

MINWAASHIN LODGE

2023 Annual Report



*Serving the Indigenous community for
30 years*

MINWAASHIN HONORS OUR FOUNDERS

Grandmother Lillian
Pitawanakwat is
the founding Elder
of Minwaashin
Lodge

We do our work to honour all Indigenous women and to always honour our founding Elder, Lillian Pitawanakwat.

From the beginning, Grandmother tirelessly traveled to Minwaashin Lodge, Ottawa to see how we were progressing. Lillian believed in us! She believed in the work we were trying to do.

She visited our lodge to bring guidance, healing, and support to our fledgling organization and to the small group of staff, who in the beginning, for the most part, were searching for their own identity and culture. Lillian prayed religiously for us and did many pipe ceremonies so that the Creator would help all of us to rebuild our strength.



MINWAASHIN HONORS OUR FOUNDERS

Irene Compton is
the co-founder of
Minwaashin Lodge

We must never forget the dedicated women that blazed the trail. The power of Irene Compton (Thunderbird Lady in the Sky) came to us from the west as Creator gave her the bundle of co-founding Minwaashin. Through Irene's Indian Name and strong cultural beliefs, she has managed to maintain a lasting presence in the community and lodge. Irene stands as a witness and keeper of the stories of Minwaashin Lodge and we would like to honor Irene Compton for her 30 years of dedication.



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OUR VISION

We envision a world where all of
creation,
the earth, the air, the waters, animals
and people are safe, honored and
respected;
where children and elders are valued;
where culture and diversity
are celebrated.



OUR FUNDERS

Public Health Agency of Canada

Kagita Mikam

Bell Let's Talk

Canadian Heritage Canada

Canadian Red Cross

Caring and Sharing Exchange

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres

The City of Ottawa

Ontario Council of Arts

Childrens Aid Society of Ottawa

Ottawa Community Foundation

The Ministry of Children, Community and

Social Services

Ministry of Leisure, Sports and Entertainment

Ministry of Attorney General

Inspirit Foundation

United Way of Eastern Ontario

Accenture Inc.

Government of Ontario

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)

Indigenous Services Canada

Service Canada

Sisters of St. Joseph Canada

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Laidlaw Foundation: Indigenous Youth and

Community Futures Fund (IYCFF)

Ecclesiastical Insurance Foundation



OUR COVID FUNDERS

United Way East Ontario
Canadian Womens Foundation
Canadian Heritage Canada
Honda Canada Foundation
Ottawa Network for Education
Sprott Foundation
Ottawa Community Foundation
Indigenous Sports and Wellness
Canadian Red Cross
City of Ottawa
CanadaLife.com
Canadian Roots
The Rogers Foundation
Women Shelters of Canada
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Ontario Native Women's Association
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Sprott Foundation: Second Harvest
Employment and Social Development Canada
Indigenous Service Canada
Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition
Community Foundation of Canada
Bell Let's Talk
Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre



April 1, 2022 - March 31, 2023

Board of Directors

VELVET MIGWANS - PRESIDENT
JO MCCUTCHEON - VICE-PRESIDENT
CHRISTINA HODGINS-STEWART - TREASURER
PAMELA WOLFE-ROBERGE - BOARD MEMBER
LANE BOURBONNIERE - BOARD MEMBER
KATELIN PELTIER - BOARD MEMBER
IRENE GOODWIN - BOARD MEMBER

Staff

MARY DAOUST - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HR TEAM

PAULETTE JOHN - EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
CASTILLE TROY - GENERAL ADMINISTRATOR
KATE HOLDEN - FINANCE/HUMAN RESOURCES
IDA KAKEKAGUMICK - IT MAINTENANCE/RECEPTION

PROGRAM DIRECTOR/MANAGEMENT

FRANCES DALY - DIRECTOR, OSHKI KIZIS LODGE
FLORENCE HILTZ - MANAGER, CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAMS
IRENE COMPTON - MANAGER, CULTURE/EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS
ANGELA JEFFREY-MARTINCICH - MANAGER, COUNSELLING TEAM, ART THERAPIST

PROGRAM STAFF

ANNIE KINGSTON-MILLER
BARB WOLFE
VERNA MCGREGOR
ELAINE KICKNOSWAY
STORM BURGOYNE
ANDREA YOUNG
EUNICE DECONTIE

OUR TEAM



Program Staff (cont)

MARLENY VELIT
WENDY KITTY-MILLIGAN
HAYVEN WAWATIE
SABRINA GIDEON
FRANKIE PASAP
PATRICIA ANIMIKWAN
KATERI MILES
KENDALL BRYANT
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NICOLE EDWARDS
LAINIE SYLVESTER
KAREN POLSON
SABRINA JONES-MONETTE
RUTH ADONYE
ROSE FOLEY
TEANNA BERTIN-MCLEOD
VERONICA SPADE





PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have been in our new location for one year now. Staff and visitors have enjoyed all the space we have in our new building. Although we are still working on renovations, we held our first in person board and staff Christmas party. It was so nice being able to spend the time together. The renos should be complete by the end of this fiscal year and our new site will be fully operational. We look forward to sharing this space with our clients and community.

Our Children's Annual Curbside Christmas Giveaway was at capacity this year. We reached over 300 families. It was a huge success and having the space in our new site made Everyone enjoyed the day. Thank you, Chef Ric and your team from The Mission, as well as all the staff and volunteers for making Christmas special for our families. Even though COVID screening is still in place, our programming is running at full capacity. The city funded a 3rd STORM team until March 2024. Services can now be delivered during day hours as well as evenings six times a week.

A 5-year Strategic Planning Retreat was held for Board and Staff last fall. It was wonderful to see how big our staff can dream and the vision they have for Minwaashin Lodge. We are going to do great things together.

The Family Healing Lodge continues to move forward with an updated Business Plan. We are seeking support to find land and a new build. It feels like every day we get a little closer to our dream.

Mental wellbeing and possible "burn out" is still a constant concern for our staff. With the caseloads over stretched, it takes its tole on mind, body, and spirit. We have their backs!

