

Mission and Values

Our Mission

Our purpose is to improve the quality of life for infants, children* and adolescents within their family** and community environments serving the people living in the City and District of Thunder Bay.

We provide quality services and take actions that:

- Improve children's mental health.
- Strengthen and support children's developmental potential.
- Strengthen and support the family's capacity to parent children.
- Build our diverse community's capacity to positively support the health and well-being of children and families

Our Values

Furthermore, we will:

- Be respectful, honest, compassionate and fair.
- Stand up for diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.
- Collaborate relentlessly.
- Be responsible and accountable to ourselves and our community.
- Pursue continuous learning and excellence.
- Lead with courage in the service of others.

Children's Centre Thunder Bay, the Boards, staff, students and volunteers, acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands and territory of the Anishinabe, home to Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. From time immemorial, this region was and continues to be a special gathering place for Anishinabek from all directions who gathered for ceremony, trade and kinship.

^{*} the word children includes infants, children, youth, adolescents and young adults age birth to 21

^{**} the word family is diverse and includes what a person would call or define as their family

Board Chair and CEO's Message



What a fantastic year! As we look back and reflect on our accomplishments, we are both proud and in awe of the great work our Staff and Board have done to advance our Mission, Values and Strategic Plan. Let's take a quick look at a year marked by so much opportunity, change and challenge,:

- Committed to driving innovation and quality improvement for the clients we serve, we achieved 100%
 Accreditation for the fourth time! Well done!
- Our Strategic Alliance with Thunder Bay Counselling, supported by our Community Foundation Grant, has made
 a significant impact. With the hard work of many people, we have advanced the work of the Alliance, leading to
 tangible improvements in flow, processes, and services.
- Our Board not only excelled in accreditation representing the work of CCTB, they completed the review of Bylaws
 to come into compliance with ONCA legislation, and also made significant strides in creating a more welcoming
 and culturally safe space for directors and the governance process. Their efforts are truly commendable, fostering
 collaboration and courageous leadership. Incredible work!
- Our Centre has been very active in the advocacy space. With the support of our local MPPs and community partners, we have had the opportunity to dialogue with numerous leaders across health, social services, and education as well as municipal, provincial, and federal politics. Our voices relentlessly advocate for the health and well-being of infants, children, and youth as the foundation of a strong and robust system of care.
- We advanced our strategic priorities with respect to the people we serve by tackling systemic equity barriers, strengthening parenting programs, improving outreach and transitions, and focusing on early intervention from birth to six.
- We reimagined our youth and family engagement with the support of the Knowledge Institute, revitalizing our Family Advisory Committee and youth engagement groups.
- We engaged in and expanded our outreach efforts with the support of Ontario Health funding, working to build meaningful relationships with the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, the Multicultural Centre, Evergreen, Our Kids Count, Roots Community Food Centre, and Communities Together for Children.
- We breathed life into our community-level strategic priorities as we worked in shared leadership with many partners
 and systems to improve care pathways for young people. Notable examples include our partnerships with the Jaida
 Project, U-Turn, the Youth Wellness Hub, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Gender-Affirming Care.

Our gratitude extends to all: our exceptional staff, steadfast Board, inspiring students, supportive Foundation, and incredible community allies. Together, your efforts have contributed to improving the quality of life for infants, children, youth, and their families.

With much gratitude and appreciation Tricia and Diane







Staff Service Recognition / Board of Directors

40 Years	Marnie Kozub
35 Years	John Friday
30 Years	Kim Santerre Sean Ryan Lorrie Peltola
25 Years	Angela Racco Sandee Mannella Rita Wellington
15 Years	Matthew Villella
10 Years	Alana Bencharski Donna Leonzio Kate Nicol Margaret Madore Karin Smids
Retirements	Dave Villella Fred Schmidt Carla Sereda John Friday

Board of Directors

Tara Gauld, Past Chair Tricia Murdoch, Chair Allane Danchuk, Secretary-Treasurer Crystal Edwards, Interim Vice Chair

