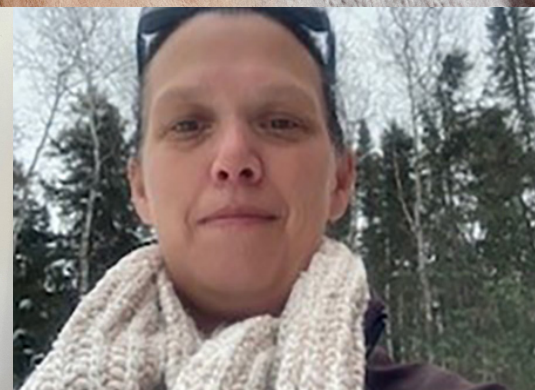




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# Meet our Foster Parents



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“Everyone Working Together to Raise Our Children”







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# Tikinagan

Child & Family Services

Tikinagan Child & Family Services  
Residential Care Services  
PO Box 627  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario  
P8T 1B1

P: 807 737-3466  
TF: 1 800 465-3624

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## Message from Thelma Morris, Executive Director



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Tikinagan has a Residential Services Unit focused on developing a range of foster care options for children and youth who need to come into Tikinagan care. This unit offers programs and services to Foster Parents to assist them in providing the best possible environment for children.

Tikinagan provides Foster Parents with orientation on the role of a Tikinagan Foster Parent, ongoing training and education, emergency support and crisis intervention 24 hours a day, and respite care options. As well, financial reimbursement by a daily rate for regular food and accommodation expenses, as well as allowances for special expenses such as clothing, school recreation and health care.





## Message from Thelma Morris, Executive Director

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**Thelma Morris**  
Executive Director







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# Serenity Kashuba

## Thunder Bay, ON

The relationships Foster Parents build with children who come into their home is special. And while the goal is to see children reunite with their families, it is often the Foster Parents who have the hardest time with children returning home.

"It's very bittersweet," explained Kashuba. "You get really excited for them to go back to their families, and they get excited as well. It's totally what we want and what we strive for, but at the same time, we kind of know...we won't see them again."

"You never know how long they're going to be here. It's just a matter of having compassion, love, and empathy and understanding. I think that goes a long way with the children that come into care."

Adopted at birth, Kashuba, now 45, witnessed first-hand the benefits of caring for children as her mother fostered for more than 25 years. Over the years, she watched all the children come through her home, admiring her mother's growth.

Becoming a Foster Parent with Tikinagan was something she could do to follow in her footsteps. Now her house is just as busy. Since becoming a Foster Parent last spring with Tikinagan, Kashuba has taken in nine children.

"It's been a very rewarding for both of us," Kashuba said of her Foster Parenting experience.

Supporting families in Thunder Bay is one of Kashuba's passions. She sees her role as a Foster Parent as one of the many services offered in the city, which is part of the Tikinagan service model, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, which means "everyone working together to raise our children."

"It comes down to the family unit as a whole. I do this work because I want to see not only the children thriving, but to be able to watch everybody come together to help the families – mom and dad, and extended families as well – is really rewarding."

"It's really great that we can all work together to provide the best care and life for the children and the families."

As a part of Tikinagan's Foster Parent Appreciation Month, Kashuba, along with the more than 370 Foster Parents across the agency's 30 First Nations and urban communities, were being recognized by the agency for their commitment to raising children.

She was highlighted by Tikinagan staff for her commitment to her foster children.

"I was really touched," she Kashuba of the honour. "I feel like I do work pretty hard to give the kids the best life we can give them, but I never

expected this. I was pretty tearful, actually."

Natalia Buentello Olvera, Tikinagan Child Care Worker, said that Kashuba cares for children like they're her own.

"She truly cares about the children that come through her home," said Buentello Olvera. "She shows them so much love and care, devoting her time and attention to them."

"I have always admired her love, for foster children and I have seen the love the children return to her as well," added Pearl Helton, Tikinagan Residential Care Worker.

“I do this work because I want to see not only the children thriving, but to be able to watch everybody come together to help the families – mom and dad, and extended families as well – is really rewarding.”



Watch Serenity's story on YouTube!

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# Emma Kejick

## Lac Seul First Nation

Growing up, Emma Kejick's childhood home was full of children coming and going as her mother regularly cared for own family members and sometimes other children.