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Executive Director-Mary Daoust, staff, and volunteers for all the hard work they do every day.

Chi-Meegwetch,

Velvet Migwans

Board President



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We officially wrapped up all retrofits to our new site at the end of this fiscal and cannot wait to enjoy our beautiful space without interruption. It had been challenging at times; however, our flexibility and determination got us through.

Results of lingering Covid restrictions caused an increase in domestic violence/substance use/mental wellness/overdoses/familial breakdown/food insecurity and homelessness. Shall I go on? It appeared safe enough with the relaxed covid guidelines in place to increase our program capacity over the summer months.

Minwaashin is very proud of our management and their teams who continue to step up repeatedly with resiliency and dedication to our community.

Drum roll pleassssee! Minwaashin is moving forward with our dream project - The Family Healing Lodge.

Moms and children will be able to access culturally specific services to deal with substance use/historical trauma caused by Residential Schools/60's scoop; to name a few. It has been a long journey to get to this point, however, under the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC) lead, Minwaashin has updated the Business Plan and looks forward to securing land and a building soon. Stay tuned

As an NFP, we have always struggled with lower wages and non-sustainable funding for long term positions. With ongoing Covid funding, we were feasting! It gave us the opportunity to meet most demands for the first time and expand on much needed staffing positions. The piece meal offers are very much appreciated and do make a difference always; however, it is a short-term solution to a long-term problem. Covid was bittersweet. Coming out of the immediate threat of Covid, we noticed the applications have decreased significantly. This is a reality we face all too often. We will rock on!

Our Board knows the importance of making our staff feel valued and respected for their roles, therefore, approving more vacation time within the first year of employment and adding an affordable pension plan for staff and agency was indeed the right thing to do without question. Our grass roots Board are an amazing group of women who believe in our vision and give their all when supporting Management and staff.

Our ongoing partnership with 'The Mission' is a blessing that we do not take lightly. We are extremely grateful to Chef Ric and his talented team who dropped off three hundred delicious, pre-packaged holiday meals/treats the morning of our Children's Christmas Giveaway. The curbside deliveries were possible, due to the outpouring of support from staff worker elves, Management, Board, and community volunteers! Much gratitude for the continued generosity, understanding and support received from numerous funders, caring donors, volunteers who want to make a difference, and our strong circle of community partners and sister agencies. It takes a village to raise a child and you all play a significant role in making that happen.

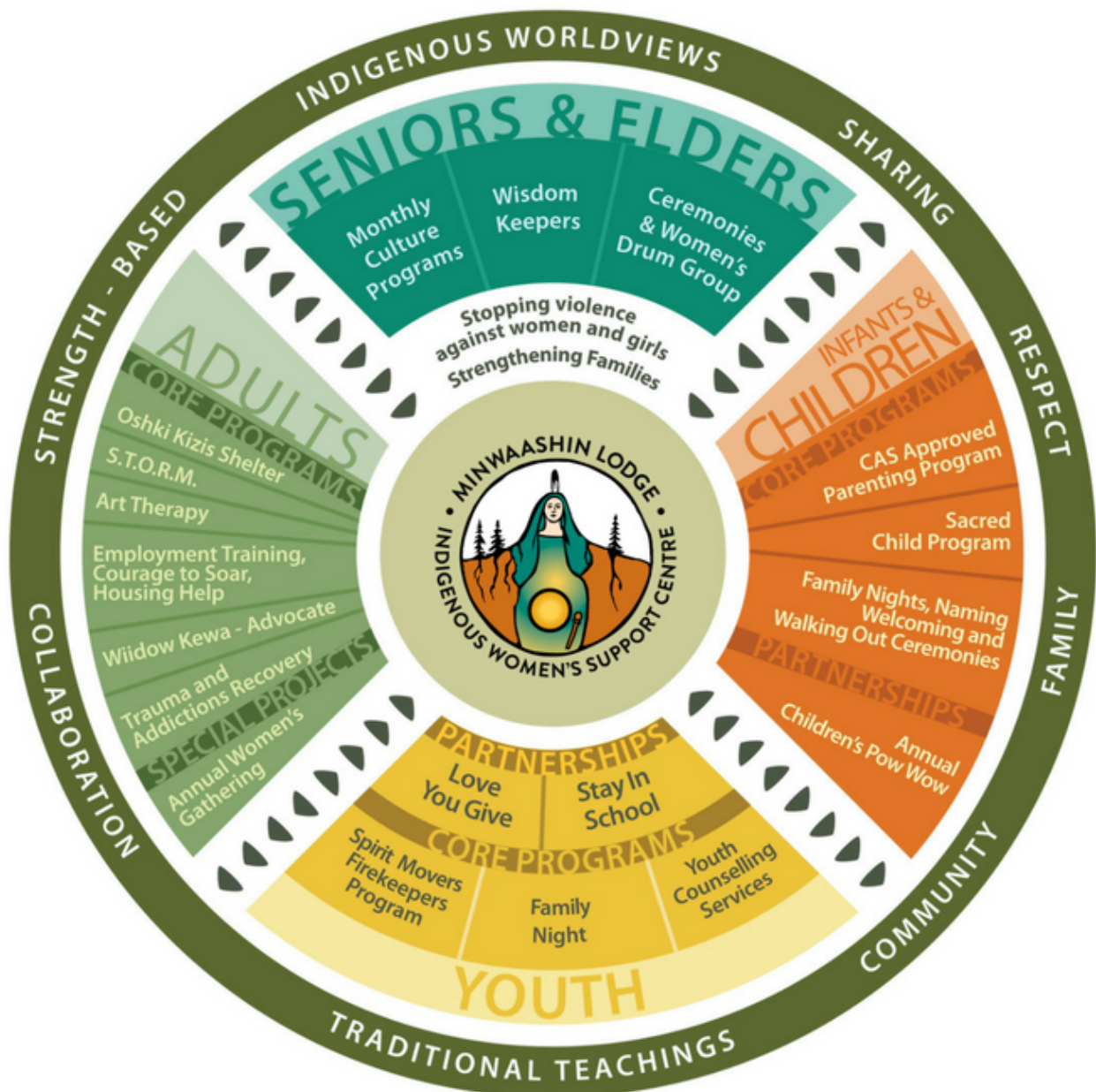
“And that is a wrap..” for this past year! What a ride!

