SARNIA-LAMBTON
CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Annual Report
2017-2018

JOURNEY BESIDE

Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society is a trusted ally to families, communities & cultures in creating safe, nurturing environments for children and youth to grow and succeed.

ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

JOURNEY BESIDE

Tuesday, September 25th, 2018

1. Welcome – Michelle Holbrook, Board President
   Chief Chris Plain, Aamjiwnaang First Nation
2. First Nation Opening – Dallas Sinopole, Youth and Drumming Circle
3. Message from the Board President, Michelle Holbrook
4. Family Recognitions
5. Greetings from the OACAS, Rosaleen Cutler
6. Recognition of Departing Board Members
7. Youth Awards
8. Message from the Executive Director, Dawn Flegel
9. Guest Speaker
10. First Nation Closing - Dallas Sinopole, Youth and Drumming Circle
11. Closing Remarks from the Board President, Michelle Holbrook

2017/2018 Board of Directors

President: Michelle Holbrook
Vice President: Ryan Bell
Vice President of Finance: Todd McNeil
Secretary: Lynda Donovan
Directors: Johann Lewis, Lynn Rosales, Deb Pretty, Steph Brown, Mariah Amor, Carm Rogers
Past President: Gayle Montgomery

Board President & Executive Director Annual Report

We begin by extending our deepest gratitude to staff, Board members, volunteers, First Nation partners, community partners, children and young people and all the different kinds of families who provide love, care and a home. It is a humbling experience to lead an agency that has so many people who contribute in positive and meaningful ways. We remain inspired by the capacity of families to heal, to grow and to hope.

The past year brought a new child welfare law, The Child Youth and Family Services Act. There are very positive changes including:

- The age of protection being increased to age 18;
- New and expanded First Nation, Inuk and Metis provisions and consultation requirements;
- A strong focus on children's voices, rights and participation; and
- Enhanced accountability provisions for Children's Aid Societies.

We look forward to continuing to implement the new law in ways that make a positive difference for the people and communities we serve.

The focus of our Annual General Meeting this year is one of our Strategic Directions. **JOURNEY BESIDE** is where we work beside First Nation partners to ensure the safety, permanency and wellbeing of their children and youth. Our stories about this work are centered on our relationships and partnerships. It's important to us that we share our stories together so this report will include submissions from First Nations with whom we work closely. We thank them for their important and valuable contributions.

We are honoured to share some of the work that has been done on Journey Beside:

- For the past 5 years, we've had an Indigenous Working Group where we meet with First Nation partners to deepen relationships and understanding, consult about a wide variety of topics, advocate together for changes, and share stories and information with each other. Our work together has helped inform some of the provincial initiatives and we have presented together.
- Because the Indigenous Working Group has been successful, it has now been expanded to include other Children's Aid Societies and First Nations in the southwest area.
- In October 2017, there was a provincial Gathering where Children's Aid Societies acknowledged and apologized for the role that child welfare had and continues to have in the lives of Indigenous children, young people, families and communities. We participated in the Gathering along with First Nation partners from Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation. We are grateful for their participation and attendance at the event.
- Our work together with the local First Nations has resulted in more culturally responsive services to families, reduced numbers of Indigenous children in foster care, reduced numbers of families in court, the use of Formal Customary Care, piloting a training curriculum and a home study that is specific to Indigenous families, and the creation of an Indigenous Gathering space at the agency.
- Our partnership with Payukotayno James and Hudson Bay Family Services continued and strengthened. Payukotayno is an Indigenous Child Well Being agency serving communities along the James and Hudson Bay Coast. We have visited each other's agencies, shared resources with each other and have offered homes for children needing them on a temporary basis until they can return home closer to their families and communities.
- For the past 3 years, we have achieved our success marker in ensuring that a minimum of 80% of staff, Board members, foster parents and volunteers have participated in at least one local training or learning opportunity per year regarding Indigenous people. This past year 100% of staff and Board members participated in the learning, 90% of volunteers and 80% of foster parents.