Denise Baxter, Director Wes Bova, Director Karen Hagman, Director Monica Hemeon, Director Julia MacArthur, Director Jackie Park, Director Kate Pickett, Director



For the People We Serve (clients, customers)

MAKING SERVICE OUR FIRST PRIORITY

- Be child-focused and family-centred
- Advance equity and inclusion through creating culturally safe inclusive spaces
- Generate positive outcomes through high quality evidence-informed interventions
- Improve access, reduce wait times and eliminate barriers
- Increase our outreach and improve transitions
- Prioritize interventions earlier in children's lives
- Support the adults who care for and parent children
- For the People Who Work for Us (employees, students and Board)

DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

- Have the right people for the right job
- Increase our diversity through equity and inclusion
- Actively engage in succession planning for today and tomorrow
- Develop our people's skills, knowledge, talent and capacity
- Create safe, accessible and respectful spaces to work and learn within
- For Our Organization (culture, practices, processes, policies and assets)

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

- Deepen continuous quality improvement practices
- Engage meaningfully and communicate effectively
- Mitigate and manage organizational risk
- Leverage information & technology to improve processes
- Integrate an equity and inclusion lens into problem solving & decision making
- Utilize our resources wisely in the service of our mission
- 4 For Our Community (the shared space and places we live in)

ADVANCING COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Build more responsive client-friendly systems of care
- Improve access, outcomes, equity and inclusion
- Assertively champion anti-racism, anti-oppression and social justice
- Support positive community change through collaboration and shared leadership
- Address identified service gaps at the local, district and regional level

For the People We Serve: Making Service Our First Priority



Family Advisory Council and Peer Support

In 2016 Children's Centre formed a Parent Council that included parents, caregivers, and grandparents passionate to make changes in the quality, accessibility, and availability of services. Their initial role was collaboration and advocacy, and in 2019 this expanded to include parent support.

In January 2023, Children's Centre Thunder Bay received a grant from the Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions to implement quality standards for family and youth engagement.

As a result, the roles of advocacy and support were separated to better support both initiatives. Building on the foundation of the previous Parent Council, the Family Advisory Council formed and included past members and new community members to increase diversity. The newly formed Council began meeting monthly on January 29, 2024 with the goal of enhancing the voice of families at the organizational, community, and system levels.

To fill the need for parent support, Children's Centre Thunder Bay partnered with Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCHM) to bring a peer support chapter to Thunder Bay.

Systemic Barrier Project:

Since 2021, Children's Centre Thunder Bay has laid out in our Strategic Plan, a commitment to use principles and practices of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to better understand who uses our services and who doesn't. This approach was meant to increase access, outcomes, equity, and inclusion across our community.



This year, we expanded the Systemic Barrier Project (to understand who we are and who we are not serving) to include the question of why. Many of us who work within systems recognize, - at a theoretical level,- that systems are can be oppressive. Hosting Listening Sessions with community members and leaders created the right atmosphere for prioritizing our objectives and do the meaningful work of relationship-building as a first step to dismantle oppressive practices.

These valuable and rich conversations helped us form trusting relationships with various community groups and individuals and resulted in meaningful change for our organization. These discussions helped us understand how Children's Center Centre Thunder Bay can do better. Recommendations from this experience varied and included themes connected to the internal workings of the Centre as well as community and systemic barriers.

Some of these recommendations included:

- CCTB would benefit from expanding its knowledge of cultural norms outside of the Western world view.
 Expanding our knowledge and understanding might include seeking out the people who are thought leaders with lived experiences in these communities who we can partner with to create cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Training to better understand the implications of mental health stigma across cultures will support our ability to decrease barriers to service.
- Community capacity building through resource sharing; for example, space, funds, staff, training to



- other groups/organizations, etc. Our Outreach work with community partners is an example of this work already in action.
- Considering unconventional interventions, and differential responses in order to mitigate disproportionality; for example, peer support models, youth hubs, and outreach.

Gender-affirming Care (GAC)

Supported by the Thunder Bay Counselling-Children's Centre Thunder Bay Strategic Alliance with Seed Funding from the Noojmawing Sookatagaing Ontario Health Team.

