



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21

Resilience Edition



Children's Aid Society
La Société d'aide à l'enfance
LONDON & MIDDLESEX

Welcome, Bienvenue, Boozhoo



The past fiscal year will be remembered for the significant challenges faced by our organization and community, as well as our responsiveness and resilience.

The COVID-19 Pandemic escalated at the beginning of the fiscal year bringing health risks, uncertainty, and new operational requirements. As a mandated child protection service, we could not discontinue services to the community and our staff quickly adapted to working remotely, observing public health guidance for service delivery. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was an invaluable resource to assist staff in the safe provision of supports to families, children, and youth.

Throughout the changes due to provincial restrictions and phases of re-opening, our staff, volunteers, and care providers have been amazing, seeing children and families needing support, reassuring youth, providing care packages to families and care providers, and collaborating with community partners on everything from remote learning for children, to the provision of mental health supports to parents. There have been fluctuations in service referrals during the pandemic, but our staff have always been there, and we cannot thank them enough.

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was a galvanizing flashpoint for local, national and global protest regarding anti-Black racism. Public sector organizations are called to examine policies, practices and beliefs that sustain systemic racism. Our work in the areas of Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation, as well as Equity and anti-Black racism, have been important steps for our agency as we have committed to addressing over-representation and disproportionality in our service delivery.

Our emerging Strategic Plan hinges on a necessary shift that includes support for the return of jurisdiction for child

well-being to First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as embedding equity, diversity, anti-racism and inclusion in all aspects of agency operations and services.

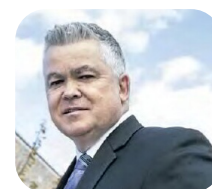
To that end, our Board of Directors has been deliberate in expanding its diversity. This has enabled the recruitment of additional Directors identifying as Indigenous or racialized members of our community, and we look forward to welcoming them at our Annual General Meeting.

Effective governance requires the identification and mitigation of organizational risk. This year, the agency implemented an Enterprise Risk Management framework to enable the Board and management to proactively respond to potential risks to services and operations. Included are known financial risks to the viability of service provision. And, in this regard we can report that we achieved a zero balance with respect to our multi-year historical deficit. This provides a more stable footing to support our services and strategic directions in the future. We wish to thank the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for its ongoing financial support and advice.

We know that community support and collaboration are critical for the provision of responsive child welfare services. In London and Middlesex, we are fortunate to have strong relationships with many agencies and organizations, crossing many service sectors. For this we are grateful, and we thank all of you. In the coming year, we anticipate learning the new direction for child welfare in Ontario as envisioned in its Child Welfare Redesign framework. This will offer further opportunities to draw upon community commitment and expertise in a reimagined approach to prevention and support for children, youth, and families.



Andrea Greenway, Board President



Chris Steven, Executive Director

Service Delivery During COVID-19

- Our staff have successfully ensured our mandated service continues while following Public Health guidelines such as screening, physical distancing and use of PPE.
- Very quickly at the beginning of the pandemic the majority of our staff shifted to working from home.
- Our medical clinic remained open and available during the pandemic to provide services to children and youth in care.
- While initially paused, our family visiting program quickly resumed with careful screening and cleaning protocols to ensure families could visit safely with their children in care. Virtual visits also helped children stay connected to their families.
- Courts shifted to virtual appearances and prioritized urgent matters, which resulted in many child protection matters being delayed.
- Our dedicated care providers continued to open their homes to children and youth in need throughout the uncertainty of this past year.
- Our exceptional volunteers remained committed during this past year, providing safe drives and helping families in need during our holiday campaign.
- Education supports continued with tutors and mentors meeting virtually with children and youth and providing support to care providers who suddenly found themselves helping children and youth learn online during school closures.
- Field placements for students continued as our agency values our longstanding relationship with King's University College School of Social Work and the important contribution we can make to the learning and development of future Social Workers.
- Throughout the pandemic we have increased support to our staff including flexible work arrangements, and additional wellness activities.



We're Listening & Learning



We recognize the history of harm child welfare has caused specific communities, including the overrepresentation of Indigenous, Black and LGBTQ2S+ children and youth in care. The tragic events of the past year, across Canada and in our own community, including the loss of Our London Family, and the discovery of unmarked graves at Residential Schools, amplified the urgent need to address individual and systemic racism. Our agency is committed to changing the status quo and overcoming systemic racism in our services. We are working diligently to provide services that are inclusive, affirming and ensure equitable outcomes for all children, youth and families.