We conclude by sharing a quote from the Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee;
"Most of the recommendations still sit on shelves. I urge everyone to move quickly to action and to work to identify immediate priorities, set critical paths that we can advance our issues and take action to implement them. I look forward to the challenge of working together to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action."

Michelle Holbrook
Board President

Dawn Flegel
Executive Director

Our Journey

Walpole Island First Nation

"Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations."
– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It has been said that we must know where we have been in order to know where we are going. I believe this is true. Dr. King so eloquently reminds us of where we have been. He reminds us that historically, systems have failed First Nations and their communities and while there remains much work to do in this area it is the efforts of some that make huge differences. The collaboration between Sarnia – Lambton Children's Aid Society and Walpole Island First Nation is an example of working toward being better.

Since time immemorial First Nation people have been parenting their children and caring for their communities in the way they were taught, but as a result of the overbearing outside systems trying to 'fix' things many of the original ways were lost. It is important work that is being done to restore the balance and return the children to their rightful owners. We are creating the opportunity to learn from our neighbors and create new systems that don't hold the same hate and prejudice for a new world and a new history… it is very exciting.

I look forward to more collaboration, to more restoration of the homes and families in Walpole Island First Nation and most of all to the capacity building and education that our collaboration brings to both sides.

While we are still quite far from reconciliation and there are still overbearing outside systems it is good to know that in our small part of the world we have reached a simple understanding that we can and will care for our children, families and homes. It's true that we may need some help along the way and it's good to know that we can call on our neighbors for that help in a reciprocally respectful way and know that we will not be taken over.

When I look at where we were and where we are now, there are so many things for both sides to be proud of. We need to keep working hard, keep respecting each other and keep moving forward for our First Nations children and youth to grow strong in who they are and be proud of it.

Tracy Brant Director of Enodmaagejig Social Services

Aamjiwnaang First Nation

I have seen the successful progression of the relationship building process between the Sarnia Lambton Children's Aid Society and our Indigenous Communities, children and families. The relationship process has taken six years to build, review, evaluate and is ongoing. This is not to mean we always agree on a case management plan, but what it does mean is the willingness to sit down talk in a respectful manner and formally consult at every turn. The service delivery to our Indigenous Communities address the social factors that impact on a family so that the protections concerns are addressed in a collective and supportive manner.

Crystal George
Barrister & Solicitor, Band Representative
Aamjiwnaang First Nation

Kettle & Stony Point First Nation

It has been through the joint commitments and efforts of the Sarnia Lambton Children's Aid Society and members of the Kettle & Stony Point First Nation that we now enjoy a relationship that is more conducive to addressing the best interests of the children and families of the First Nation. Over 6 years ago, in the midst of a very difficult set of circumstances, we agreed to work to develop a better relationship, one that was based on respect for and understanding of each other. I believe that the leadership and staff of the Sarnia Lambton Children's Aid Society has made a strong commitment to that end. Although we still see far to many children and families in times of crisis, requiring the involvement of those involved in securing the welfare of children, we are on a right path. As I look back over the 44 years that I have been involved in the Canadian justice system I can see the positive change. Although that change has most often been by slow degrees it is nonetheless change for the better.

Ronald C. George
Barrister & Solicitor, Band Representative
Kettle & Stony Point First Nation

Southwest Zone Provincial Update

In June 2017, the Ontario child welfare sector agreed to 8 commitments to improve service to Indigenous children, families and communities. Those commitments are:

- Reduce the number of Indigenous children in care
- Increase the use of Formal Customary Care
- Reduce the number of legal files
- Implement mandatory training for staff
- Track and report the number of Indigenous local Board members

Southwest Zone Provincial Update Continued

- Establish relationships with local Indigenous partners
- Establish a plan with local Indigenous partners
- Embed Jordan's principle in the Inter-agency protocol

Following the OACAS apology to Indigenous communities in October 2017, a further commitment was made to give Sixties Scoop survivors disclosure of their CAS files.

