

Winter 2023

# ALICIPSUMQUI

News on the health and well-being of our communities

## THE *Warmth* OF SPIRIT

The end of 2022 wrapped up another year of change and progress at Ogimaawabii'tong / 4



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# winter photo gallery

A snapshot look at some of the things the KCA departments have been up to through the season in our communities.



A young child with dark hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a white turtleneck sweater. They are looking intently at a stack of colorful blocks (yellow, blue, orange, yellow) being placed on top of each other. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting.

# Niigaanniing Bimidiziwin Child Development Services

This past quarter, the Niigaanniing Bimidiziwin Child Development Services (NBDS) team was busy concentrating on providing child development services by enhancing their current service delivery model and case management process. Throughout the summer months, NBDS focused on advertising child development services in the communities and meeting with community resources. Now, we are focused on service delivery; staff is attending the communities on a consistent basis, collaborating with community resources, meeting with children and families, attending any community events, etc.

Through the fall, KCA Speech and Language Pathologist, Tara Barber, provided SLP services in full force to the communities of Wabaseemoong, Grassy Narrows, and Eagle Lake. She

has been establishing connections with school teams, daycares, and community resources. Tara has also been clarifying and Investigating the SLP wait list and completing clinical file reviews. Tara is also in the midst of providing in-house training to the Family Systems Navigators and Infant/Youth Development Workers on SLP tools and skills when working with children and families.

NBDS and Firefly continue to strengthen the partnership as staff from both NBDS and Firefly made traditional ribbon skirts this quarter through a workshop which was facilitated by Sharona Crane. Both NBDS and the Management and clinical staff from Firefly had a retreat, “Strengthening Our Braid” in Winnipeg on October 24 & 25, 2022 to discuss processes and service delivery. The retreat was facilitated by Sherry

Copenace and two elders, Sharon Fobister and George Land were in attendance and provided their guidance and support throughout the two-day retreat. The outcome and goals of the retreat were successful as many of the participants said, “We came as two and left as one.”



# NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

*Ogimaawabiitong was proud to recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Friday, September 30th by hosting a day of education and reconciliation at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp.*



We began the day with a staff and community sunrise ceremony before welcoming over 400 students to the property. Students spent the day walking around the property and engaging in activities meant to spark conversations such as drumming, blanket exercises, and colouring/activity books. Hot chocolate was available

throughout the day and for lunch, students were provided with soup and bannock. Serena Kenny, Operations Manager at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp, spoke about the day, “Today is National Truth and Reconciliation Day, also known as Orange Shirt Day. Today we are honouring and remembering residential school students, survivors, and the ones that never came home.” “We are coming together today to be together in a way that they weren’t able to.” She went on to explain why the children were invited, “We really wanted to have a day focused on the youth, the kids still in school, knowing that this age group that is here today were the ones that were taken from their homes and families.” “We really wanted them to be able to come here and feel free in a way that the residential school survivors, and the ones that never made it home, were never able to feel.”

# Fall Harvest

*Ogimaawabitung held our Fall Harvest from October 17-20 at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp, over 600 visitors from local schools and communities came to the property to celebrate.*



The Fall Feast was held on October 18, where foods harvested and prepared by the community and KCA staff were served. Danika Crow, Manager of Cultural Services for KCA, commented on the importance of a traditional fall harvest, “It’s a way for our kids to learn our traditions, the things we have been doing for years.”

“I remember growing up, we used to have harvests all the time but then they just sort of went away... so when I started doing them again last year, it was my goal to get kids back out there learning about the importance of hunting and other important skills.”

“Knowing how to skin a deer and respecting what you are killing, making sure you are not

wasting parts of the animal or being disrespectful to the animal.” Crow explained that these educational harvests are not just about hunting, they are also about the teaching of survival skills. “We teach them survival skills too, like how to build a fire because I know that a lot of kids do not know how to make a fire or how to cook something over a fire.” To conclude her comments, Crow said “I would like to give a big shout-out to our drummers and the knowledge keepers that came out because, without them, we can’t pass our teachings along to all the people that come out. And a thank you to all of the participants who came out.”

