

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



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Thank You to the Communities

Thank you to the communities we serve and work with to help make a better life for our children and families. With our mandate to work alongside leadership, we are partners and a part of each community. We continue to strive towards a day where all of our families are healthy and raising happy, strong and proud children. As we continue the important work we do in child and family services, we truly appreciate the guidance, wisdom and values of each community.

Lorraine Crane

Board Chairperson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

@ March 31, 2023

Lorraine Crane, Chairperson Sonny Gagnon, Co-Chair Russell Kakepetum, Secretary-Treasurer Jim Bottle, Board Member Simon Winnepetonga, Board Member Samantha Kejick, Board Member Chris Kakegamic, Board Member

ELDERS COUNCIL

Elsie Fox Emily Gregg Georgina Neshinapaise

YOUTH COUNCIL

Reina Foster





About Tikinagan Child and Family Services

Created by the First Nation leadership in our region back in 1984, Tikinagan is a communitybased child wellbeing agency rooted in and accountable to the communities we serve. We are a large team of caring staff working in First Nations and supporting our families from our 30 First Nations.

We are here because we want to protect our children, help our families and nurture our communities.

Our Mandate

We are also mandated by our Chiefs to provide services that are culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous children, families and First Nations. We are accountable to the Chiefs and to the communities for this responsibility.

Tikinagan Child and Family Services has a dual mandate. We are also one of 53 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario mandated under the Child. Youth and Family Services Act to protect children from harm. We are accountable to Ontario for this responsibility.

Our Vision

The Answers Lie Within the Communities

The Creator entrusted First Nations with the sacred responsibility of protecting our children and developing strong families and healthy communities. The Chiefs created Tikinagan to support and strengthen our children, our families, and our communities. The future of our communities is our children. They need to be nurtured

such, community responsibility for child protection is an essential aspect of First Nations' self-government.

Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin

Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin the Tikinagan service model. In Ojibway/Oji-Cree. Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin means. "everyone working together to raise our children." It is a system of protecting and caring for children and supporting families that has been designed and is delivered by First Nations people.



Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin represents the culmination of almost 40 years of work to develop a culturally appropriate response to children and families who are in need of help in the First Nation communities. In developing Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin,

within their families and communities. As we have sought to be true to the original vision that the Chiefs and Elders had when Tikinagan was created.

> Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin is designed to respect the inherent authority of First Nations to care for our own children. It acknowledges that our First Nation mandate supersedes provincial legislation and that our ultimate goal is the pursuit of complete First Nation jurisdiction over our own child welfare services. Until this goal is achieved, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin are designed to be culturally appropriate and meet the needs of our First Nations and provincial legislation, regulations and standards.

Customary Care

Customary care is an integral element of Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin. Within the customary care system, the First Nation Chief and Council have the authority to declare children to be placed in Tikinagan care when removal from their home is required. The First Nation, parents, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin caregivers and children in care sign a Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin Care Agreement for children coming into the agency's care. Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin care puts the decision in the hands of families, extended family, communities, and First Nation leadership, and not mainstream Court systems.

Learn more about our history and service model



LORRAINE CRANE **Board Chair** Our service model. Mamow Obikiahwahsoowin, was developed based on our traditional ways of raising children. Our agency strives to follow this philosophy to ensure children remain in their communities with those who understand their needs while adapting to change.

Message from the Board Chair

Greetings,

This has been a year of action with a strong focus on continuing the connection with our communities in a post-pandemic era. And as our agency and many of our communities cautiously returned to a new normal, we continued to meet with our families, celebrate our children, and improve our services.

Our service model, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, was developed based on our traditional ways of everyone working together to raise children. Our agency strives to follow this philosophy to ensure children remain in their communities with those who understand their needs while adapting to change. It is important that we keep children connected to their family, community, and culture.

Some of the ways our people stay connected are by visiting homes, helping our Elders with firewood, sharing a cup of tea, or sitting by the campfire. These simple acts we took for granted and were taken away from us over the last few years, so we were eager to resume our engagement with our families and our communities. Of course, our essential services never ceased – we continued to work together to ensure the well-being of our children, youth and families.

