hold.

1. All my peers are White – other Executive Directors and the Directors at the agency.
2. My successes or failures as an Executive Director will not be attributed to my race.
3. If people are unkind to me, it's not about my race.
4. People of my race are not described as “marginalized, at risk or over-represented” in the racism conversations I participate in.
5. I can choose to ignore race conversations or racism as a topic in my personal or professional life and there will be very little consequence.
6. I can easily shop and interact with anyone while shopping and not have to worry or even think about how I'll be treated based on my race.
7. I know my children will never be discriminated against or targeted based on race. I don't worry about their safety based on race.
8. I see my race positively represented in media all the time – movies; tv shows, books.
9. When I am participating in training and race is being discussed, no one looks to me or expects me to speak on behalf of White people.
10. I can show anger or frustration and not face any stereotypes about that or have it attributed to my race.

On January 28th, we recognized and honoured Martin Luther King Jr. Below is a link where you can find information. [Martin Luther King Day 2021 - Our Martin Luther King \(ourlutherking.com\)](https://www.ourlutherking.com/)

It was another opportunity to reflect upon some of the changes we've been making at our agency to address and eliminate racism, anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism. A few of the examples over the past year include:

- Equity competencies are now in effect and being reviewed in performance reviews;
- A comprehensive policy review with anti-racism, equity and Indigenous inherent rights embedded in our policies – these are now being reviewed by our Board;
- We have a process in place to respond to micro-aggressions and are tracking them so we know

when we are improving and what we need to further change;

- We have an Equity Committee in place and members are working together to develop the upcoming priorities and work that will be done;
- We are co-leading work in the community on anti-racism and equity; ([learning opportunities](#))
- We have been more specific in our recruitment efforts to hire Black, Indigenous and racialized people.

And there is more work to be done. Thank you to all the Black, Indigenous and racialized employees and Board & Board Committee members for the ongoing courage and commitment in pushing for necessary and needed change and justice for such a long time and often at great personal expense. Thank you to the White employees and Board and Committee members for your efforts to deepen understanding and being willing to do the personal and professional work necessary for change and justice. Working together will create lasting changes for the people and communities we serve today and for future generations.

Strategic Planning

I am happy to say that we have hired three young people who will be part of the strategic planning team in partnership with Lambton College and Ryerson University. They are looking forward to getting started! At the same time, we will be consulting with the First Nations to determine if/how they would like to be involved and what type of process to use. We anticipate announcements and further information going out shortly. Nearly all work on this will be completely virtually. Timeline for having the strategic directions ready for the Board of Directors to approve is this Spring.

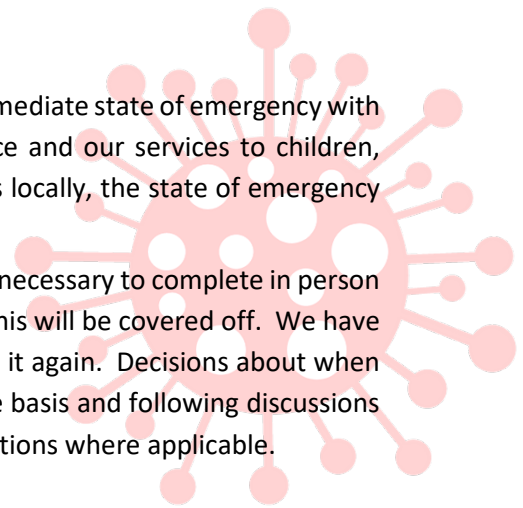


COVID-19

Provincial Announcement

Premier Ford announced on January 12th that the province is under an immediate state of emergency with new restriction and a stay-at-home order. We are an essential service and our services to children, families and communities continue. With the continued rise in numbers locally, the state of emergency and new restrictions announced, we made the following changes:

- Wherever possible, services will be provided virtually. When it is necessary to complete in person service, each department will work together to determine how this will be covered off. We have successfully done this before and we will be able to sort through it again. Decisions about when in person service will be provided will be made on a case by case basis and following discussions and input with the manager, front line staff, families and First Nations where applicable.