# Christmas Donation

*On Tuesday, December 13, Ogimaawabiitong (Kenora Chiefs Advisory) came together to distribute over 12,000 lbs. of food and over 1450 toys to the children and families of our nine communities for this holiday season.*

With the large donations from our partners this year, we were also able to provide donations to multiple organizations in town including The Fellowship Centre and the Jubilee Church. KCA is very appreciative of our partners who made this food and toy donation possible. We would also like to thank the efforts of our staff and community volunteers who arranged and facilitated the deliveries of the donations to each of the nine communities. “We’ve received these donations for a few years now, and every year we are blown away with the kindness and generosity towards our communities and our membership,” said Chief Lorraine Cobiness, Board President on behalf of the leaders of Ogimaawabiitong. “To be able to not only distribute these donations to our communities and our families but to share with organizations in town as well means a lot for our organization to be able to share in the kindness.

We truly want to say a profound Miigwetch, and just share our deepest gratitude for the continuous support from these groups over the years and are excited to be able to give



every child in our communities a new toy this Christmas.” We would like to thank our donors Exceldor, Lamb Weston, Saidham Foodbank, All Gold, Concord Premium Meats, The Meat Factory, CDC, Giant Tiger, Confederation Freezers, and Wild Fork for

providing food donations. We would like to thank Norseman Cartage, Trucks for Change and Erb Transport for helping us get the donations to Kenora. And we would like to thank SpinMaster Ltd. for making sure every child has a new toy this Christmas.

## Annual General Meeting

*On December 8, Ogimaawabiitong held our Annual General Meeting at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp. We celebrated another successful year with record-breaking growth for the company. We welcomed new team members and programs, and we recognized the departure of our very own leader, Joe Barnes.*





*“Understand. Take the time to understand and work together as a community. Kenora has so much to offer. The communities around Kenora have so much to offer; we just have to work together to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live a great life.”*

**– Joe Barnes**



# Joe Barnes

*The end of 2022 wrapped up another year of major changes at Ogimaawabiitong. We continued to battle COVID-19, bring on new programs and continue to expand our scope of work. The end of 2022 also saw another major change within the organization, and that was the retirement announcement from our Executive Director Joe Barnes.*

Barnes has a Diploma in Social Service Work from Seneca College and has had extensive experience working within First Nation Communities and the broad Canadian context. Among Barnes’ many accomplishments are such innovative activities as: the development of community strategic plans for Health services for their membership; and the First Nation Public Health Pilot Project in Northwestern Ontario.

Barnes has been working with KCA since 2004, first working as a consultant on the development of new health care models in the north. In 2010 Joe was offered the role of Executive Director, and has been in that role since, helping grow and expand the organization to one of the largest employers in Kenora as of 2021.

Joe’s role as an Executive Director expanded to also being the Co-chair of the All-Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team and sitting on the National Standards Committee for the development of policies in Long Term Care Home.

In his time at KCA, we have had the ability to launch and build many large new projects including the KCA Youth and Family Wellness Camp, Wiigwas Long Term Care Home, The Youth Wellness Hub and so much more.

Aside from his work accomplishments, Joe brought a big family type of environment to the organization. Staff consistently share how KCA is a large family, and a huge part of that is the leadership we have all received under his guidance. Joe’s dedication to the communities he works with, and dedication for meaningful and important change is something that is admirable, and something we all work to achieve.

We will miss him greatly in this role but are happy that Joe is going to get some more free time to spend with his wife, kids and dogs. We wish you all the best adventures, and nothing but happiness in this next step forward. You will be greatly missed.



# KCA Program Updates



## Youth Hub

The Kenora Youth Wellness Hub was busy over the past quarter with almost daily programming, activities, and many holiday celebrations to get Kenora youth in the festive spirit. The Youth Hub has opened its home multiple times this past quarter, they gave tours to the new Kenora City Council as well as classes from Beaver Brae Secondary School. During the holidays, the Youth Hub was open and hosted a holiday event where they shared a meal with the youth and handed out gifts to all who attended throughout the holidays. Gifts included craft/art supplies, activities, treats, and various self-care items. In more good news, Right to Play participation through the Hub has been increasing, over the quarter RTP workers took youth from the Hub out for activities such as sliding, swimming at the rec center, and visiting/riding horses at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp. And finally, the Youth Advisory Committee welcomed two new Youth Advisors to the team. As the team moves forward through the winter months, they are looking forward to launching their Youth Hub Renovation fundraiser. The goal for the renovations is to increase accessibility, community visibility, and practical infrastructure for programming within the space.

