

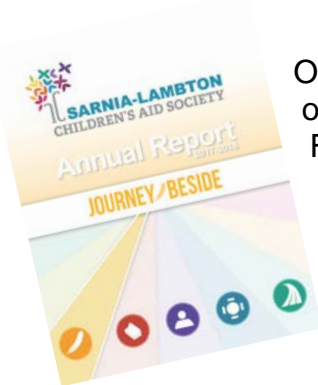


We Value

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

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE PERIOD OF June 27th, 2018 - October 30th, 2018

A warm welcome to all the new and returning Board members.



Our Annual General Meeting this year focused on our strategic direction of Journey Beside. It was an honour to hold the event at Aamjiwnaang First Nation. We celebrated some of the work and success that has occurred over the past year and were also encouraged to continue working with First Nation partners to improve. Thank you to Michelle Holbrook who co-chaired with Lexi Giorgi and for her leadership as Board Chair over the past year. Welcome to Ryan Bell who is our new Board Chair.

We are fortunate to have such a strong, diverse and committed group of people on our Board of Directors and I look forward to our work together in the year ahead.

On October 14-16, the annual Child Welfare Leadership Conference was held. The focus this year was learning about Design Theory and how it can be used to inform our work. The overall idea is to start with the experiences and input of the people and communities that we serve and the outcomes that we want – and create a service and system from there. Time on the second day included reflecting on the Indigenous Gathering held in September, change management, CPIN outages and changes to the funding model this year.



Mary Ballantyne, the Chief Executive Officer for our provincial association – The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) will be retiring at the end of the year. I am on the Board of Directors for OACAS representing the southwest zone and was on the selection committee for the new CEO. We anticipate an announcement about the new provincial child welfare leader shortly.



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.

This remains a strong focus in our work and covers much of what we do including supportive and collaborative work so that children and youth stay with their families and communities. We currently have 7 children and youth who remain at risk of growing up in care. We have started to hear about each one and the planning underway at each weekly Director meeting. The purpose is to ensure that these children and youth are known at every level of the agency and that there are many different perspectives helping us consider every possibility for a positive alternative to growing up in foster care.



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.

We were honoured to be nominated for an Outstanding Business Achievement Award in the category of Inclusivity through the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce. Merci Mariah Armor for attending the awards night with me. Although we did not win the award, we were in good company and it provided an excellent opportunity to see and learn about different businesses and companies in Sarnia-Lambton. It also raised awareness about our agency and our work.



Our use of Signs of Safety as a framework for service has continued. Staff receives ongoing training and learning opportunities in this area.

We have started to call a sample of families who have received our services and ask them the following questions:

- Do you know why we are involved with your family?
- Do you know what is expected in order for the Sarnia Lambton Children's Aid Society to end its involvement with your family?
- Please tell us how your child's or youth's voice was heard.
- Please tell us what you would like to see us do more of...
- What else would you like us to know?
- Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with our service?

The One Vision One Voice provincial project is leading the work to address the over-representation of Black families receiving child welfare services. In the summer, there was a Black youth symposium that was well attended by youth from around the province. We invited the 3 Black youth in care that we serve; however, they did not choose to attend because all three are in the process of returning home. In November 2018, there is a Black staff symposium – the first of its kind in Canada. We will have 3 staff attending and look forward to the recommendations and ideas from the meeting.



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.

In October 2017 there was a provincial gathering at Rama First Nation where an Apology was offered to Indigenous communities on behalf of non-Indigenous Children's Aid Societies for the harm caused by child welfare. At that time, a request was made to return in a year to report on the 8 Indigenous Commitments that were made to improve service. The follow up meeting was held September 16-18th 2018 at Rama. There were representatives from across the province in attendance. Miigwech to Lynn Rosales, Crystal George (both from Aamjiwnaang First Nation), Ron George (Kettle and Stony Point First Nation), Colleen Johnson and Sharon Coyle (both from Walpole Island First Nation) for attending and participating in the event. Chi-miigwech to Carm Rogers (Kettle and Stony Point First Nation) who also made the trip with another person from his community. Unfortunately, there was a mix up at the hotel reception which resulted in them returning home.

The Indigenous team hosted a lunch and provided information about Orange Shirt Day and

how it started. The Southwest Executive Directors also recognized the day and posted on social media.



On October 2nd, we had an Indigenous Working Group meeting. We spent time sharing our thoughts and impressions from the Rama gathering. There is both hope with some of the positive work and partnerships that are underway and disappointment in the provincial results on the Indigenous Commitments. The meeting was also an opportunity to update each other on what is happening within the agency and on the First Nations.



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.

We have engaged the services of Storyboard (a Sarnia business) to create a series of videos for the agency. We have agreed to partner with Chatham CAS on two of them because our needs are similar and it's a good way to make the best use of public resources. The first two videos will focus on:

- Reimagine who we are – video to recruit diverse staff.
- Reimagine the foster care system – video to recruit families when children need out of home care with a focus on adolescents.

Each video will have people from each agency sharing their stories. Storyboard will also assist in targeting specific audiences online with the videos. We have used Storyboard for our last two strategic plans and have good experience with them.

On August 31st, 2018, I met with MPP Bob Bailey. Chris LaForge attended with me as a young person to share his experiences and ideas. We spent an hour updating Bob Bailey about the work underway and learning from him about his new responsibilities. We had two main points of advocacy:

- Supporting kinship families.
- Continuing the work and Reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

Bob Bailey offered to try and arrange a further meeting with the Ministers involved. We have sent a follow up letter.



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 continue to develop skills in the areas of facilitation and ‘mapping’ and ensure that I am supporting family participation in planning for their children.”

- Christie Klassen

Understanding the world view of clients; identifying their strengths, and working in partnership with families and service providers to promote safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children to grow and thrive.

-Wokeyim Adagbor



Getting Better Together

Wellness in our workplace was identified as a priority for the year because of ongoing concerns and a 50% increase in sick leaves. As a result, I have started to report on this area in my monthly reports.

To address the concerns, a working group was created to review the staff wellness survey, facilitate focus groups and create an agency plan to address the strengths and worries in the workplace. There are front line staff and management staff on the working group and they have named the group “Getting Better Together”. Following a Day of Engagement where all staff was invited and encouraged to participate in focus groups, a summary was provided to staff during a staff meeting. Lesley Allen and Avery Petersen are the co-chairs. The plan for change was completed over the summer and presented to staff in September 2018.

Stabilizing our staffing levels was identified as a priority in wellness. The Board passed a motion in June allowing for additional hires to occur. We have hired additional child protection workers and expedited the child protection worker authorization process. We still need to hire two additional managers and have recently re-posted for one of them.

All managers have recently been trained in Working Minds – mental health training which provides a common understanding and strategies to support staff and ourselves. This training will now be provided to all staff.

The Social Committee at the agency also continues to be active in planning of various activities to support connection to each other, belonging and wellness.

DAWN FLEGEL, M.S.W., R.S.W
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.