This year, Tikinagan had an increased presence in our communities to support our children and to be there for our families and communities. In June and throughout the fall, we returned to hosting in-person events for Honouring Our Children Day. In October 2022, we participated in Dress Purple Day, encouraging young people and those in our communities to wear purple to show children and youth that the people around them support them and want to help them however possible. We had incredible participation from our community schools in promoting the message that we are here for our children, and how they can find support from adults when needed. It also educated children and youth about the experience of coming into and being in care.

In February 2023, we held our first Breaking Trail forum by the Niigaanshkaawin Team. This three-day event brought community representatives from our 30 First Nations together to discuss the past, present, and future of Tikinagan Child and Family Services.

Niigaanshkaawin is our way forward to achieving the original Chiefs' vision where each community would implement and maintain their own child welfare laws. Since embarking on this new journey, we have seen an increase in communication with many communities. We look forward to more communication with other communities in an effort to determine how they would like to see Tikinagan provide support in the future.

And now to wrap up this year of action, our 2022-2023 Annual Chiefs' Assembly is taking place this fall where we can share more about our efforts to support our 30 First Nations this year. The Board, Staff and I are excited to be able to come together to talk about the future of the agency.

I would like to extend gratitude to our communities and their continued support. Together we will achieve the Chiefs' original vision. I am also very grateful for the guidance of my fellow board members. Sadly, we lost a valued member in December 2022 - Stena Turtle. A Pikangikum First Nation member, her unique expertise and perspective helped to shape Tikinagan and its important work. She will be missed

Despite challenges in our communities, Tikinagan's leadership team and staff have remained unwavered. Our dedicated team has tirelessly continued to support our children and families. Thank you everyone for helping us raise our children.

Lorraine Crane

Board Chair

Message from the Executive Director

Waachiye, Boozhoo, Greetings,

As I reflect on this past year, I am proud of where we have come as an organization and where we are going as a community.

Since its inception, Tikinagan has been guided by our traditional ways of raising children. We have always said the answers lie within the community. Our staff, our leadership, and our direction always have and will always come from our communities. Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, which means "Everyone working together to raise our children," is our service model and it includes the whole community. From the youngest member to the oldest, the parents, our Elders, the teachers, the current and future leadership, and Tikinagan, we work together for our families.

The future of Tikinagan depends on the leadership within our communities and those they represent. We are your agency. Much like leadership in our communities are chosen by the community as whole as those who represent the best interest of community, Tikinagan operates on the same principle. We are chosen by the communities to support them in the way they see fit.

Historically, Indigenous child welfare has been negatively impacted by many factors including colonization, residential schools, and the systematic destruction of our language, culture, and the ways of our people.

The sacred responsibility for developing and sustaining our families takes us as Indigenous people back to the past to prepare ourselves for the future. The concepts, language, and the values practised are the strengths we need now to encourage to ensure healthy families, which in turn will be the foundation of strong and healthy communities.

After years of hard work, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation implemented and Iaunched Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Dibenjikewin Onaakonikewin (KIDO), which means Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Family Law, on April 1, 2023. This new law allows the community to provide their own traditional family services that align with their community's values. This inspirational community really demonstrates what is achievable within our communities.

However, nothing happens overnight. We need the opportunity to hear the voices of our stakeholders, our communities' leadership, and those they represent. Success comes from working together and supporting one another. We continue to collaborate and support our First Nations to ensure the wellbeing of our children and their families.

Guided by our nine values at Tikinagan our work this past year demonstrates our commitment to our First Nations, which is presented in this annual report on our 2022-2023 activities. This report provides updates about our services, financial position, and human resources. We also are excited to share our new initiatives and services, including Niigaanshkaawin, Neegaan Inabin, and Youth Know. With the change in health protocols in communities post-COVID, we have been able to increase our presence in our communities. This has given us the opportunity to listen to our people, recruit community members to support their own communities, educate our people about our Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin Service Model, and to show our communities we are here to work with and for them.