Currently in our service area, there are many caring and capable service providers in the GAC space. However, service delivery is more often dependent on the people who deliver care as opposed to a systemic and integrated care system that is structured to provide holistic GAC.

The purpose of this project is to integrate opportunities and efforts into a more cohesive care pathway for transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) people that is safe, accessible, supportive, and high quality. First, we are striving to improve care through advancing integration and collaboration through executing two Lean Six Sigma Design Events, evolving more effective working partnerships, and providing advanced training. Second, this project directly



addresses TGD needs, one of the most marginalized equity-deserving groups whose right to live and receive care is being challenged on numerous fronts. Third, this project seeks to provide a comprehensive approach to GAC including the provision of biological, social, and psychological interventions. Finally, this project ultimately seeks to improve the overall health of TGD people including their physical and emotional health for the individual seeking care and their self-defined family system.



Measurement-Based Care

Children's Centre has incorporated Measure-Based Care (MBC) into our mental health services. This well researched and evidence-based approach relies on client report and perspective on the effectiveness of the therapy they are receiving through the completion of the Outcome Rating Scale and Session Rating Scale during each session. This method actively engages clients as a partner in their therapy process.

MBC provides the ability for clients and therapists to take a collaborative and proactive role in tracking therapy progress. The client-completed therapy measure is part of a well researched form of MBC called the Partner for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS). If progress is not being made as expected, corrections can be made to improve the service using the client perspective, something which complements the CCTB's focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Use of visualization software allows the ability to graph therapy progress.





Infant Hearing Program

The Infant Hearing Program provides Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) services to approximately 1,500 infants born in the City and District of Thunder Bay each year. The UNHS is an evidence-based Early Hearing Detection and Intervention initiative, which includes two components:

- Electrophysiological hearing screening, an in-person hearing screen completed by eight weeks of age.
- Newborn Screening Ontario (NSO) Risk Factor Screen (RFS), which screens the dried blood spot sample collected at birth for congenital cytomegalovirus and common genetic risk factors for permanent hearing loss in childhood.

In the fall of 2023, provision of the in-person screen was assumed internally. Two Communicative Disorders Assistants in the Preschool Speech & Language Program were trained to provide the in-person hearing screen, while clinic administration and booking were assumed by administrative staff. Throughout the transition, program staff worked hard to ensure services continued seamlessly for infants and their families without a disruption in service.

Program funder MCCSS also initiated province-wide modernization efforts, which included a move to automated digital transmission of consent and RFS results with partner agency NSO. Local processes were updated in collaboration with our community partners

at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and midwifery clinics with a target of contact in the first week of life. Earlier initial contact with families ensures timely access to important UNHS testing and treatment when needed for all infants and their families.





Autism Assessment Partnership

Through an innovative partnership with Children's Centre Thunder Bay and local paediatricians, the Autism assessment process has been streamlined to match clients to the service pathway that best meets their individual needs. Eleven paediatric assessment clinics were held at CCTB between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024 resulting in a total of 27 assessments. Of those, 20 children received an Autism diagnosis. This initiative supports our efforts to provide client-centred, effective, accessible, timely, and efficient services to children, youth, and families. Further, the partnership has helped to reduce our wait list by 13 months and has connected the right families to the right service. Community connections benefit us all, and we are grateful to our partners for their collaboration!







For the People Who Work for Us: Developing and Supporting Our People

Team Building

Great teams create a positive work environment. Understanding yourself and the peers you work with creates a foundation to gain insights not only to your own personality, but those of your teammates as well, allowing you to communicate, collaborate, and work together more effectively.

All staff participated in the Personality Dimensions assessment, which provided insight as to which their dominate colour may be. Kari Chiappetta facilitated a wonderful team building morning which included laughs and learning. We learned that every Personality Dimension has its own pros and cons, but that we can all learn to work together by bringing our own unique skills and traits to the table.