Inspired by her mother's compassion, Kejick continues to embody the Tikinagan service model Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, which means "everyone working together to raise our children," in her own home.

"My mom was always taking care of somebody," recalled Kejick. "It was something my mom use to do it and I feel I can do it too."

Kejick, who will celebrate 10 years as a Foster Parent at Tikinagan Child and Family Services, began fostering a family member, which lasted more than half a year.

A few months later, Tikinagan asked if she would be interested in caring for a baby boy. Working in an administrative career at that time, Kejick wondered if she could balance her time between work and childcare. After a two-week hiatus, she missed him and reunited as his Foster Parent.

That baby boy has remained in her home ever since, and now he's nine-years-old.

Kejick cares for children in her home for the long term. One girl she began with she was two weeks old and stayed until she was four. Another girl,

who is still with Kejick today, began living with her when she was five weeks old and is now five years old. Next month, they will celebrate each other's birthday— shared on the same day.

Kejick, who has two adult children of her own, said it feels good again to have little people around calling her "mommy" again.

"I'm their security, and that makes me feel good," she said.

For the last decade as a Foster Parent, Kejick had many other children come into her home. She said she couldn't give an exact number, but noted some have stayed for a weekend, a week, or even a few hours for respite.

It's no wonder people in Lac Seul First Nation recognize and appreciate her for her role as Foster Parent.

"I think my community has accepted me being a Foster Parent and seeing these kids here at my home, knowing it's a safe place," Kejick said.

"I try to explain right now these kids need a safe home and that's what I'm providing. I feel I can provide a safe place for them."

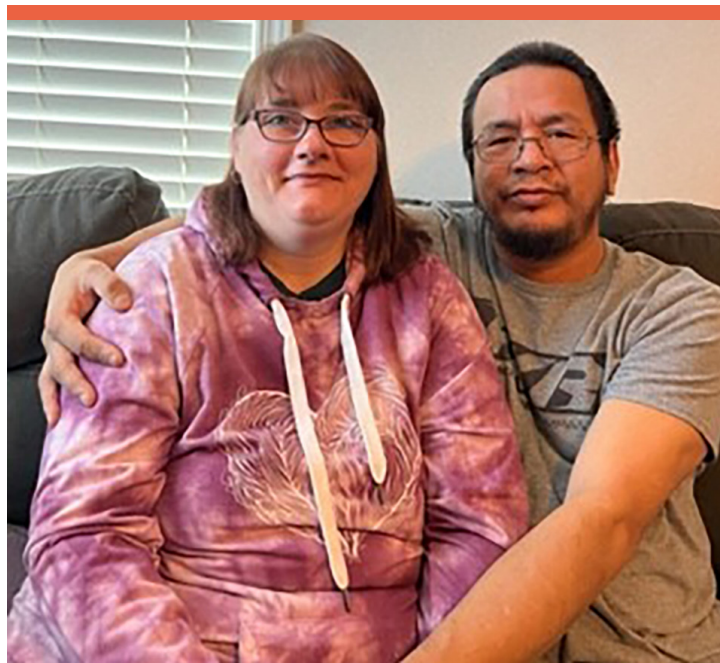
When asked what advice she would share with future Foster Parents, she encouraged them to expect them to love the children that come into care as their own.

"I forget sometimes they are Tikinagan children," Kejick said. "I know I'm not going to be there forever, someone else will come along and step in. I remember maybe there's another child that needs a safe home and that can be me again."

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# Jolene & Sims Roundhead

## Mishkeegogamang First Nation

Six and half years ago in Mishkeegogamang First Nation, Jolene Roundhead heard about Tikinagan & Child Family Services' need for foster families. She went home to talk to her husband, Sims, about it and they agreed to try it out.

Their first child was a brand new baby boy, and they still foster him today.

"It was actually really awesome, because you got to learn and grow with the child," said Roundhead of her first fostering experience.

"You have to work closely with them to get them to learn, and to me that is the biggest reward: teaching them and watching them and seeing their expressions on their faces when they're actually learning something, or doing something for the first time. It's really cool."

Roundhead, 41, who admits she has always had a love for children, said now she does most of the teaching while her husband Sims helps children explore their interests, whether it's playing Xbox games or learning how to trap on the land.