We look forward to another year of working together to raise our children, holding up our families, and supporting our communities in returning to our traditional ways of raising our children.

Thelma Morris Executive Director

The future of Tikinagan depends on the leadership within our communities and those they represent. We are your agency. Much like leadership in our communities are chosen by the community as whole as those who represent the best interest of community, Tikinagan operates on the same principle. We are chosen by the communities to support them in the way they see fit. **THELMA MORRIS**

Services Highlights

Since Tikinagan was established in 1984 by the Chiefs of this region, we have been prioritizing our traditional practices and Indigenous values in the ways we provide service. Moving away from mainstream service delivery, we incorporate the voices of our leadership, our Elders, our parents, and children and youth to embody the true spirit of our service model Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin – "everyone working together to raise our children." This is our Indigenous way of protecting and caring for children and supporting families, which was designed and is delivered by First Nations people in our 30 communities.

MAMOW OSHKI-PIMAGIHOWIN

Mamow Oshki-Pimagihowin, which means "working together to learn new life skills," is Tikinagan's Prevention Services program. Tikinagan's service model emphasizes prevention - prevention of harm and prevention of children coming into care.

During the Christmas season, the Prevention Team organized a "Holiday Hamper" initiative, which were delivered approximately 1,300 hampers to families in the northern and urban communities that Tikinagan provides service to. During the Lil' Bands Hockey Tournament in Dryden from January 29 to February 5, the Prevention Department put together activities for youth participating. Each day at least two activities were planned, including bowling, tube sliding, free breakfast, and a dinner and movie night.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Tikinagan is here to help families. We provide parents and caregivers support and assistance to ensure the well-being of their children and youth. The first step to ensure the well-being of our children and youth is receiving a referral. A referral is a report of a child protection concern. Many of these reports come from concerned individuals from all over our region and beyond. The referral may come from extended family, neighbours, schools, health professionals, or even from parents reaching for help for their family. In 2022-2023, we received 8,147 referrals, which is an increase of 165 referrals compared to the previous year. Over half of these referrals were received from within the First Nations we serve.

ONLINE REPORTING

When we receive referrals, reports often come over the phone. But technology has changed the way we communicate. To make reporting more accessible, including those without phone service in our communities, we launched an online reporting form on our website in the Fall of 2022-2023. This confidential form does not

replace emergency services, such as 9-1-1. It is meant to provide an additional method for adults and other service providers to ensure the safety and well-being of our children and youth.

FAMILY SERVICES

At March 31, 2023, we provided services to 1,049 families, and 79% (830) of those have their children in their care – meaning they remain with their family. The Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin priority is to keep families together. This year, 307 children in care went home to their families.



To help keep our families together, we prioritize Admission Prevention, which focuses on supporting families before intervention is required with a family-centred approach. As a result, fewer children come into care. Our Family Services and Admission Prevention supports are also used to reunify families – children who were in Tikinagan care returning home.

Some examples of how we have been able to provide support in 2022-2023 are:

- Cultural Connection: enabling families to attend healing lodges and cultural events
- **Supporting the Essentials:** providing groceries and supplies for families so children can stay at home with their parents
- Helping with Extra Expenses: paying medical expenses that are neither covered by Jordan's Principal nor through other government funding
- Making Steps Toward Reunification: helping parents catch up with outstanding bills, or purchasing essential furniture and household items.
- Reconnecting to Community: allowing urban-based child return to or visit their home communities, which strengthens family and culture connections



CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

Last year, we had 517 child in care. In 2022-2023, there were 526 children and youth in care. As we connect with families and provide supports so that children can return home, we expect this number to decrease.



KOOKUM'S LOVE

In 2022-2023, our Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin Committee, which is focused on developing new approaches to keeping kids at home and bringing them back home, progressed on enhancing our culturally-appropriate placement services. One small, but important step we made was naming our agency operated homes under the guidance of our Elders. "Kookum's Love" is the meaningful vision chosen to capture the environment they wanted youth to experience while in care.