Chi-Meegwetch,

Mary Daoust

Executive Director





MINWAASHIN LODGE: LIFE-CYCLE SERVICE MODEL

Respecting women is our culture



COUNSELLING SERVICES

Our approach to counselling is rooted in an understanding that historic and ongoing colonial violence has contributed greatly to many social problems in Indigenous communities, including problematic substance use, family breakdown and mental health challenges. Counselling services at Minwaashin draw from a cultural empowerment approach which aims to support healing through reclamation of cultural practices and connection to community. Counselling modalities offered include: traditional counselling, sand tray therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, play therapy, creative art therapy, etc.

Minwaashin Lodge: Indigenous Women's Support Centre provides a range of counselling services to First Nation, Métis and Inuit women, youth and children who are survivors of various forms of violence, including survivors and intergenerational survivors of the Indian Residential School System and 60s Scoop.

To reduce barriers to accessing counselling services, counselling is offered at our agency location and our shelter Oshki Kizis Lodge, as well as at partner organizations within the city and through secure videoconference. Additionally, traditional healing such as sweats, fasts, circles and drumming are offered to children, youth, adults, and elders.

Highlights:

- Ongoing: Agreement with Ottawa-Carleton District School Board: Minwaashin Lodge renewed its partnership agreement with OCDSB which allows Minwaashin staff to work with Indigenous children within the school setting. This is particularly useful for the children's therapy program, as the children's therapists can meet with children at school, in instances where transportation is a barrier.
- Ongoing: Agreement with the Ottawa Catholic School Board: Minwaashin Lodge renewed its partnership agreement with OCSB which allows Minwaashin staff to work with Indigenous children within the catholic school setting.



Highlights (cont):

This is particularly useful for the children's therapy program, as the children's therapists can meet with children at school, in instances where transportation is a barrier.

- Ongoing: Traditional Counselling: Through funding from the City of Ottawa and Ontario Council for the Arts, the Traditional Knowledge Keeper continued to offer traditional counselling and healing for survivors of violence and abuse.
- Ongoing: Group Counselling: The Strong Women's Support Group (Mashkawizig Ikwewag), which is grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, continues to provide weekly support to Indigenous women living with problematic substance use. The group is a safe non-judgemental space for woman to connect with peers and community to support their healing through the reclamation of traditional teachings and skills.
- Ongoing: Aunties on the Road: Indigenous Full Spectrum Doula Collective: Through funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Youth Opportunities Fund, the Aunties on the Doula collective continues to thrive. Minwaashin acts as an organizational home and mentor for the collective, who provide full-spectrum doula services to Indigenous youth 12-30 and an annual full-spectrum doula training. Additional funding to support the training was received from the Laidlaw Foundation and the City of Ottawa.
- Ongoing; During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Minwaashin Lodge transitioned counselling services to virtual and social distant formats. This included secure phone and video sessions and, once some restrictions began to lift, in person sessions offered outdoors. We are now continuing to offer services with a combination of virtual and in person sessions using appropriate safety measures.
- New: Through funding from the Ottawa Community Foundation, Minwaashin Lodge was able to offer four cycles of a family art therapy group. This group allows Indigenous children and youth to connect with their families through culturally based art therapy in order to heal the effects of intergenerational trauma. This program can also, as needed, provide families with individual family therapy sessions.
- New: Through funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Resilient Communities Fund, Minwaashin was able to offer professional development opportunities for counselling members, as well as all staff trainings on preventing burnout and vicarious trauma. This funding also allowed us to extend the contracts of several counselling team members until new funding could be secured helping to reduce service disruptions to community members.



Statistics:

700 First Nation, Métis and Inuit women and families received counselling services with over 8000 hours of 1:1 counselling, art/family therapy and crisis intervention in addition to psycho-educational workshops, traditional support, healing circles, teachings, sweats, fasts, ceremonies and referral services. This year there has been a large increase in the number of children and youth receiving individual counselling.

Thank you to our funders: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), City of Ottawa, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Council for the Arts and the United Way.



SACRED CHILD PROGRAM

What an exciting beginning! We work with many community partners to educate parents and families on topics such as nutrition, family violence, child development, and parenting skills through personalized goals and safety planning. Our expanding team worked diligently to deliver programs to address the diverse current needs of the community. We were blessed to add an Inuit family support worker as well as many other positions to support the Family and Youth team. Our full-time programming has been opened and attended well. Please find our calendars posted on our social media. Bi-weekly baby food cupboard with monthly family resources, continued access to CASO and crisis support kept our team busy. The program also strives to recognize and respect the roles of women in the family and their contribution to the wellness of family, community, and nations for the next seven generations. The Sacred Child Program is part of the dynamic circle of services that is vital to the wellness of the families of Minwaashin Lodge.

Highlights:

- Annual Back to School Supplies Giveaway
- Toys for Tots
- Winter Xmas giveaway and feast-curb-side delivery
- Weekly access/visitation with CASO
- Traditional teachings
- FNIM Parenting
- Nitawigin EarlyON Program - virtual cultural programming
- Dad Central Learning
- Bi-weekly food bank-curb-side delivery
- Curbside crisis supports/visits
- Partnership with Indigenous Early Years Committee (IEYC) with quarterly family bundles
- Resilience Day/Every Child Matters Day



We would like to acknowledge our partnerships as our community is stronger as a circle.