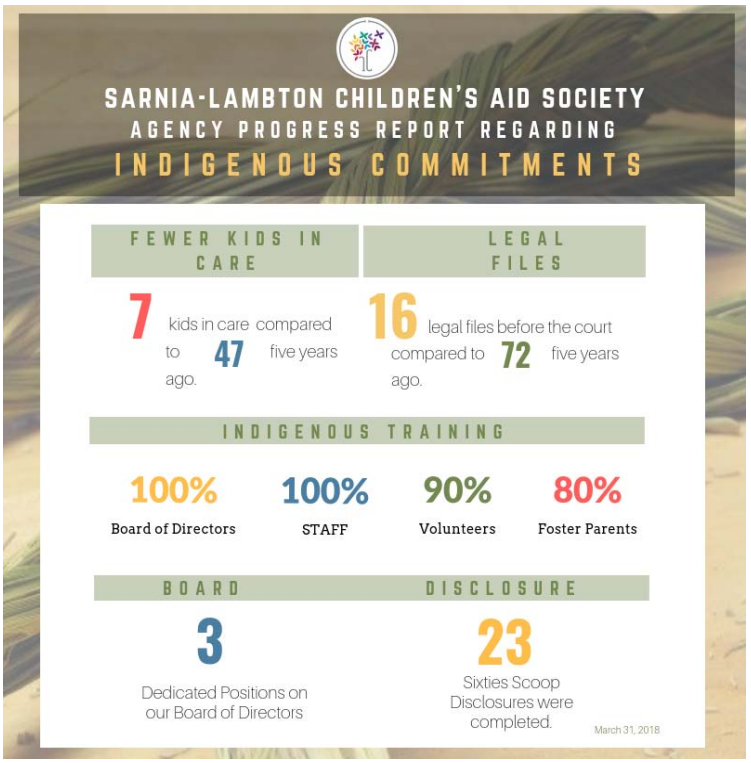
To help support the work that needed to be done to honour the commitments, a group of representatives from each CAS zone was established comprised of Executive Directors and Directors of Service. As the Director of Service representative for the Southwest Zone, I worked with other Directors of Service in the Southwest to help support their efforts in improving service to Indigenous families. As we go forward, our agency will continue to advocate on a provincial level to create a system that is led by the Indigenous communities and ensures the well-being of their children, families and communities.

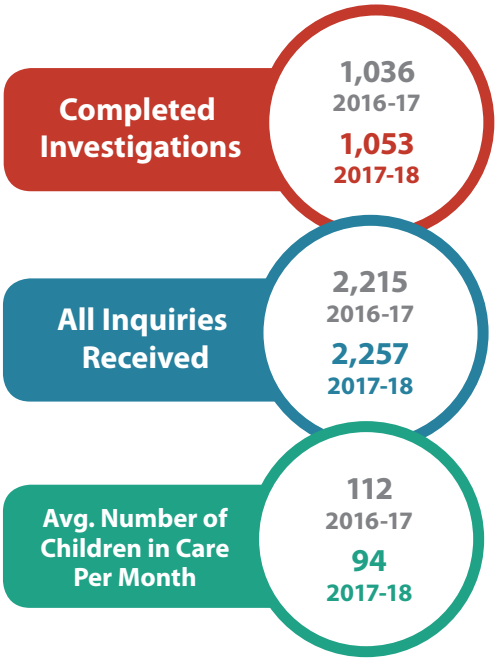
Locally, I am proud of the work this agency has done together with its Indigenous partners to honour these commitments and work towards reconciliation. Highlights of our progress include:

- we no longer have overrepresentation of Indigenous families in the court system
- we are using Jordan's principle as our guide in questions of jurisdiction
- we continue to work in partnership on all decisions regarding Indigenous children and families
- we have provided training to staff, board members, volunteers and foster parents
- we have provided disclosure to Sixties Scoop survivors in a safe and supportive manner

While I am proud of these accomplishments, we still have much work to do. As we work together to reimagine a child welfare system that ensures that Indigenous children are safe and well in their communities, it will require all our collective talent, knowledge and commitment. Miigwech to the Nations we serve for their continued partnership as we work together towards a better child welfare system.