## Binesi

The Binesi Wazoson team has been busy working on a few different programs this past quarter. Firstly, they are proud to announce the Anweshinan Program; a cultural land-based experience for those, aged 18 to 29, who are looking to continue their mental health & addictions healing journey in a culturally safe setting. They have also been continuing to advance their Step Up Step Down program, a voluntary short-term, live-in stabilization and treatment program aimed at addressing the service gap between inpatient and community care. The program provides Anishinaabe cultural and traditional supports, and primary care providers, and other specialists will be available to the participant, aged 12 to 18, as required within KCA. This quarter, workers were very busy working on the expansion of programs as well as taking youth to events and activities.

## Child And Youth Services

The Child and Youth Services Team have continued to do what they do best, assessing the needs of youth and their families and connecting them with services in and out of the community. Since the last quarter,



the team has welcomed back Stephanie Landon as the Child & Youth Case Manager for Wabaseemoong Independent Nations. Moving forward, they are looking to expand by filling their vacant case manager and youth outreach worker positions!



## Horse Farm

This quarter saw the end of 2022 and by the end of the year, the KCA Horse Farm had serviced over 4,771 individuals with horse time, guided trail rides, and equine assisted learning. The horse farm also moved to providing services seven days a week with family time bookings becoming available on the weekends. Washagamis Bay School and Beaver Brae Secondary School joined Kiizhik, Bimose and St Thomas Aquinas Schools in the schools' program. Both Kenora Association for Community Living (KACL) and the KCA Mental Health Team continue to utilize the space for small group sessions with clients. On top of regularly scheduled programming, the equine team was happy to participate in several Youth and Family Wellness Camp activities and celebrations such as Winter Days, Truth and Reconciliation Day, and the Staff Fun Day.

## Human Resources

This quarter, the Human Resources department took a strong focus on optimizing the health of all employees at Kenora Chiefs Advisory promoting employee wellness through physical health, psychological wellness, and work-life balance. Optimizing the health of KCA employees creates a happier and more productive workforce through higher employee engagement, reduced absenteeism and better job satisfaction. The idea of employee wellness is multidimensional and extends beyond the limitations of the past and focuses on providing workers with access to medical care. HR is encouraging a culture where employees use their talents,

gifts, ideas, and personalities to do their work, empowering staff to experience healthy occupational wellness. Employees are encouraged to take mental health and cultural days. We all need to step away from work so we can return to work refreshed and renewed. As always, the Human Resources team would like to remind employees that their door is always open!



## Intake and Data Services

From the period of October 1st to December 31st, the intake workers from the Intake and Data Services Team processed 435 referrals to the Mental Health & Addiction and Child & Youth Developmental Services. The intake team worked hard to support community members, partners and KCA staff in navigating our services and programs. Recently, the team grew bigger with the addition of two new quality improvement specialists – Gabrielle Pawlowski in a brand-new position of Quality Improvement/Data Support Specialist and Steve Grubich, Quality Improvement Coach.



## Winter Fun

### Cultural Services Winter Days

Ogimaawabiitong hosted our 2nd Annual Cultural Services Winter Days from January 16-19 at the Youth and Family Wellness Camp, and over the four days, we saw over 500 youth from multiple communities come out to participate in storytelling and cultural teachings. We had Knowledge-Keepers share on moon teachings, anishinaabemowin, star knowledge and legends, winter survival skills, shooshemon (snow snake) Game, Hide Scraping, falconry, dog sledding and more. Miigwetch to our Elders, Knowledge-Keepers, youth and teachers who made the week possible.