To date, Roundhead said they've fostered 38 children. Each time, though, the hardest part is still watching them go.

"You fall in love with them, and you know some day they will go home, but when it actually happens, it just feels all wrong because you've poured all you're love and soul into them, and it's hard to watch them go home. Even though it's exciting for them, it's hard for us."

In March 2022, as a part of Tikinagan's Foster Parent Appreciation Month, Jolene and Sims, along with the more than 370 Foster Parents across the agency's 30 First Nations and urban communities, were recognized by the agency for their commitment to raising children.

They were nominated because they often take in high-risk children, providing a home where there is fun and compassion.

Roundhead shared that understanding that these children need love is the biggest key.

"Some of them may not have had a lot of love at home, so they act out to get attention, but the wrong attention," she explains. "You always have to keep in mind, no matter what they do, you always have to give them positive attention because they're seeking the negative attention and they get a thrill from it."

“You have to work closely with them to get them to learn, and to me that is the biggest reward: teaching them and watching them and seeing their expressions on their faces when they’re actually learning something, or doing something for the first time. It’s really cool.”

Roundhead credits Tikinagan's support for not just Foster Parents but the children as an important part of everyone working together to raise children, which is Tikinagan's service model Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin.

"It works out really good because you have a broad spectrum of people you can go to when you need help

with the kids, she said. "Having that support for them is really good.

"It's kind of like being in one great big family. A lot of the workers are really amazing people and they work really hard to get what they kids need."

When asked what advice she would share with future Foster Parents, Roundhead said they cannot expect a child to come into your home and be perfect. Instead, "be patient and supportive.

"They're going to act out because they've been taken from their family, so you're going to go through a little bit of a difficult time with them processing everything that is going on. Because sometimes they just don't understand."

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# Shelly Meehan

## Dryden, ON

Every child who walks through Shelly Meehan's door is invited to paint a stone, which represents more than just beautifully painted, unique artwork. Each of these stones, cherished by Meehan for the last 31 years of her Foster Parenting journey, demonstrate unconditional love, support, and respect for the children for whom she has provided care.

These stones also act as the start of a conversation – the first step in welcoming each child into their new atmosphere and allowing the child to express themselves.

“(The stones) let's them see lots of kids have been here and got to go home,” Meehan explained, who has cared for more than 1,000 children. “It gives them something to look forward to, and it let's the older kids know I've got experience.

“They didn't choose or pick me, so I have to prove myself to the families and show them that their kids are going to be loved and safe.”

As a Foster Parent, Meehan embodies the Tikinagan service model Mamow Obikihwahsoowin, which means “everyone working together to raise our children,” by opening her door open to the families of the children she cares for. She welcomes the families to reach out and stay connected with their children. She sends them pictures, information, and keeps the connection between the children and their

families. On occasion, families have even come to her home for holiday meals.

“It's important to show the kids that as adults you can all get along. It gives the kids security knowing they can be comfortable and that they will always have someone around to love them.”

Meehan's three-decade long Foster Parenting career began with two girls in Sioux Lookout while she was a case aide for the Kenora-Rainy River Districts Child & Family Services. A few years later, she relocated to Ottawa where she was a Foster Parent with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa. In February 2010, after returning to Northwestern Ontario, she became a Foster Parent with Tikinagan and continues to Foster Parent at her home in Dryden.

Meehan's role in Tikinagan's circle of care finds her working with Tikinagan staff regularly. Occasionally, there are challenges when working with northern communities due to the pandemic, internet connection, phones lines being down or other technological issues that can occur. These delays, noted Meehan, are a lesson in patience.

However, with her experience in being an advocate for the children, Meehan is on top of their needs and usually is already aware of upcoming appointments or purchases that need to be made for the children. Despite her self-sufficiency, she said she still feels like a part of the team. She is still able to access workers and get any information she needs. She said her Tikinagan workers are good about getting information to her and if they can't access to the information or don't have an immediate answer, they'll find a way.

“Sometimes needing to get stuff done, it's about going through the right avenues – but I am never really left hanging,” Meehan said. “It's about a common mutual respect – you both have a job to finish.”

When asked what advice she would give to people thinking about becoming a Foster Parent, she said: “Be prepared, you have now taken on the world's toughest job, but the most rewarding job.” She added that Foster Parents have to be able to think quick on their feet and when you need help, ask for help.