National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

On Friday, September 29th, Children's Centre Thunder Bay along with several staff from Thunder Bay Counselling (our Strategic Alliance partner) gathered for National Day of Truth and Reconciliation to honour and learn the truth of the land we live on, Anemki Wequedong and the Territory of the Fort William First Nation, signatories to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. **That day, staff worked together to understand**

and share their learning of the appropriation of the land occupied by the Ojibway and Anishinaabek people of Fort William First Nation. We learned the history of how the people and land were impacted by colonization. Many shared how the land appropriation impacted the health and survival of the Indigenous people. One group of people was invited into the sacred space of Mission de L'Immaculée Conception Fort William Mission where members shared the history of the church, the place it holds in the community, and programs it provides. The group was invited to stay for the service or attend any other ones. Many of us reflected on the faulty and colonial history they learned growing up in Thunder Bay and how they wanted to share this new learning moving forward.

Succession Planning

Succession planning in a mid-sized organization such as Children's Centre is crucial for its long-term success. A strong succession plan, which seeks to ensure a transparent and fair process, ensures a smooth transition of leadership and key roles within the organization.

As part of our current leadership team prepares for retirement, implementing this plan is a high priority for Human Resources. We have developed policies and profiles for key agency roles. Identified staff members have started a soft launch of the plan, which will be monitored, evaluated, and adjusted over the coming months.





Health & Wellness

In today's fast-paced work environments, the well-being of employees plays a pivotal role in organizational success. Staff wellness initiatives have emerged as integral components of modern workplace strategies aimed at promoting employee health, satisfaction, and productivity. By prioritizing employee well-being, organizations can cultivate a positive work culture, reduce absenteeism, and enhance overall workplace performance.

Employee wellness encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health aspects. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these dimensions is crucial for creating effective staff wellness initiatives.

The 2023-2024 service year included several wellness and learning initiatives including:

- National Truth & Reconciliation Learnings
- Healthy Workplace Challenge
- Fun Fridays in December
- Push-up Challenge
- Accreditation Education, Wrap-up Celebration







For Our Organization: Pursuing Excellence

Accreditation

This year CCTB underwent an Accreditation Review by the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA). CCA is a national, not-for-profit organization that accredits community-based health and social service organizations across Canada. This event occurs every four years and provides an external review of the organization's operations in relation to accepted standards of good practice and risk management. The standards address all aspects of the organization including governance, management, and programs and services. The process is intended to promote learning, continual improvement, excellence, and innovation.

The on-site review occurred in March of this year; however the work to prepare began in June 2023. As a result of a lot of hard work by the management team, the Accreditation Working Group, and our amazing staff, CCTB met 100% of the standards and is fully accredited through to 2028.



Communications Report

In collaboration with Compass Leadership, CCTB underwent a comprehensive assessment of our internal communication strategy. This assessment considered how communication flows throughout the organization – from management to staff and from staff to the management team.

The assessment identified areas of strength while making recommendations for improvement. As a result, the centre integrated a robust SharePoint site along with other Microsoft 365 applications to enhance our internal communication and collaborative work. We also adopted the Make It Better Boards initiative to provide space for staff to make their own suggestions and take leadership in initiating change.

As a result of a Lean Green Belt project, our external website underwent a full rebuild over the last year. Input from staff, clients, and community partners was taken into consideration; the result was a website that was easy for families to navigate to learn about the services CCTB provides. The website is fully accessible and is available in French as well as English.





Children's Centre Thunder Bay - Thunder Bay Counselling (CCTB-TBC) Strategic Alliance

The Children's Centre Thunder Bay - Thunder Bay Counselling (CCTB-TBC) Strategic Alliance was granted funding through Thunder Bay Community Foundations and the Community Service recovery fund. The \$200,000 grant allowed for the Strategic Alliance to enter Phase 2 with a focus on our continued collaborative efforts to create efficient systems of care that span a lifetime. The project contributed to shared knowledge between teams and empowered local families and clients. Fostering these relationships, we created a supportive ecosystem that addressed diverse needs while ensuring assets were directed toward the most impactful initiatives. Initiatives focused on Cultural Training and Education, Lean Education and a System of Care, Building Safer and More Inclusive Communities, French Language Services, and Youth Engagement.