The Elder's talked about how they showed love for their grandchildren, great grandchildren, and other children in the community. Everyone involved in the conversations had memories of their kookumbeing held in her arms, being rocked by her when upset, listening to her, singing songs and telling stories, and praying for them. Our foundation for the environment at our agency homes reflect Kookum's love – welcoming, open, and caring where judgement and shame do not exist. This way of caring for our children while in care will provide a natural transition for when they are ready to return home.

The late Moses Mawakeesick, Elder from Deer Lake First Nation, when speaking of the vision for all agency's residential resources stated:

"A kookum kind of love describes any child you show affection to: true compassion, empathy, kindness, and a power to love. Children will not want to leave the home because they feel the true love of their kookum."

THUNDER BAY EXPANSION

Since we received the designation to serve individuals that are connected to our 30 First Nations who reside in the City and District of Thunder Bay in January 2020, Tikinagan continues to hire and train staff, expand office facilities and develop residential care options for our children and youth in care. We also continue to work toward establishing new protocols with urban service providers and First Nation band representative programs.





FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION

Every child deserves a place to call home. Tikinagan has been working to expand our own residential services that includes First Nation and urban foster homes, agency operated homes and group care. In an effort to show appreciation to our current Foster Parents who open their homes to our children, as well as those Foster Parents who live in our agency operated homes, we celebrated Foster Parent Appreciation Month in March 2023.



Throughout Parents, which helps put a face to the experience of helping The ended with a regionwide in-person and aatherina diaital with music, comedy our children. and expressions of appreciation for our

many amazing Foster Parents. We also provided each foster parent with a special Tikinagan blanket gift. Foster Parents and Short-term Caregivers come in all different forms - grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, neighbours - and they step in when parents need support. These people supporting families in being reunited.





DRESS PURPLE DAY

In October 2022, we participated in Dress the Purple Day, allowing us to celebrate a month, we featured community that cares for families and stories of our Foster share the message that help is available and no one is alone. Dress Purple Day is important to our organization. It gives us the opportunity to show our communities care for our children, that we are here for our children, youth, celebration and families as a resource. Our philosophy. Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, doesn't just include Tikinagan staff. It includes the whole community as we all work together to raise

2022-2023. we had incredible participation from our schools in promoting the message that we are here for our children, and how they can find support when needed. We sent purple-themed items such as t-shirts, toques, pencils and more to more than 25 First Nation schools. We held a contest in our First Nation schools deserve to be celebrated as they are key to asking youth to tell us why they wear purple and a contest for classrooms to support photos of them wearing purple. In addition, we provided schools and teachers with a classroom toolkit and four lesson plans with age-appropriate cartoon videos to educate students on topics like getting help, safe touch, and wellbeing in the community.









NEEGAAN INABIN

Early in 2022-2023, we launched Neegaan Inabin, which means "Looking Forward" in Oji-Cree. This new service provides culturally appropriate, holistic supports for youth aging out of care and young adults formerly in care (aged 18-25) from Tikinagan's 30 First Nations. Transitioning youth into adulthood has been an important focus for Tikinagan.

When federal funding became available for post-majority care on April 1, 2022, we began developing Neegaan Inabin. A year later, the province announced funding to support youth with a similar initiative, effective April 1, 2023. Tikinagan combined these two mainstream efforts into our own culturally-appropriate service for young adults transitioning from care with an Indigenous approach.



Neegaan Inabin, which means "Looking Forward" in Oji-Cree, provides culturally-appropriate, holistic services supporting youth aging out of care and young adults formerly in care (up to age 26) from Tikinagan's 30 First Nations.

Before the end of 2022-2023, we started accepting service referrals for Neegaan Inabin. Since the implementation, we have been working in collaboration with child care workers and family service workers to ensure smooth transitions into independence and adulthood for our youth.