Many thanks to our funder: Public Health Agency of Canada



Partnerships:

Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition
Ottawa Public Health
Inuuqatigiit/Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre
Tungasuuvingat Inuit
Odawa Native Friendship Centre
Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre
Aboriginal Makonsag Head Start - Nitawigin EARLYON Program
Métis Nation of Ontario
Ontario Native Women's Association
Circle of Care-Alternative Child Welfare Restoratives Justice Program
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa*City of Ottawa Public Health
Ontario Best Start
Ottawa Public Library
Ottawa Food Bank
The Mission
Ottawa School of Art Outreach Program
IEYC - Indigenous Early years
United Way -- Gifts in Kinds Program
Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)
Ottawa First Words
Canada Mental Health Association

SACRED FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATION

Under the Sacred Child Program, the Sacred Family Liaison Coordinator and the Anti-Human Trafficking Program work to bring a culturally safe and client-centered approach to families involved with the Children's Aid Society (CASO).

This service is offered to First Nations, Inuit and Métis families with open case files with CASO. A cultural lens is used when assisting the reunification of families by supporting, guiding, and advocating for their rights.

Service delivery is individually tailored to each unique client's needs and the intake process ensures the community is fully supported.

This year's focus has been to keep the youth-in-care connected to culture and community. In doing so, we address the growing number of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls by providing vulnerable youth with support and by building empowered spirits for the next seven generations. A vital component for this goal is the establishment of a new group for youth at risk of being trafficked or of coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

A critical program development has been providing on-the-land and other cultural experiences as well as one-on-one support to youth throughout their most difficult years transitioning from sacred children to sacred women.

Many thanks to our funder: Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

GIIWITAASHKODE YOUTH PROGRAM

The Giiwitaashkode Youth Program (Come Sit by the Fire) is for youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine years. We use a holistic well-being approach to strengthen and inform self-identity, decrease the risk factors that contribute to violence and victimization, including human-trafficking, and increase protective factors to build strengths, skills and resiliency in Indigenous youth and their families.



This program is not limited to group and community work. We also provide personal one-on-one support for any basic needs, emotional needs, mental health referrals, crisis support, advocacy, and mentorship. These are all necessities for the empowerment of the women we work with.

The goal for this program is to build a culturally safe space for young women at Minwaashin Lodge. Within Giiwitaashkode, we will continue to come together and share our culture to grow as strong Indigenous women.

Highlights: Dream catcher making, birch medallion painting, medicine candle making, self-care teachings, vision board making, beading, and sharing meals.

Miigwetch to our funder for making this program possible!

**Many thanks to our funder: Ministry of Children,
Community, and Social Services**



INDIGENOUS FAMILY SYSTEM'S NAVIGATOR

Navigators bridge the gaps in family's access to care.

This position is to help clients navigate complex systems such as mental wellness/physical health care, human/social services, and the criminal justice system which may be Indigenous or non-Indigenous focused. The end goal in assisting clients is to build and maintain self-directive and independence in their home communities.

Summary of services:

- Connect clients with resources and support systems
- Facilitate interaction and communication with child welfare staff and other community workers
- Streamline tasks, appointments and paperwork
- Assist parents/families to identify and access financial services to pay for their case plan needs
- Assist parents/families to arrive at scheduled appointments on time and prepared
- To decrease parents/families barriers with possible communication breakdown, involvement with the child welfare system, and/or with emotional regulation
- Assist parents/families to identify and utilize appropriate social services
- Track interventions and outcomes; and
- Assist with birth/status/medical/social housing applications and forms when required



Navigators can also provide outreach strategies within their respective communities including child welfare resources pending on client volume. In future, the clients will have a new resource manual to access available programs and services specific to their area within the Ottawa region. Due to Covid, the need for services is at its peak, therefore, the program is critical to bridging those gaps in community.

Many thanks to our funder: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).



THE SPIRIT MOVERS & FIRE KEEPERS YOUTH PROGRAM

This program is for First Nations, Inuit and Métis focused program for boys and girls aged 7-11 years old and youth 12-18 years. Activities are based on traditional cultural teachings. The youth gain knowledge of their Indigenous roots with age-appropriate discussions and activities. The core program is to promote and maintain healthy lifestyles, friendships and to offer Indigenous teachings and ceremonies.



We continue to provide support to our youth and their families through video chat, check ins, talk and text and 'curbside and backyard visits and we have resumed in-person programming with the Wednesday night Drop-in program -- a program geared to the immediate needs and interests of the current group with craft activities, outings to museums and nature walks.

We were invited to provide outreach to Queen Mary Public School providing cultural support to grade 4-6 student's weekly at their Indigenous club. While we have wrapped up for this school year, we are preparing to return for the 2023/2024 school year.

The youth participated in the annual 'Flotilla for Friendship' which connects youth and police officers for the day by paddling down the Rideau River. The outcome of this annual event is to continue closing the gap and building stronger relationships between Indigenous youth and police.

In the spirit of creating additional positive relationships with youth and the police, the youth program has partnered with the R.C.M.P. They have invited our youth to tour the RCMP Musical Ride's stables to learn about the horses. An officer also attended our drop-in program to answer questions from our youth about the roles of the RCMP, with a view to making more positive connections with youth.

Thank you to our funder: City of Ottawa





COURAGE TO SOAR

The Courage to Soar (CTS) program is designed for survivors of domestic violence or women who are at risk of domestic violence and are ready to build economic self-sufficiency.

Highlights

The CTS program is 24 weeks and provides training programs with a 90-day paid placement in various Federal Government departments. The program focuses on ensuring each woman receives a range of supports that will lead to successful graduation. Nine participants graduated in fiscal 2022-23 - three with Distinction and one with high honours from Willis College.

Partnerships

This program would not be possible without our partners who we are very grateful to:

- Willis College (training)
- Ontario Works (employment assistant benefits and job retention support)
- Kagita Mikam (training and cost sharing)
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
- Job Connect (employment services)
- Apatisiwin (training and cost sharing)
- Ottawa Food Bank (emergency food)
- Human Resources Development Canada (placements)

Program Components

Intake and assessment identify the level of skill and support needed for each applicant. With this assessment, women are assisted to maintain their commitment by taking part in violence against women groups and support, individual counselling, crisis counselling, culturally based psycho-educational workshops, safety planning and advocacy.

Individual training, education, and employment action plans are devised, based on cultural models such as the Medicine Wheel and Tipi Pole Teachings.