Jennifer Thrasher,
Director of Services





JOURNEY BESIDE

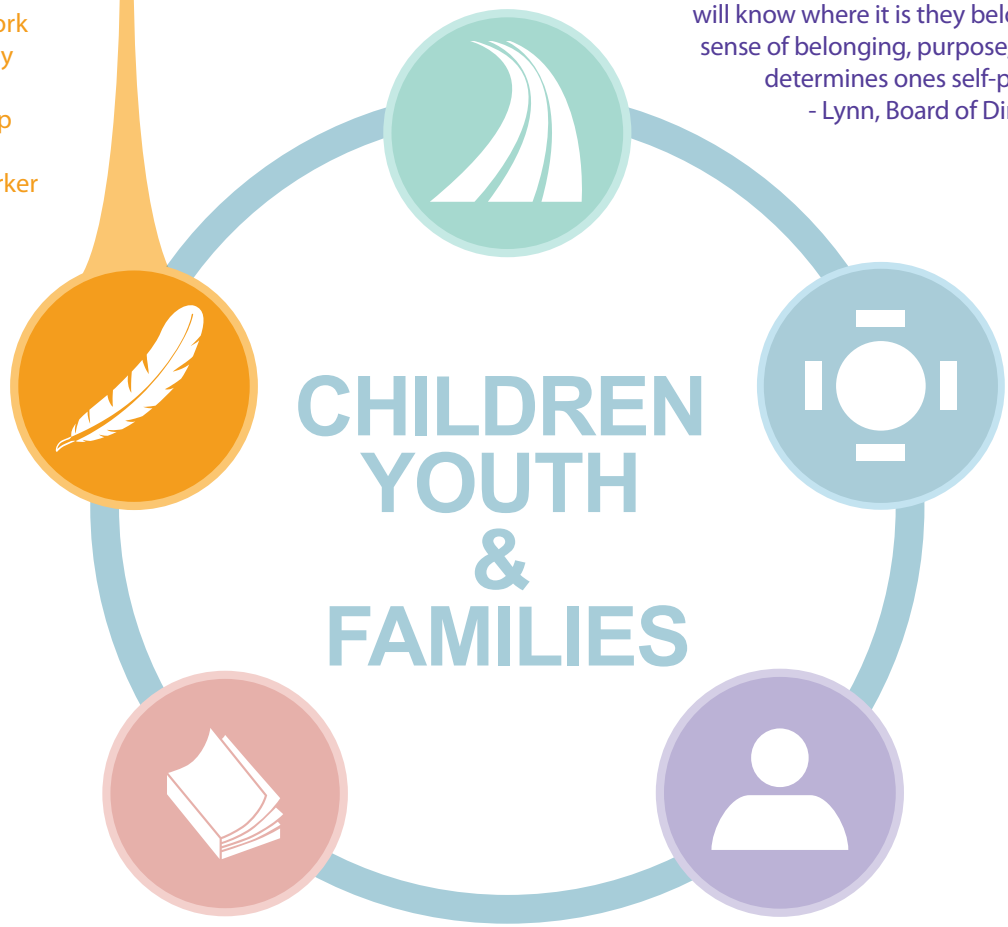
We will continue to work beside our First Nation partners to ensure the safety, permanency and well being of their children and youth. We commit to learning from one another and sharing our agency's resources to support First Nation children and youth.

Success Marker: A minimum of 80% of staff, Board members, foster parents and volunteers have participated in at least one local training or learning opportunity per year regarding Indigenous people.