### Community Fun Day

The Youth and Family Wellness Camp was booming with activities this holiday season. On December 10, KCA hosted a Community Fun Day at the Camp! There were lots of fun activities such as horse rides, sledding and crafts. There was a horse-drawn sleigh giving rides to visitors and the Grinch even made a sneaky appearance. It was a day full of holiday fun with lots of delicious food from Pam and Dylan, the Camp Chefs!



# News and Events

## NOHFC Provides Funds for Youth and Family Wellness Camp

On September 20, 2022, Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs, MPP for the Kenora-Rainy River District, and Chair of the Northern Ontario Heritage Corporation (NOHFC) announced that the NOHFC has provided our KCA Youth and Family Wellness Camp with \$476,833 to invest into a commercial kitchen, laundry room, bathroom and showers. The facility upgrades have been crucial in getting the camp facility into the amazing working state it is in today. We would like to extend our appreciation to Minister Rickford and the NOHFC for their continued support.

## Northern Ontario Youth Climate Action Summit

On September 21, the Youth and Family Wellness Camp hosted students from local schools as they participated in the Northern Ontario Youth Climate Action Summit presented by Science North. Local school children from grades 7 to 12 were invited to the camp to learn about climate change and participate in different science demonstrations and activities. Grace Schmidt, a staff scientist with Science North and one of the organizers of the summit, said day one was all about learning with workshops and keynote speakers, and day two would be all about acting and planning projects to continue acting through the community. “We taught the kids how to talk to their parents about climate change, we also had a keynote speaker from Indigenous Climate Change Canada who talked to the students about her climate change journey,” said Schmidt. “We also had [a speaker] from the Jane Goodall Institute of Canada to teach the students about community climate mapping.”

## FASD Trailblazer Event in Partnership With WNHAC

Together in partnership, WNHAC and Kenora Chiefs Advisory hosted FASD Trailblazer; a walk and run to bring awareness to FASD. The event happened on Thursday, September 22 at Garrow Park and youth from the surrounding area were invited to participate. Children’s Health Promotion Coordinator, Jennifer Coulis, was one of the event organizers, “There were probably over 100 kids that came out, it was great!” “We had mocktails at our section. The reason we did mocktails was because it’s a really great way to make everyone feel included when you are at a gathering or something similar. We want to support moms who are pregnant or who are about to become pregnant – everyone wants to feel included with a fancy drink!” The three-kilometre walking path went around the Garrow Park Trails and back to the starting point at Garrow Beach. There were different informative stations and activities spread out along the path where students could stop to learn more about FASD and the effects of alcohol on a developing mind. Coulis went on to explain that WNHAC hosts a Trailblazer event every year, each year partnering with a different organization to have a different theme.

## Provincial Funding Announcements For Binesi And Makwa

On Tuesday, October 11th, we welcomed Kenora-Rainy River MPP and Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Greg Rickford, and Michael Tibollo, Ontario’s Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, to the Youth and Family Wellness Camp after the province announced \$1.7 million in funding for the property. The funds were to

be used to expand the already established Binesi Wazisawan Youth Mental Wellness Service program – expanding the on-site community home from 2 beds to 8, allowing the program to serve more at-risk youth with complex needs in Kenora and throughout Northwestern Ontario. “I am confident that youth in the Kenora area will benefit from a safe place to receive treatment, resulting in better outcomes for the entire community,” said Rickford. The duo also announced \$110,000 in funding over two years to help KCA and Kenora Makwa patrol raise awareness for cybercrime and hate speech through social media. This funding comes as part of the Safer and Vital Communities (SVC) Grant.

## Lawson Foundation

Kenora Chiefs Advisory would like to once again extend our appreciation for The Lawson Foundation. In October, we announced that we had received a \$300,000 grant over three years from the foundation for a project called Diabetes and the Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings. With the support of KCA staff and Elders, this project will prepare youth and families to live a healthy lifestyle by sharing traditional knowledge, wisdom and learning ways to help prevent diabetes. “We are grateful for the grant the Lawson Foundation has provided for our Diabetes and the Seven Grandfather Teachings project. This project will provide cross-generational knowledge sharing and land-based diabetes prevention activities to children, youth and families out at our KCA Youth and Family Wellness Camp,” said Jocelyne Goretzki, Director of Health Promotion and Prevention Services.

# ...even more winter fun



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