Through Neegaan Inabin and our eight transitional pillars, youth are provided with culturally appropriate, holistic services to support their transition into early adulthood. The program assists youth in navigating resources they need to succeed by connecting them with existing supports within their communities. The Neegaan Inabin program is voluntary and does not require any legal status or commitment.

Neegaan Inabin has begun working on developing transitional, supported living arrangements for youth and young adults in Vermilion Bay, Sioux Lookout, and Thunder Bay.

The artwork, including the logo for Neegaan Inabin, was designed by Weagamow First Nation youth artist Memekwe Apetawakeesic (Morriseau). She conceptualized her drawing to show how young adults can learn how to adult, demonstrated in the calf moose that represents strength and durability.

Learn more at **NEEGAANINABIN.ORG**





COMFORT KITS

In 2022-2023, we partnered with the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, and their Ted & Loretta Comfort Care Program to provide "Comfort Kits" to children and youth going through challenging times. These kits will provide items and materials to support the child/youth's well-being. We provided 107 kits, each catered to three age groups (3-5, 6-12, 12-18). Next year, we will continue the partnership and increase the amount of kits are distributed.



Our Training Unit delivered more than 540 training days to more than 1,800 individuals

TRAINING

In 2022-2023, our Training Unit delivered more than 540 training days to more than 1,800 individuals, including staff, foster parents, and our partners. We focused heavily on suicide intervention with SafeTALK, ASIST and ASK, as well as children's mental health, cultural humility, Indigenous language and Equity in Child Welfare.



Staff engaging the community at the Webequie First Nation's 2023 Career Fair

GOLF CLASSIC

Tikinagan's Annual Charity Golf event was held on September 23 in Sioux Lookout, raising more than \$20,500 for the Mamow Oshki Pimagihowin Fire Relief Fund. We would like to thank participants for a great day of golf and our sponsors for helping make the event a success.



GETTING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

Coming out of the pandemic, we looked to engage our communities with in-person contacts with a focus on recruiting new staff and foster parents, as well as promoting our services. This year was busy with community Meet and Greet Events. Team members from across Tikinagan including Prevention, Neegaan Inabin, Foster Care, Training and Human Resources worked collaboratively to bring information to our communities about services in these areas and in efforts to recruit foster parents and staff.



HONOURING OUR CHILDREN

Honouring Our Children Day is where our communities celebrate our young people. Honouring our Children Day, which starts on June 24 and extends into the fall, allows us to not only celebrate our children and youth but show them we are a part of their circle of care. The Prevention Team assisted communities in planning and implementing their Children's Day Activities throughout the summer. They also attended events in the communities to assist with organizing games and cooking for Honouring Our Children Day festivities.







NIIGAANSHKAAWIN

When our people would get ready to harvest, set out on the trap lines, or break trail, they would rely on the teachings passed down from our parents, family, and community. They have instilled knowledge and wisdom about the land and our way of life which we have practised since time immemorial.

This was the same approach we took for the Niigaanshkaawin Forum, held in Thunder Bay on February 14-16, 2023 -- one of many steps on our journey to envision the future of child and family services in Tikinagan's 30 First Nations.

Since its inception at the Tikinagan's 2021 Chiefs Assembly, Niigaanshkaawin, which means "walking ahead or first to walk ahead," has continued to work towards fulfilling the original vision for all the First Nations we serve. The original vision for Tikinagan, included the goal of First Nation control and delivery of child and family services and ultimately First Nation governance through the establishment of their own laws. As our 30 First Nations continue to develop First Nation Representative programs and First Nation law making in our communities, the Niigaanshkaawin project continues to offer support to First Nations in the spirit of Mamow Obikiahwahsoowin – everyone working together to raise our children.

The Forum, which was based on suggestions received from Chiefs, delegates and observers at Tikinagan's 2022 Annual Chiefs Assembly, had a strong focus on bringing light to the communities, helping us see new possibilities, and new ways of caring for our families. All our conversations, workshop sessions, and networking began moving us toward a renewed vision of child welfare.