" I choose to ensure that every child know they are accepted, they have a purpose and that they are a gift from the creator. They must know who they are and where they come from so they will know where it is they belong. For to have a sense of belonging, purpose, and acceptance determines ones self-perception."
- Lynn, Board of Directors

"I will support the families I work with in becoming strong family units, to encourage as many children as possible to grow up with their families."
- Aileen, In Home Support Worker

"To educate the entire agency about Formal Customary Care- both the technical requirements and why this is a preferred alternative to First Nations youth being in care. "
- Jennifer, Director of Services

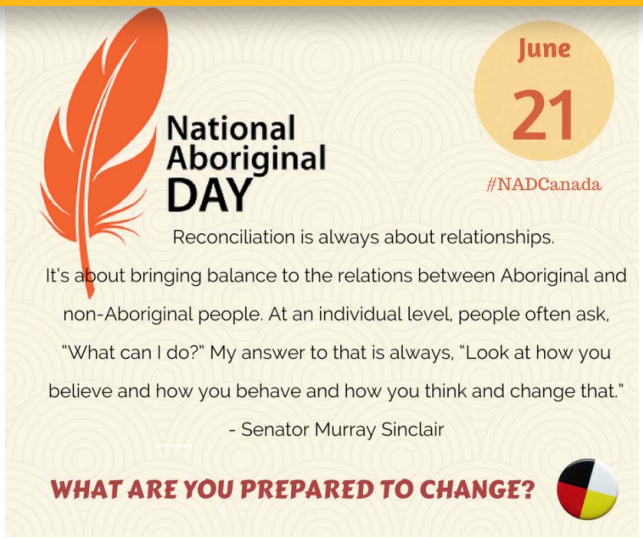


"I will continue to support inclusivity and advocacy for the Indigenous Kinship families and extended family units with whom I work, and will expand my knowledge of the traditions, practices, and spiritual dimensions of the First Nations, Inuit and Metis People."
- Megan, Kinship Worker

"I will share with my children and my extended family what I am learning so that the future generations know what is happening and has happened."

"I need to be more understanding of the emotional, psychological and cultural damage residential schools have cause d to Indigenous families and to be sympathetic to the impact it has had on the generations that have followed"

"I will teach my daughter an accurate portrayal of Indigenous history, including residential schools. This is very different than what I learned growing up."



"To change my lack of knowledge surrounding our responsibilities under royal treaties, which allow us to inhabit some of these lands."

"I plan to incorporate concepts of Indigenous care into more lessons in my class this year, with a focus on enhanced understanding and relationships."

"I will continue to educate myself and speak up if/when I hear other speaking negatively or when they are mis-informed"

"Bringing more awareness to present day oppression of our Indigenous population"

"Be more open to share and be accepting of all."

"To be mindful at all times & appreciate relationships & the power they hold."

"Talk about it with family, friends, co-workers and try to help others understand oppression and how we can stop it from continuing to occur."

Heart & Spirit

WHAT IS HEART & SPIRIT?