These action plans encompass the following critical components:

- Office Administration Training tuition fees and books are paid for by the CTS program.
- Training prepares graduates for entry level positions.
- Work placements assist participants to enhance their skills and give exposure to a working environment.
- Tutoring, peer support and “first day at school” support is provided by graduates of the CTS program.
- Self-care, team leading and modeling, and confidence building workshops are delivered to strengthen soft skills.

Benefits of the Program

The CTS program has proven to be a model program, gaining high recognition in the Indigenous community, and establishing continued support from the MCCSS and Ontario Works. Many applicants are referred by past graduates who have had a positive experience in the program. Graduates are proud of and use the leadership, self-esteem, and confidence they have acquired because of the CTS program. The program continues to experience an **80% success rate**, with graduates going on to employment or to pursue further training in colleges and universities.

**Thank you to our funder: Ministry of Children,
Community & Social Services - IWF**



CULTURE PROGRAM

The Culture Program empowers women to seek a healthy and culturally enhanced lifestyle - Mino Bemaadziwin /the Good Life - for themselves and their families. The mandate of the program is to assist First Nations, Inuit and Métis women find, cultivate, and develop cultural leadership and traditional skills. As well, the program provides opportunities for women to participate in traditional gatherings, recreational outings, and ceremonies.

Accomplishments

This year Minwaashin Lodge received a grant from City of Ottawa, Heritage Fund. We also received funding from Canadian Women's Foundation to create an online store with women donating their time to create items for an e-commerce undertaking. It has proven to be successful, and we aspire to continue with sustainable funding.

Highlights

Programming was a hybrid mix of virtual and in person. Friday's program was in person with a maximum of twelve women attending each session. Our land-based activities were conducted outside. Women and their children participated in summer teachings and ceremonies. Some of the highlights were Strawberry Picking and Sweetgrass Picking.

Monthly Women's Drum Circles were conducted to provide a safe space for women to connect with the drum, songs, teachings, and with their voice. A series of healing and drumming workshops were held with Brenda McIntyre, Medicine Song Woman.

The Culture Program continued following the seasons and the medicine wheel which facilitated the creation of traditional drums, rattles, and regalia during the summer, fall and winter months. Visiting Elders delivered traditional knowledge workshops on-line from Kitigan Zibi and Wiikwemkoong.



Partnerships

Oshki Kizis Lodge received bi-weekly Culture & Wellness programming for women and children.

Women's Events Network Organizers of Ottawa provided opportunities for Indigenous women to participate in the December 6th Vigil and the Annual Take Back the Night Walk online. Indigenous women demonstrated leadership, public speaking, and drumming at these annual vigils to raise awareness of the impacts of violence against all women.

Aboriginal Awareness Week provided opportunities for Indigenous women to demonstrate their leadership by actively participating in municipal, provincial, and federal Aboriginal Awareness Week campaigns.



Statistics

The following number of women took part in various programming:

Traditional Support Services - 158

Cultural Arts & Crafts - 210

Healing Circles - 154

Hand Drum Circle - 60

Ceremonies - 126



CULTURAL E-COMMERCE PROGRAM

This year Minwaashin Lodge received a grant from Canadian Women's Foundation to create an online store with women donating their time to create items for the e-commerce undertaking. It has proven to be a wonderful success, and we look forward to continuing it with sustainable funding.

An experienced artisan was hired to train First Nations, Metis and Inuit women to make several handcrafts including soaps made with traditional medicines, medicine bags, No-face Dolls, and a great many other traditional items. Participants were also provided with training relating to entrepreneurship and small business development, as well as crafting materials to support their development as Indigenous crafts people.

Minwaashin oversaw and promoted the production of crafts made by Indigenous women and marketed them at local craft shows, community events and on our website. Throughout the program, participants received support and guidance from our Program Coordinator who oversaw all aspects of the project. The project empowered Indigenous women fleeing violence through the reclamation of traditional knowledge and skills and supported their financial independence.

Financial abuse is commonly experienced by victims of intimate partner violence and is often used to keep their partners from leaving abusive relationships. This program offers a start and an avenue for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women to gain skills that provide them with the ability to increase their financial independence. Participants also indicated that they benefitted from the program by a marked increase to their mental health and wellbeing.

Highlights

Programming was provided twice per week. Women came together to learn, socialize, and make crafts. Traditional Elders also came and gave the teachings associated with each craft.

Partnerships

- Accenture delivered a Home-based Business Skills Workshop to the women.
- Legacy of Hope delivered a Financial Literacy Workshop.
- Eco-Equitable delivered Sewing Classes both beginner and advanced.
- First Nations Women's Enterprise delivered a Start Your Own Business Workshop.

Thank you to our funder: Canadian Women's Foundation



APATISIWIN

The Apatisiwin Program is a training and employment program funded by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) through an agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ISETS). The ISET Program provides funding to Indigenous service delivery organizations that design and deliver job training services to First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban/non affiliated Indigenous people in their communities. Indigenous service delivery organizations can be found across Canada.

Objectives of Program

- Funding is distributed to eligible clients for employment and training programs.
- Partnerships with community colleges, local universities, private training institutes and businesses across the province provide training and employment opportunities for Ontario's urban Indigenous people.
- The Apatisiwin program matches eligible clients with potential employers.

Statistics

A total of **31 interventions** for funding were processed in the 2022-23 fiscal year --15 purchase of training interventions, 6 Courage to Soar interventions, 1 child care assistance intervention, 6 Employment Insurance reach back interventions, 11 CRF interventions and a total of over 21 client interviews / requests for information were completed throughout the year.



Progress to date

- A total of 17 client files were processed in this fiscal year with a total of 31 interventions which included processing of training allowances, childcare, bus passes and the payment of tuition and books for training.
- The program funded 6 participants in Minwaashin Lodge's Courage to Soar program via Willis Business College. The success of the program has become a popular option for the federal government in the recruitment of graduates. More federal government departments are becoming aware of the program, and this ensures the entry of clients into the workforce and financial security for clients who are often single parent households. Clients this year tended to have more dependents necessitating the maximum amount given for interventions.
- Pre-employment support, coupled with pre-employment training helped a client acquire a contract to produce a podcast on cooking for low-income households.