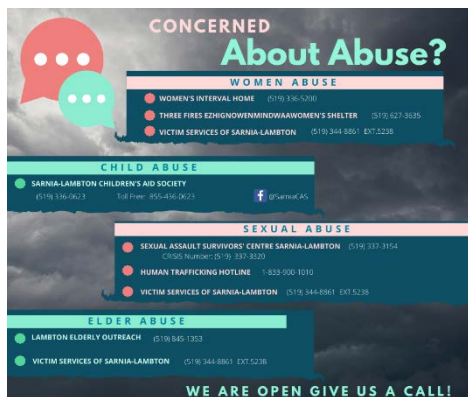


- We know what a detrimental impact it had when children and young people weren't able to see their families in wave one of the pandemic. In person access visits for children will continue where possible and with safeguards in place and in consultation with the First Nations where applicable. These are being reviewed on a case by case basis. We recognize there may be situations where in person access visits may not be able to continue due to circumstances and the health risks involved. In those situations, it will be very important for everyone to work together (family, staff, resource family, kin, First Nation) and determine the best way for the child to continue to have some form of regular contact with their parents/family members.
- Our receptionist is answering calls remotely and staff who have an in person meetings or visits occurring in the building, will greet the guests and complete the LPH screening questions prior to their entry.
- We are limiting physical presence of staff in the buildings to only what is essential for service. We will continue to clean and disinfect the buildings during the lockdown.
- We are offering iPhones to families and young people we serve who are in need of a device to stay connected to their worker.

We have set up an online screening tool for staff to complete prior to entering the buildings or providing any in person service. This will enable us to confirm that staff have been self-screening.

Increased Risk of Abuse

There are increased risks of abuse for many people during COVID and particularly given the requirements to stay at home. As we know, home is not a safe place for everyone. Locally, there have been three recent tragedies of women being killed. Our deepest condolences to the people impacted by the losses. Violence impacts women everywhere – the people we serve, neighbours, friends, family and our colleagues. The Canadian Women's Foundation reports that half of all women in Canada have experienced at least once incident of physical or sexual violence. Systemic racism has created additional risks for Indigenous women and Black women. The Women's Interval Home has shared resources on signs of abuse and we have shared it on Facebook as well. We are working together with other community



partners to get more messaging out to communities on where people can go to get help. The Women's Interval Home is available 24/7 at 519-336-5200 ext. 221 and info@womensintervalhome.com. Three Fires Women's Ezhignowenmindwaa Women's Shelter on Walpole Island can be reached at 519-637-3635.

We are seeing increased intensity and severity of protection concerns and are working together to ensure we respond quickly and support our staff throughout.



Chasing Zero

We are chasing having all children and youth growing up safe with families. It is at the heart of everything we do. Success Marker: Zero children & youth growing up in care by 2020.

During the pandemic, additional supports were provided for alternate care families (kin, foster, Formal Customary Care) and for young people on Extended Care and Supports.

The moratorium on youth aging out of care during the pandemic has continued.

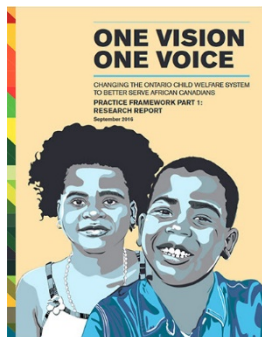
Great news about new resources coming for withdrawal management at Bluewater Health. This has been advocated for by our communities (thank you Ryan Bell for your participation in this) and the local First Nations for quite a while. The announcement can be found here:

<https://www.bluewaterhealth.ca/news/improved-withdrawal-management-services-for-sarnia-lambton>



All at the Table

There is a place for everyone at our table. No one person or group sits at the head. People of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, races, cultures, genders and sexual orientations are welcome to pull up a chair and have their voices help shape our services and decisions. Success Markers: Family involvement in case conferences increases by 10% a year beginning in 2016. Families have a way of telling us if our services were helpful and why.



One Vision One Voice

The second PowerUp! youth symposium has been scheduled for February 24, 2021. The One Vision One Voice program is excited to engage with Black youth across the province for a virtual afternoon of inspiration, education, and togetherness.

One Vision One Voice (OVOV) is now publishing a monthly newsletter regarding the work that is being done to improve service to and address overrepresentation of Black children and families in the child welfare system. It

can be found here:

<http://go.oacas.org/webmail/529102/913396103/e0de4b4740f577b699d77e76006b34536ef4f44d5548940116eeabfd14729aa>



Journey Beside

We will continue to work beside our First Nation partners to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of their children and youth. We commit to learning from one another and sharing our agency's resources to support First Nations children, youth and families. Success Marker – a minimum of 80% of staff, foster parents, Board members and volunteers have participated in at least one local training or [learning opportunity](#) per year regarding Indigenous People.