Our agency has developed a comprehensive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which integrates several initiatives focused on providing culturally safe and affirming services, specifically with Black, racialized, LGBTQ2S+ and French speaking communities. Through staff and care provider training, transformed Human Resource practices, as well as policy and service reviews, we are taking action to improve outcomes and ensure sustainable change.



Together with the Community

When the Society receives a call that does not require intensive child protection services, the caller or the family can be referred to community service partners which happens in 4% of our referrals. This “link” is the least intrusive alternative service delivery method as it does not involve initiating a child protection investigation but still ensures that families and children have the appropriate resources and supports available to them.

Select Partnerships

Adolescent Quick Response Program

African Caribbean Canadian Local Advisory Committee

Anova

Atlohsa Family Healing Services

Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

Ontario Family Violence & Family Law Community of Practice

Community Safety and Well-being Plan

Community Service Coordination Network

Craigwood Youth and Family Services

Family and Infants Together (FIT) Program

Humana Community Services

King’s University College

London (and Middlesex) Coordinating Committees to End Woman Abuse

London Family Court Clinic

Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre

Middlesex London Health Unit

Mnaasged Child and Family Services

Muslim Resource Centre

N’Amerind Friendship Centre

Situation Table City of London and Middlesex County

Vanier Children’s Mental Wellness

Violence Threat Risk Assessment with Local School Boards

Western University

Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Truth & Reconciliation

We are committed to working together with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in a way that is culturally safe and affirms their rights. In addition to case planning with local First Nations, including Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation, the Society works with 42 First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities from across Canada when members are residing in our community.

We recognize the critical overrepresentation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth in care. As of March 31, 2021, 24% of children in care were First Nations, Inuit or Métis. Planning with members of an Indigenous community occurs with immediate notification and support and approval of the respective Band representative.

Indigenous service providers, including N’Amerind Friendship Centre and Atlohsa Family Healing Services, assist staff with the provision of support to urban Indigenous children, youth and their families in a meaningful and culturally informed manner.

At the time of this report, Canadians are aware of the discovery of children’s grave sites at former Residential Schools. These are devastating and tragic losses for the families and communities of those children, and all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. We remain committed to working together with Indigenous communities in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, and healing.



Supporting Children & Youth in Our Community

Together with our community, we are working to ensure all children and youth thrive in a safe, stable and loving family. We provide essential services to families in which children and youth are at risk of or are experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, neglect, or separation.

Intake, Investigation & Ongoing Services

During the 2020-21 fiscal year, the Society received 5,064 referrals from teachers, physicians, police, and other community members. We experienced lower referrals and investigations during times of school closures, followed by surges when schools reopened. We are appreciative of teachers in our community who play a crucial role in supporting the well-being and safety of children and youth.

During the pandemic families struggled with isolation and barriers to accessing service and support in the community. Addictions, intimate partner violence, mental health challenges, and housing and food insecurity were significant needs in our community. In particular we continue to see the tragic impact of the opioid crisis on families. Together, these areas of concern were reflected in calls for assistance to our agency and resulted in the completion of 2280 investigations and the provision of service to 1,299 families.

	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Referrals Received	5064	6406	7217
Protection Investigations Completed	2280	2500	2688
Children/Youth Served in the Community	2741	3127	3042
Open Ongoing Cases	768	786	819
Adoptions Finalized	17	37	46
*Children in Care	438	442	529
*Children in Customary Care	8	4	4
*Care Provider Homes	177	185	223
*Youth on Extended Care	181	145	179
*Kinship Service Placements	157	118	121
Kinship Search Completed	126	109	97

**As of March 31, 2021*

Kinship - It Takes a Village

Extended family of children and youth can share in the responsibility for their safety, permanence and well-being. We continue to prioritize the importance of kin searches to provide an alternative placement option, should it be needed, as well as to provide added support and connections for children, youth, and families.

This year, there were 126 extensive kin searches completed. These connections can include anyone who is close to the child/youth or their family such as a friend, teacher, coach or neighbour. Children and youth supported by kin are more likely to experience emotional security, cultural connections and a sense of belonging.