The Process

- Intake and assessment to determine the level of skills and supports needed.
- The program works in conjunction with all the violence against Indigenous women services at Minwaashin Lodge such as counselling, culturally based psycho-educational workshops, safety planning and advocacy.
- The Apatisiwin Program works closely with the Courage to Soar and Employment Readiness Program to prioritize and deliver best training and career options for each woman registering with the Apatisiwin Program.
- The program ensures on-going monitoring of participants in training and employment interventions.
- Upon completion of training and employment interventions follow-up is done to assist in the entry into the labour market or provision of other opportunities.

The Partnership

Willis College

Algonquin College

Carleton University

Accenture Inc. - Management & Consulting

Kagita Mikam

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

Academy of Learning

The Versailles Academy

Ontario Works Employment Centres

City of Ottawa

Federal government departments such as Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) have become partners in addition to ISC and CIRNAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)

Employment Readiness Program and Courage to Soar.



EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAM

The Employment Readiness Program (ERP) works in tandem with the Courage to Soar and Apatisiwin program. This has strengthened ERP's capacity to deliver more effective supports and increase economic advancement for Indigenous women.

Group work

- Four, 10-week cycles of Employment Readiness Programming were delivered. Women received professional supports such as career counseling, resume writing, confidence building, education/training information, job interview skills and peer support
- Delivered two Basic Computer Skills workshops to increase employability
- Provided 8 additional Mental Health Workshops
- Provided 100 additional hours of Traditional Grandmother Support
- Provided 185 additional hours of individual Mental Health Support
- Purchased additional supplies for 146 participants
- Provided 8 additional online ceremonies.

Individual support

- Individual career counseling and support
- Entrepreneurship training and support
- College and university entrance assessment
- PLAR - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Assessments
- Individual coaching and mentoring for interviews
- Pre-employment services to identify career goals, develop and implement an
- Employment/ Training Action Plan
- Referrals to specific occupational skills training
- Violence Against Women counseling, support and safety planning
- Support to navigate systems such as Ontario Works, housing, education etc.



Partnerships

Accenture: has raised the profile of Minwaashin Lodge's Employment Readiness Program and increased our capacity to add more workshops and engage with professionals to assist Indigenous women.

Kagita Mikam: has increased our capacity to provide additional services & support.

Employment Ontario, St. Lawrence College, Algonquin College, Carleton University, Ottawa University and Willis College have increased Indigenous women's participation in education and training institutions.

City Of Ottawa/Ontario Works: has reduced barriers to employment by assisting participants with tangible needs such as bus passes, food, and work wear to become employment ready.

Statistics

A total of 47 women participated in the Employment Readiness Program: 16 obtained jobs and 10 pursued further education.

Thank you to our funder: The Ministry
of Children, Community & Social Services -
WESP



VOLUNTEERISM

Minwaashin provides a wide range of volunteerism opportunities for community members. Volunteers are from all walks of life and work, students, grassroots, and professional women work together to make sure Minwaashin Lodge's programs and services are effortlessly delivered. Volunteers provided support in areas of event planning and delivery, care giving, clerical, fundraising activities, education, mentorship, and programming support.

Volunteers assisted at various special events as follows:

- March – Community speaker presentations at Minwaashin Lodge International Women's Day event
- March-April Bi-weekly, food bank collection and distribution
- March-April Income Tax Clinic and individual returns completed for low income women
- May Honoring Mother's Day - compiling and delivering gifts.
- June Orange T-shirt Day, Summer Solstice, and National Indigenous Day
- July Recreational Outings for women & children – delivered gift certificates
- August Annual Pride Float – assembling and participating in parade
- September Take Back the Night Event - Virtual panels
- September Back to School Supplies Drive
- October Farmers Harvest – providing fresh vegetables for women & children
- November Elimination of Violence Against Women weekly events
- Dec Annual Children's Winter Gathering.

Partnerships

University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College, Willis College and Salvation Army. Minwaashin Lodge hosted volunteer students from various programs of study.

This past year, Minwaashin Lodge provided volunteering opportunities for 100 community members. Many have served behind the scenes, helping at busy times of the year like Christmas and special events. We depend on many individuals to enhance our programs and services.

**If you would like to volunteer, please contact Irene Compton,
613-741-5590 ext. 224.**



OSHKI KIZIS LODGE PROGRAMS



This year the impacts on the community due to Covid-19 and its aftermath continue to challenge our services; however, we have been able to maintain extensive services to street involved and trafficked people. Food insecurity continues to be a very real issue for our clients, and access to basic services remains difficult. We maintained our community food program, delivering food to community members bi-weekly. The number of households receiving food this year remained constant at 125. When a woman or family no longer needs our help, we take on new community members from our wait list.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and Inner-City Health have supported and kept us up to date on emerging issues

throughout this Pandemic. OPH continues to organize immunization on site for staff and clients at OKL. The shelter has returned to pre-pandemic resident numbers, but because OKL does not have the physical space to accommodate isolation, we continue to use hotel space for women who test positive for COVID until they can be safely brought to OKL. There have been times when women fleeing violence cannot be accommodated by 311; in these cases, we use hotels until we can find safe options.

The Staff Team

Shelter Director, Residential Support Workers (3), Transitional Support Workers (2), Housing First Case Managers (4), Youth Housing First Case Manager (1), Family Support Worker (1), Street Outreach Worker (2), Cultural Outreach (1), Kitchen Manager (1), Street Team Outreach Mobile (STORM) (2), Anti Human Trafficking Team (STORM HT) (2), Court Support Worker (1), Human Trafficking Liaison (1), and Youth Anti Human Trafficking worker (1).