Niigaanshkaawin was developed to honour the original vision of those who came before us. With the support of the Bill C-92, Niigaanshkaawin gives us the opportunity to develop and govern our own child welfare laws.

The next steps on this Niigaanshkaawin trail include additional follow up and outreach to our First Nations and community partners. We are still crossing the first few checkpoints of the project and we still need to hear your ideas, your stories.

Learn more at NIIGAANSHKAAWIN.ORG

Financial Position 2022-2023

STATEMENT OF CHILD WELFARE FUND	OPERATIONS 22/23			
OPERATING REVENUE	22/23	21/22		
Child Welfare Other Total	\$ 73,971,700 \$ 40,829,795 \$ 114,801,495			
OPERATING EXPENSES	22/23	21/22		
Salaries & Benefits Boarding & Client Services Administration Total	\$ 51,968,227 \$ 40,710,550 \$ 24,394,234 \$ 117,073,011	\$ 52,121,526 \$ 31,768,757 \$ 17,401,159 \$ 101,291,422		
Fund Balance, Beginning of the year	\$ -	\$ -		
Settlement of prior year deficits	\$	\$ -		
(Deficit) or Surplus for the year	\$ (2,271,516)	\$ -		
Fund Balance, End of the year	\$ (2,271,516)	\$ -		

A summary from Schedule 1 - Statement of Revenue and Expenses Child Welfare - compiled by MNP LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants

Staff Recognition



Tikinagan Child and Family Services would like to recognize employees who have reached their 10th, 15th, 20th and 30th anniversary of employment with the agency in the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Our thanks and congratulations go to the following employees for their many years of dedicated service to the families and children of this region.

10 Years

Georgina Okeese
Elaine Yellowhead(Ignace)
Lyndsay Kruger
Irene Yesno-Kermack
Joni Smith
Colleen Wesley
Cassandra Gray
Leona Davis
Glenn Bradley
Vanessa Knight
Elroy Moonias
Danielle Nothing
Candide Savard

15 Years

Donna Gagnon Nina McKoop Maybelline Fiddler Carrie Potan Jennifer Matasawagon

20 Years

Tanya Favot Lori Labelle

30 Years Clara Young

In Memoriam

Stena Turtle

Tikinagan Child and Family Services mourns the loss of our Board Member Stena Turtle.

Stena had served as a band councillor for her home community of Pikangikum, but also had experience working in the finance department for the band office. It was her knowledge that made her an asset to the agency's leadership and direction when she joined the Board as the IFNA representative in July 2016. For much of this time, she also served as a member of the Board Finance Committee.

Thelma Morris, Tikinagan Executive Director, often sat down with Stena, listening to her as she proudly shared about her family and her grandchildren.

"She spoke highly of her family, and that was important to her," said Morris.

Stena's presence will be missed on the Board. She regularly questioned and gave advice on Tikinagan's budget.

"She was a quiet, soft spoken woman, but very intelligent and knowledgeable, in particular about our finances."

In meetings, Stena had a quiet and graceful way about her, but at the same time, never hesitated to speak on issues, especially the difficult ones.

"She would ask the important questions and got us to think more deeply about how our decisions would impact our families and our communities."

SHOSHANNAH FOX

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shoshannah is a digital and traditional artist hailing from Bearskin Lake First Nation, now residing in Sioux Lookout. Shoshannah started her artistic career as a high school illustrative co-op student for Kwayaciiwin Educational Resource Centre back in 2018. After high school graduation, she was hired as an artist. Shortly after she entered motherhood and is now raising a young boy with the help of her family.

Shoshannah has completed projects for schools in the northern communities, including language-based and community-based resources such as flashcards, books, games, in-classroom materials, and learning tools.

In addition to digital artwork, she creates artwork using different media such as acrylic, gouache, watercolor, coloured pencil, marker and conte art.

To learn more about Shoshannah and to see more of her work visit:

Shoshannahfox.com





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