Through the involvement of the steering committee, we gathered perspectives and insights that offered value while prioritizing quality in terms of addressing critical needs, advancing strategic objectives, and maximizing efficiency.





For Our Community: Advancing Collective Action



Outreach

Improving access and addressing systemic barriers to service are core to our Strategic Plan by 'Making Service Our First Priority'. CCTB has long been interested in expanding our Outreach activities by offering accessible services outside of a traditional, office-based model.

In October 2023, CCTB was successful in obtaining a grant that would allow us to do just that. As a result, we partnered with several community organizations, increasing access to CCTB services with families and communities that may not have accessed services otherwise. We have provided a variety of education and engagement activities, along with mental health and developmental services, in partnership with:

- Communities Together for Children
- Evergreen a United Neighbourhood
- Our Kids Count
- Roots Community Food Centre
- Regional Multicultural Youth Council
- Thunder Bay Multicultural Association

CCTB staff spent time within these organizations, getting to know the communities and families, building trust and relationships. As a result, we had 430 client contacts, delivered 48 mental health sessions, three developmental screenings, four workshops, and provided information to families about CCTB services.

The feedback from our community partners has been overwhelming:

- "It is important to go where the people are, share resources, and find support for families. It is important to have someone available to strike up conversations and share, providing a safe space for families to have trusted conversations with professionals about their struggles and victories. Being physically available is important and helpful."
- "We believe that the services being provided through our agency from the CCTB are extremely valuable for our newcomer clients."
- "It was helpful to have the counsellor on site, so people did not have to plan to travel across town. She was accommodating to the needs of the clients, if they wanted in- person, phone call, etc."
- "The information they have been sharing has raised awareness on the services and supports the Children's Centre provides. The staff have shared valuable information to empower the youth and help them make wise choices and responsible decisions. They have supported our peer mentors to be leaders, trained and encouraged the youth council executive officers to be role models."







Youth Wellness Hub

We breathed life into a dream, moving from a hopeful concept last summer to a full-blown Youth Wellness Hub (YWH) program. We accomplished this thanks to investments from the Ministry of Health and Noojmawing Sookatagaing along with the support of the Jaida Project, MPP Kevin Holland, and the Child and Youth Mental Health Planning System. Several groups support this program including our youth, CCTB (as the operational support organization), our system of service providers, and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

The YWH program is still in its infancy. Work to develop the program spanned the last year, shaped by two amazing youth and service provider forums (November 2023 and February 2024). Development also included striking an enthusiastic steering committee, writing many proposals, and gaining meaningful support from over 24 organizations. Through this collective effort, we were successful in receiving permanent funding for the program.

YWH will provide easy and safe access to more integrated health and wellness care for youth ages 12-24 and their families. Our work over the next year will focus on programming, services in the District, creating a permanent location, and developing an integrated governance model.



Noojmawing Sookatagaing - City and District of Thunder Bay Ontario Health Team (OHT)

CCTB is a proud member and signatory partner with our local accelerated Ontario Health Team. Although this work is being driven by Ontario Health, we see this as an opportunity to make paradigm-shifting changes to the way care is designed and governed.

The work in this space takes a population health approach and focuses on creating a new and different way of organizing and delivering care for all people, particularly those who have poorer access and outcomes.

- The priorities of our local OHT are to develop meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities in support of Truth and Reconciliation,
- utilize collaborative governance and consensus decision making,
- engage meaningfully with the people who use the system,
- address mental health and substance use health needs.
- leverage digital health opportunities, work more closely with primary care, and address unmet Francophone needs.

The goals of the OHT clearly align with many of CCTB's strategic priorities, and being an active participant helps us advance our mission in the context of our values.

Building Community Resiliency through Understanding (ACES Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant)

CCTB through the Children's Centre Foundation was the successful and gracious recipient of an Ontario Trillium Fund Resilient Communities Fund grant of \$200,000. Our plan over the next 24 months is to build community knowledge and resilience using the grant's resources. Capitalizing on work done by many important partners including the Community Safety and Well-Being, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Dilico Anishnabek Family Care, we will use experiential learning together with the evidence-based program known as the Brain Architecture Game the ("Brain Story") to explore and understand the role adverse childhood experiences has in community health and well-being.