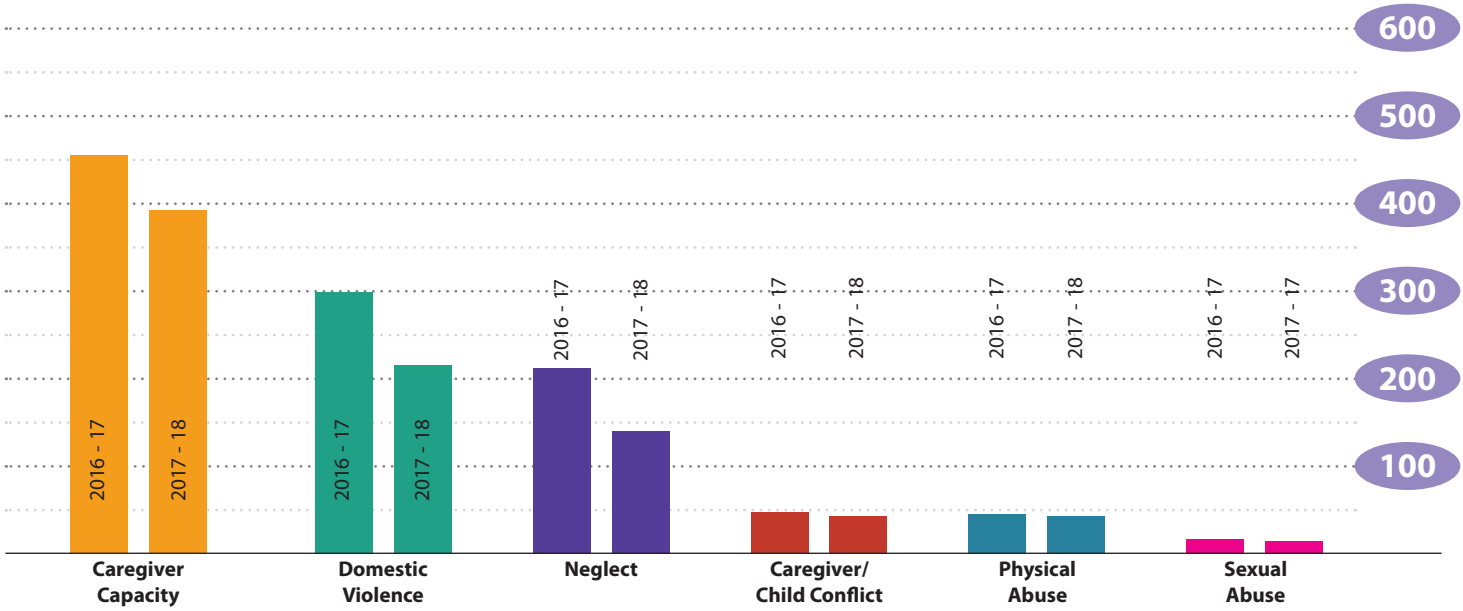
Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society has partnered with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) to test pilot a culturally appropriate alternative to SAFE and PRIDE. The HEART and SPIRIT program is designed to prepare both First Nations and non-First Nations caregivers with the tools to become effective caregivers to First Nations children.

Some of the core First Nations design elements include:

- Incorporates fundamental Indigenous beliefs and values;
- Honors and respects Indigenous traditions, practices and learning styles;
- Designed, developed, and delivered within a First Nations context;
- Strengths-based;
- Uses Indigenous practices and activities to engage caregivers and families;
- Engages Elders as an important part of the understanding and learning process; and
- Builds collective strength by discussion, sharing and storytelling.

Some additional distinct elements of this program that are specific to a First Nations' application, include an acknowledgement of the colonial context, use of an Indigenous Model for Human Development and the use of First Nations' ceremonies and traditions as well as symbols to explain concepts within an Indigenous knowledge system.

Types of Concerns Received



Financials

Expenditures	2018	2017
Salaries & Benefits	10,395,445	10,458,271
Travel	589,969	559,625
Training & Recruitment, Promotion & Misc.	103,925	298,146
Building Occupancy	332,314	381,591
Professional Services – Clients	326,275	343,182
Board Care	1,695,041	2,523,741
Personal Needs – Clients	1,077,256	1,424,798
Health & Other Related – Clients	231,118	169,665
Office Administration Supplies & Professional Services	520,086	458,889
Technology	157,884	234,147
Total Expenditures	**15,249,313**	**16,853,055**

Revenues		
Expenditure Recoveries & Other	687,922	342,183
Provincial Subsidy	15,171,271	16,433,128
Total Revenues	**15,859,193**	**16,775,311**
Net Surplus (Deficit)	(429,880)	(77,744)
[a]Balanced Budget Fund (Contribution) - Utilization	0	373,730
Ministry Managed Fund		
(Deficiency) excess of revenues versus expenditures per audited statement	429,880	295,986
Add back expenditures recognized for GAAP Audit Compliance	(281,295)	(295,986)
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	**711.175**	**0**

[a] The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has created the "Balanced Budget Fund" to support Children's Aid Societies in meeting the balanced budget requirement set out in Regulation 70 and to proactively manage the risks associated with a multi-year budget planning process. During the year ended March 31, 2014, Sarnia-Lambton CAS generated a surplus of $1,146,614 that may be eligible for access until March 31, 2017. **Audited Statements are available on the agency website.