OSHKI KIZIS SHELTER

Oshki Kizis Shelter, our 21-bed shelter for Indigenous women and children fleeing abuse has been in operation since 2001. The Shelter provides a safe place where traditional cultural values and practice are honoured. All programs and services are rooted in the Seven Sacred Teachings. A holistic approach is used to support the women and children while they begin their healing journey. We work very closely with Minwaashin's main location staff to ensure that residents can access the services they need. Program staff come to the shelter to offer in-house programs and services to the women and children at the Shelter. Shelter staff continues to work closely with Children's Aid Society and other service providers to preserve, maintain and reunite families.

Due to Covid-19 emergence in March our numbers dropped significantly to adhere to Ottawa Public Health Guidelines. We were extremely challenged to provide isolation off site for new intakes and access testing. We continue to place women and families in hotels to isolate; a negative test is required before coming to the Shelter. Many of our previously housed ex-residents have been supported by our food delivery program which has been in operation since March 2020.

Statistics

- 52 women and 64 children were residents at the Shelter.
- 43 women and 49 children were housed with some returning to their home communities.
- 75 households were provided support by the Transitional and Family Support workers.
- 1,315 calls were taken on the crisis line.
- 2,645 calls were taken from women seeking help or referral.
- 242 women could not be accommodated at OKL because we were at capacity. They were assisted in finding alternative accommodation.





STREET OUTREACH

The Street Outreach worker services focused on central downtown and Vanier including community shelters, food banks and drop-in centres. This year outreach served 643 individuals. Street Outreach works with other homeless outreach teams to provide services to women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The worker also facilitates clients' access to cultural, spiritual, and practical supports. Outreach connects homeless clients with Housing First Case Managers (HFCM) and other Indigenous agencies for housing assistance.

There has been an increase in the number of people requesting tents and sleeping bags as many are sleeping rough. Reasons for the increase in the number of people refusing to go to shelters including fear of contracting Covid and fear of violence including sexual assault especially for women.

Outreach provides:

- Housing referrals
- Hospital visits, court support
- Medical accompaniment
- Police support, Ontario Works advocacy
- Ontario Disability Services Program advocacy
- Facilitates access to legal supports
- Informal mental health support
- Promotion of harm reduction
- One on one individual support
- Distribution of clothing
- Providing hygiene and feminine products
- Snacks, drinks
- Bus tickets to provide transportation to appointments.

Statistics

642 individuals were served.

Continuing Initiatives

Outreach serves the most vulnerable members of the community many of whom do not access other services. Providing emotional and practical supports including food, clothing, harm reduction supplies, hygiene items, bus tickets, emergency first aid and referrals to services.

The Outreach Team has assisted Street Team Outreach Mobile (STORM) to provide cultural supports to members of the community. Our Cultural Outreach worker provides cultural supports and programming to members of the community housed at Cornerstone Princeton Residence. She also organizes programming for Shelter residents. Outreach provides supports to our Anti-Human Trafficking drop-in.

It has not been possible to go into the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC) to support incarcerated women. We look forward to reengaging in discharge planning for incarcerated women being released.



STREET TEAM OUTREACH MOBILE (STORM) & STREET TEAM OUTREACH MOBILE HUMAN TRAFFICKING (STORM HT)

STORM/ STORM HT is a mobile outreach program consisting of two teams that reach out to First Nations, Inuit and Métis women who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or trafficked in the City of Ottawa. STORM/ STORM HT provides individual support and advocacy to women. Staff are often the first point of contact for marginalized women in the sex trade who are often reluctant to access services.

STORM and STORM HT provide:

- Referrals to Minwaashin Lodge for Crisis and Addiction Counseling
- Referrals to Elders and Traditional Healing
- Referrals to Health Centers and/or transport to hospitals.
- Supports and advocacy for trafficked women
- Referrals to Housing First Case Managers (HFCM), housing and other community services
- Safety planning for all women, including exit planning
- Transportation and bus tickets
- Health and hygiene products, condoms and various other harm reduction supplies
- Needle exchange and crack pipe distribution
- We also provide bagged lunches (60-80 per day), snacks, juice or hot chocolate, clothing, shoes, winter coats and boots
- Provide women with updated “Bad Date” lists (Generated by Salvation Army)
- Distributes 911 phones to clients to be used to access emergency services
- Provides personal alarms /phones to women for access to emergency assistance.

Statistics:

STORM:

1737 individuals were served over the last year, 42 transports to safety reasons were provided.

STORM HT Anti Human Trafficking:

1904 individuals served, 363 identified as trafficked for sex.



YOUTH ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING (YAHT)

(Courage for Change)

Rural/ Remote Funding

- 5 women were assisted to return home
- 2 women set up in apartments
- 2 women were helped to get assistive device not covered by provincial Health Plan
- 5 women were assisted in coming to Ottawa to escape human trafficking.
- 9 women were provided with food.

This funding allowed us to travel to some rural locations to provide services. It also allowed us to assist women in rural areas with transport, referrals, food, and cultural supports.

This is a new initiative with the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), and was slow to start, hampered by COVID restrictions. This program provides supports and referrals to Youth who are currently trafficked as well as those who are at risk. This program takes an active role in our Homeless drop in where many contacts are facilitated for Youth at risk. This year a new initiative began which provided Equine Therapy to youth impacted by trauma and human trafficking. Minwaashin has an informal agreement with Davalon Farm where our youth are engaged in both riding and caring for horses. This initiative and partnership have proven very popular with the youth we serve.

THE DROP-IN

Renamed "The Drop-In" to signify that everyone is welcome. The Drop In now operates every Monday, as it was necessary to reduce service to once a week due to staff limitations. This past year we have partnered with The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health. Their support has assisted the Drop-in in providing harm reduction, hygiene, food, clothing, and support.

Some of the Drop-In highlights were clothing giveaways in partnership with the Vanier BIA. On average, 60 + people come to our door, and we do our best to ensure that everyone is supported; however, with a growing need for food we often run out of meals and are only able to provide granola bars, juice, and fruit. The Drop-In would not be possible without the continued support from Parkdale Food Centre (for all the frozen meals, bagels, and food rescue donations), part-time Shelter staff, St. Margaret's Parish, and community donations.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING LIAISON PROGRAM

The Indigenous Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison position is funded by The Ontario Native Womens Association. This staff person works with other Anti-Human Trafficking workers across the province. Indigenous women comprise 51% of all trafficked people. This is a significant portion of Indigenous communities, who comprise only 4% of the population of Canada.