Children & Youth in Care

Our priority is to support children and youth to remain safely with their family and in their community. However, if this is not possible and children enter care we view foster care as a temporary option with the goal of family reunification as soon as possible. As of March 31, 2021, 438 children and youth were in care. We are committed to “no child growing up in care”, and while in care, we make every effort to ensure children live in family settings. This past year 76% of children and youth were residing in family based care.

Notably, 40 youth continued in care past their 21st birthday under the provincial directive. Supporting Consistency of Care for Youth. This positive initiative allowed youth to continue to receive services and supports and prevent youth from leaving care during the pandemic.



“She was unstoppable. Not because she didn’t have failures or doubts, but because she continued on despite them.”

Preparation for Life

As of March 31, 2021, the Society was providing voluntary services to 16 youth ages 16-17, and 181 youth ages 18-22. Combined, this represents 45% of all children and youth in care. In response to their unique needs, the Society maintained increased services to youth both in and out of care through our Youth Response Unit (YRU) which strengthens youth-centred services.

This unit also supports permanency for youth by preserving family systems and promoting permanent meaningful connections for youth with their families, kin and in their communities. Other services provided by the Society include financial assistance; assistance in securing housing; education planning; and, preparation for life through the development of healthy life strategies. In addition, over the past year, the Society has also increased its collaboration with Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) to provide immediate and transitional housing and supports to youth. This has included an exclusive partnership to provide housing and the support of a housing stability worker to 16- and 17-year-old youth. Access to the YOU Emergency Youth Shelter is also available when needed and has made a meaningful difference in the lives of youth.

Provincial data shows the educational attainment of youth in care is lower than the provincial average. In response, the Society provides a wide range of educational supports including services provided by education liaisons, volunteer tutors and mentors, as well as maintaining active engagement with school professionals.

“The best view comes after the hardest climb.”



Care Providers

As of March 31, 2021 CASLM has 177 caring and dedicated Care Providers who welcome children and youth into their homes. Just as every child and youth is unique, so are the Care Providers who strive to meet their needs.

The need for Foster Care Providers remains high. We continue to seek adults from diverse communities to provide support and care for children and youth.



Financial Report

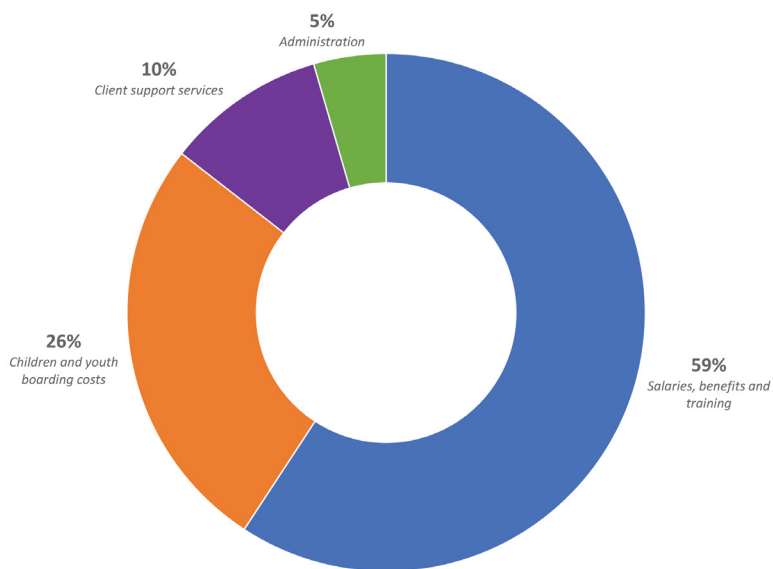
	2020-2021	2019-2020
Revenue	\$57,829,461	\$60,993,828
Expenditures	\$55,340,787	\$59,420,962
Surplus	\$2,488,673	\$1,572,866

This is a summary of the details in the 2020-2021 audited financial statements prepared under Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and audited by MNP LLP.

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Revenue	\$58,409,038	\$59,455,209
Expenditures	\$55,886,900	\$59,157,290
Surplus	\$2,522,138	\$297,919

This is a summary of the revenue and expenditures prepared under the modified accrual basis of Accounting required by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Expenses Breakdown by Category:



Special thanks for funding support from our community donors, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada.



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 Maranda King, Director of Corporate Services & CFO
 Susan Schiedel, Service Director
 Carrie Thomas, Service Director
 Kristian Wilson, Service Director
 Michelle Young, Service Director
 Cherie Dolmage, Director of Human Resources
 Denise Marshall, Senior Legal Counsel