The federal government has announced new funding to support Indigenous communities taking back child welfare services for their communities if they chose to do so. The following article provides details on that announcement as well as a recent CHRT ruling that expands the eligibility for Jordan's Principle funding. <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/pm-announces-542m-to-help-indigenous-communities-take-over-child-welfare-services/>

Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

Our congratulations to Wabaseemoong Independent Nations who announced that effective today, its Customary Care Code will have the force of federal law, An Act respecting First Nation, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. The Customary Care Code will govern child welfare for Wabaseemoong children and youth regardless of where they live. The Nations have worked with the federal government and the province of Ontario on this important transition – the first one in the province. We have received direction from the Ministry that we are to continue with the requirements in the Child Youth and Family Services Act to consult and work with Wabaseemoong if we are serving their children.

<https://wabaseemoong.ca/wp-content/uploads/WIN-Customary-Care-Code-PR.pdf>



Our Stories

By sharing our heartfelt stories, challenges and the changes we are making, we can better educate our community about the valuable work we do with children, youth and families. Success Marker: We have an annual communication plan that provides the public with more information about the work we do.

Our appreciation to the Children's Services team, Nicole Hillier, the Rotaract Group and the Taylor family/friends for all their work in putting together this year's youth holiday party, COVID-style. The creativity, positive energy and generosity from staff across the agency and the community was amazing. We had great feedback from the young people who participated – it was nice to see some smiles from them and staff too! Julie Taylor (former foster parent) was interviewed for an article with the [Sarnia Journal](#). Julie was also interviewed on CBC Radio – Afternoon Drive which can be heard here: [CBC Radio](#). To see snapshots from the event [click HERE](#)

Through the Family Meal Fundraiser, Cosmos sold 127 meals and Lambton Scientific matched it for a total of \$1016 that will be donated to our agency. That's an amazing amount of pasta and generosity. Our thanks to both Cosmos and Lambton Scientific for their support.



My Circle

Each of us has the responsibility to ask ourselves “What role do I play in helping us meet our goals?” and “How am I committing myself to our mission?” This is your circle. Success Marker: everyone has a personal goal that helps us achieve our strategic goals.

We have achieved our success marker in this area. Here are a couple of circles:

“I will treat every person with respect and dignity and will acknowledge, at all times, their inherent worth.”

- Amal Yusuf

“For those supporting others, be patient and honest about your own boundaries and emotional energy.

As well, when we really love ourselves, everything in our life works.”

- Christiana Tettey-Fio

Staff Years of Service Breakfast

Due to COVID we are not able to come together in person as a management team with the help of Board members to prepare the annual breakfast for the staff recognition event. We put a survey out to staff to help us decide how to celebrate this year. As a result of the input from staff, we have scheduled a virtual event for the morning of February 24th. If you are able to attend, please contact Nicole Hillier so she can send you the zoom link to participate. This year Kelly Lane, our Children's Services Manager, will be celebrating 30 years!



Learning Opportunities

We purchased the book and workbook on [How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi](#). The description of the book: "Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas – from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities – that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves." If you wish to borrow a book please contact Nicole Hillier we will find a way to get a copy to you.

While the events of Washington dominated headlines and discussion around the world, we can also remember that Canada was built on racism and colonialism. We have our own current and devastating racism problems and need to continue our collective efforts to build a more equitable society. That has a direct connection to child welfare and the services we provide every day. I'm sharing a few links that have also been provided to all staff. There is no shortage of learning opportunities and resources and I've encouraged staff to share with each other. It's equally important to reflect upon and apply what we've learned so that change happens.

This article outlines some of Canada's white supremacist problems:

<https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/security-and-defence/canada-has-a-white-supremacist-problem-4757/>

Thanks to Charlene Taylor for sharing this link about Rocky and Dale Sands who talk about when the Indian Agent was kicked out of Bkejwanong (Walpole Island) and what it was like living under his oppressive rule.

<https://youtu.be/uSxzPPHhQW0>

This link is a CTV interview with Kike Ojo-Thompson on how systemic racism, and specifically anti-Black racism, shows up in the classroom.

<https://www.ctv.ca/shows/the-social/the-effects-of-anti-black-racism-in-the-healthcare-industry-s8e73>

Thanks to Nicole Hillier for sharing this link on micro-aggressions in the classroom.

<https://youtu.be/ZahtlxW2CIQ>

Submitted by:

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