# Foster Connection.

# Become a Foster Parent.

## Being a Foster Parent

Foster Parents provide a nurturing safe home for foster children, many of whom have had traumatic experiences in their lives. Foster Parents tend to the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs of the children. They provide nourishing meals, a warm place to sleep, a comfortable happy place to live, safe from harm. They listen. They love. They try to understand.

Foster Parents do a lot of things for a child. Much depends on the individual child's needs. But much is just healthy role modelling and compassion for a child whose life might be in turmoil.

Fostering is a valuable community service and also offers a very rewarding experience for Foster Parents.

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[www.tikinagan.org](http://www.tikinagan.org)

Tikinagan provides support and services for families who are experiencing difficulties, and works to help these families find resources to heal. Whenever possible, we work to keep children and families together, and to help parents care for their children.

Some situations, however, require that children live apart from their families for a time. Some of these children can stay with their kokums and shoomas (grandmas and grandpas). Some can stay with other family members, or with friends. However, some children don't have these options. Tikinagan is committed to keeping our children within our communities, but to make this happen, we need your help.

Tikinagan is committed to keeping our children within our communities.

By being a Foster Parent, you can make a real difference in the life of a child. When their families are unable to care for them, you can help children stay in their home community, and stay connected to extended family, friends and their culture and traditions.

## Foster Parents

Foster Parents are everyday people who come from all walks of life - homemakers, councillors, grandparents. They work at the community store, the nursing station, the school or in the band office. The list is long. Foster Parents can be married or single or separated. They can have their own children, or not. The key requirement is your willingness to help a child. Foster Parents are very important to us and are essential to successfully delivering our services. Although the legal responsibility for the child remains with the agency, the Foster Parents play a very important role in the child's life.

## Foster Children

A foster child may be a baby, a toddler, a young child, or a teenager. A few of our children in care are physically, mentally or emotionally challenged and require special care to be able to enjoy the benefits of daily life. Foster children need the kind of care and stability that a foster family can offer. Most require not only warmth and acceptance but also guidance, direction, structure, love and understanding.



## Supporting Foster Parents

Tikinagan has a Residential Services Unit focused on developing a range of foster care options for children and youth who need to come into Tikinagan care. This unit offers programs and services to Foster Parents to assist them in providing the best possible environment for our children.

We provide Foster Parents with:

- Orientation on the role of a Tikinagan Foster Parent
- Ongoing training and education, including meeting the special needs of children placed in your care
- Support services provided by an assigned residential care worker who will also advocate for the Foster Parent
- Emergency support and crisis intervention 24 hours a day
- Respite care options such as alternate placement of the child or alternate caregiver for the child
- Financial reimbursement by a daily rate for regular food and accommodation expenses as well as allowances for special expenses such as clothing, school recreation and health care

You are not alone. Foster Parents are a valuable part of a team dedicated to planning and meeting the needs of children in care.

## Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin

Tikinagan provides services using a service model called Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, which means “everyone working together to raise our children”. Everyone in the community, including parents, extended family, Elders, chief and council, local service providers, and Tikinagan, are responsible for protecting and caring for children.

Key aspects of Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin include:

- Protecting and caring for children is a community responsibility
- Culturally appropriate services based on traditional practices and values
- Services are designed & delivered by First Nations people
- Recognizes inherent authority of First Nations over child welfare

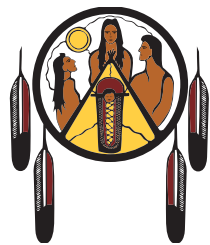
Our policies and procedures are built around this model, but more importantly we endeavor to work within the true spirit of Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin based on First Nations’ values and principles. We reflect this in all our services especially caring and planning for children and youth in our care and supporting Foster Parents.

### How You Can Become a Foster Parent

We are looking for people who care about children, enjoy the challenges of parenting and want to work with others to meet children’s needs. All members of your family must share your interest in fostering. We are seeking families that live in First Nation communities served by Tikinagan.

- Call Tikinagan Child and Family Services telephone intake
- Write to Tikinagan at the address listed, or
- Talk to any Tikinagan Child and Family Service Worker

You will be put in touch with a Residential Care Worker who can give you more information on Foster Parenting including the process and requirements for becoming a Foster Parent.



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# Tikinagan

Child & Family Services



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