Statistics and General Information

The role of the Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison worker is to support these women who are at risk, being groomed, or looking to exit from exploitation, primarily through the STORM program, as well as through the weekly drop-in, every Monday at St Margarets Inuit Church on Montreal Road. The worker also educates service providers, community members, teachers, and students on Human Trafficking through an Indigenous perspective through presentations, movies, and discussions.

Due to COVID, the first part of the year saw many of the presentations moved to Zoom and other online platforms. AHT Laison held an event for staff and Community members with three individuals with lived experience who spoke of their lives as trafficked people. AHTL continues to participate in Anti-Violence & Coercion Taskforce (ACTION) for Indigenous Organizations and Networks.



HOUSING FIRST

Minwaashin Lodge provides Housing First Services to Homeless Indigenous Women. In addition to the services provided to homeless adults, we have a Youth Housing First worker who serves homeless Indigenous Youth.

Housing Based Case Managers (HBCM) provide the following services:

- Guidance and support to make a housing plan with clients that includes their preferences and needs
- Helping people get the paperwork and identification needed to apply for housing
- Facilitating applications for Housing Registry status
- Liaison with prospective landlords
- Searching for available housing that meets the clients needs
- Accompaniment to house viewings
- Hands on assistance with obtaining furniture
- Secure available subsidies for housewares; shopping with clients
- Develop a safety plan for clients that addresses their concerns
- Helping clients to move into new home
- Assist with initial grocery shopping with clients
- Provide ongoing support in the form of visits
- Provide telephone crisis support
- As needed support clients in disputes with landlords / other tenants
- As necessary find secondary accommodations.



HBCM workers establish supportive relationships with the people they serve. This has resulted in increased success for the clients and has meant that workers have been able to provide many supports that are not specific to housing but essential for housing to be successful. We have four adult Housing First Workers with an average caseload of 15-24, many of whom are high acuity. We have one Youth Housing First Worker serving young people aged 17-24. Our Youth Housing First Case Manager (YHFCM) currently has a case load of 15-18 individuals. Last year despite the intensifying barriers Housing First successfully housed 30 clients and their children.



INDIGENOUS COURT WORKER

Court Worker provides the following services:

- Assistance completing paperwork and applying for Legal Aid
- Accompaniment to hearings
- Assistance with documentation and preparing for meetings with lawyers
- Providing support before and after court appearances
- Providing professional visits to incarcerated clients.

Statistics

34 clients involved in Family Court
24 clients involved in Criminal Court.

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER (FSW)

This was a part-time position specifically to serve families in the Shelter and was recently expanded to full time to meet increased demand.

Statistics

59 women and 72 children were served.
24 women and families were housed.

This position supports Indigenous clients who are involved in the Criminal or Family Court system.

Referrals come from Minwaashin staff and various other partners. The worker assists Indigenous clients who do not have other supports. This program meets a critical need for the people we serve, and the caseload of this position has increased steadily. As courts closed because of the Pandemic, the court worker continued to provide guidance, referral, and support. This work was impacted by Covid restrictions as there were periods of time when court was not in session or restricted to video only.

The duties of the FSW include:

- Assisting clients to apply for financial support i.e. Ontario Works, ODSP
- Assist with access to school registration
- Planning to address the families needs.
- Helping women get the paperwork and identification needed to apply for housing
- Facilitating their application for Housing Registry status
- Accompaniment to house viewings
- Hands on assistance with obtaining furniture
- Secure available subsidies for housewares, shop with the client
- Develop a safety plan for clients that addresses their concerns
- Help the client to move into new home.



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND SUPPORT WORKER (THSW)

This past year has been very challenging as Covid restrictions and lockdowns have reduced the access to services in all agencies and have increasingly made Zoom or other communication methods the practical choice. This has significantly reduced frequency of in-person meetings.

The THSP, while serving clients at the Shelter and community clients, reports to the Shelter Director of OKL. The Transitional Worker's focus and responsibility is to provide support for the practical needs of women who have left the shelter and have been in the community for two to three months, along with women from the Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit community who may need practical support resulting from domestic violence but are not necessarily in the shelter. Provision of service to current shelter residents will be determined by their readiness to begin planning to move to independent living or those requiring complex system navigation to address time sensitive matters (legal, CAS, police).

Primary Responsibilities

- To work with women to develop transition plans that will enable them to move to independent living and to assist with their departure plans
- To assist in identifying natural and formal support systems to achieve goals
- To assist ex-residents in referral to legal, financial, housing, employment, educational upgrading, training, parenting support, counselling, and health and wellness services, court support, and any other healing services deemed appropriate
- To bridge clients to other community services.
- To network and build strong working relationships with other community services and relevant organizations
- Accompany clients to appointments (OW, ODSP, housing, legal, police, CAS)
- Assist client with systems navigation
- To advocate on behalf of clients for the services they need
- Provide advocacy letters and letters of support
- To act as a resource person for other staff members
- To assist in safety planning for women and their children
- To work within the context of the Framework for Services for Abused Women in Ottawa-Carleton (understanding and practice from an anti-oppression framework)
- To maintain clear and professional boundaries.





Statistics

83 Indigenous women were served.

9 were referred to more appropriate services.

Thank you to our funders!

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services – Oshki Kizis Lodge
and

Transitional Support

Sisters of St. Joseph Canada - Oshki Kizis Lodge

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Service - Anti Human
Trafficking Supports

(AHTC) Indigenous Led Initiatives Fund, STORM HT

City of Ottawa - Housing First Case Management, Housing First Youth
Case

Management, STORM Outreach, Street Outreach

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres - Court Support

Worker, Cultural Outreach, Outreach Worker

Indigenous Services Canada - Family Support Worker

Ontario Native Women's Association - Human Trafficking Liaison,
General Housing Workers (2)