As documented and researched, the pandemic has been identified as an adverse childhood experience, which has in turn resulted in an increase in mental health challenges experienced by clients. The "Brain Story" will assist our community of health and social service providers to understand the impact of adverse experiences on the architecture of the brain and how supporting healthy brain development is paramount to healthy outcomes across the lifespan. Stay tuned for updates regarding opportunities to learn and the outcomes of this important project.





The Jaida Project

The stigma surrounding suicide and mental health needs to be shattered. It's the single greatest obstacle to individuals reaching out for help and engaging in long-term therapy. The Jaida Project is committed to creating the awareness of the truths behind suicide, the effects on our youth and our families, and finding pathways for our youth to engage to get the help they need.

In partnership with Children's Centre Foundation
Thunder Bay and Westfort Productions, The Jaida
Project launched a video campaign to shine a light on
adolescent suicide and address the stigma of suicide.
Further work includes supporting youth to collaborate
with a community research group to identify and improve
the classroom pathways to continued mental health
engagement for all students.

To learn more about The Jaida Project and to get involved, visit: www.thejaidaproject.ca





YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2024 (WITH COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR 2023)

Revenue	2023/24	2022/23
Advances from MCCSS Ministry of Health District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board Other Donations Interest Recoveries	\$3,676,206 7,769,744 1,663,554 653,449 12,828 149,038 164,725 14,089,544	\$3,584,929 7,203,467 1,415,722 754,861 80 77,278 136,148 13,172,485
Expenditures	14,005,544	13,172,465
Salaries Employee Benefits Travel Staff Training Building Occupancy Purchased Services – Non-client Program Expenses Professional Fees – Client Promotion and Publicity Office Administration Capital Acquisitions Other	9,073,751 2,391,250 127,706 143,210 330,293 177,070 204,958 898,402 22,789 425,861 55,076 142,811 13,993,177	8,823,990 2,265,724 96,790 60,805 352,588 142,163 152,553 565,438 10,707 471,136 44,465 137,477 13,123,836
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures for Year	96,367	<u>48,649</u>
Net Assets, beginning of year	<u>96,367</u>	<u>48,649</u>
Net Assets, end of year	<u>\$954,074</u>	<u>\$857,707</u>

Audited financial statements are available upon request.

Message from the Children's Centre Foundation



Reflecting on these last 12 months, I see a renewed excitement in our board members, a sense of purpose and passion, and great pride in what we have accomplished. Subtle shifts in our fundraising efforts have resulted in new partnerships, meaningful community connections, and an overall improvement in our ability to support various Children's Centre projects and initiatives.

As always, our primary goals are: to enrich the lives of children and families in our community, to educate the public about the services offered at the Children's Centre, and to engage the community through fundraising and special events. With these goals in mind, we have continued hosting our major fundraising events as well as participating in new events and partnerships such as the Take it in Strides suicide awareness and prevention run, and the Jaida Project.



Our community has shown up to support our initiatives in a very powerful way. And, with the support of our donors, we have been able to improve the lives of children and their families in some very meaningful ways. The Foundation funded the construction of an outdoor therapy space for the Live in Treatment home as well as a sensory room at the Children's Centre. We also funded a food security initiative by providing fruits and vegetables to the children in the day treatment program, along with providing funding to several other projects and initiatives at the Children's Centre. We have seen an increase in our volunteer base and have entered into some very exciting partnerships with other community groups and businesses. The support from our volunteers, donors, and community partners has been inspiring. As a result, our board of directors has enjoyed a renewed sense of purpose and fundraising efforts have gained momentum.

On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our donors, partners, supporters, and the Children's Centre Thunder Bay. We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead.

Monique Gouthro, Chair Children's Centre Foundation



Annual Report | 2022-2023 19





engage • educate • enrich

283 Lisgar Street Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6G6

> T: 807.343.5000 F: 807.345.0444

www.childrenscentre.ca











