

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025



NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES OF TORONTO

CHILD CENTERED, FAMILY FOCUSED, COMMUNITY DRIVEN.

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ABOUT US

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) is a multi-service agency founded by First Nations and Métis community members living in Toronto to support the wellbeing of Indigenous children and families living or staying in Toronto region.

Guided by the vision of providing culturally connected, land-based holistic support to Section 35 rights holders living or staying in the urban setting of Toronto, our programming offers support across all directions of the medicine wheel, focused on honouring and empowering children and families through all stages of life.

We work with over 250 First Nations, Inuit, and recognized Métis communities to ensure children and families receive distinct and appropriate services guided by their Nations.

MISSION STATEMENT

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto strives to provide a life of quality, well-being, caring and healing for our children and families in the Toronto Native Community. We do this by creating a service model that is culture-based and respects the values of Native people, the extended family and the right to self-determination.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2022, NCFST made the decision to divest from a hierarchical leadership model toward a governance model better aligned with the traditional governance structures of this territory. Throughout 2023 and 2024, we undertook this transformative work guided by the original intentions of founding board members and staff, supported by recognized Knowledge Carriers, Elders, community, and Indigenous scholars. Now, we are grateful to be working as a Leadership Council, practicing shared decision making and implementing traditional practices guided by our shared values, the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

The all-female Aboriginal and allied Leadership Circle comprises four directors and Kookum Alita Sauvé (Tahltan and Cree). The circle works in ongoing collaboration with recognized Knowledge Carriers and the NCFST Elder's Advisory Council comprising Elders from the diverse nations we serve.

Along with our shared values, expressed through the Seven Grandfather Teachings, NCFST's approach to governance is grounded in honouring self-determination, care and reciprocity, sustainability, reverence for all of creation, respect for those who have come before, collective decision-making, and culturally appropriate evaluation.



2024-2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mae Maracle, President Ashley Quinn, Vice-President Stephen Lindley, Treasurer Aliesha Arndt Richard Cummings Jennifer Franks Jessica McKenna Fred Martin Erin Moe

The NCFST Board of Directors consists of members from a range of First Nations and recognized Métis communities including: Six Nations of the Grand River, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Lac Seul First Nation, Dokis First Nation, and the Manitoba Métis Federation.



ELDERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The NCFST Elders Advisory Council comprises recognized Elders from across Turtle Island. Council members come from a diverse range of First Nations and recognized Métis communities, reflecting the Nations we support to ensure all are represented.

SERVICE PROTOCOLS

To ensure all Aboriginal children receive support that is guided by their communities and nations, we regularly co-develop service protocols with First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis communities.

MANDATE

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto is a Child and Family Wellbeing Society mandated through the Child, Youth and Family Services ACT (CYFSA) of the province of Ontario.

MEMBERSHIPS

NCFST holds memberships with the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO) and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS).



PRAYER FOR HEALING AND WELLNESS

Greetings Creator,

Thank you for the Good Life that you have given to us. We thank you for the work that we do at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. We ask you on this day to watch over those that work together for the care and protection of our children and families. We ask you for the healing and wellness of our minds, bodies, and spirits as we work toward the healing and wellness of our Indigenous community. This is our prayer today.

All My Relations,

Thank you

Aanii Boozhoo Gizhe Manidoo,

Miigwech maanda gaamiizhang Mino Bimaadiziwan. Chi miigwech maampii eninkii'yang maaampii Binojiinh Gamik. Daabiwezenmigo maanda giizhgak wiikwanmang maampii enkiijik miinwa ogimaajik wenaa wiigenaanmoyang miinwa wiikowanmang ninda binojii'ik miinwa indoodemik. Daabawezenmigo wiinaandeyang miinwa mingaaneyang maanda enenmang, niiyaw miinwa jiibay megowa wiinaandegizad miinwa wiimingaaneyad gaynawa maampii Anishinaabec endaajik. Mii maanda ebiwezenmigo maanda giizhgak.

Kina Nindaawenmajik,

Miigwech

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As President of the Board, I'm pleased to share highlights from a year of important progress at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. Over the past year, the organization has continued its transition to a renewed governance model - one that reflects Indigenous values, fosters collective leadership, and strengthens accountability to the community.

The board has been fully engaged in supporting this transition. We've worked closely with agency leadership to ensure our role and responsibilities align with the principles of collective decision-making and traditional governance practices. This work is ongoing, and we are proud to be part of it.

A key focus for the board this year has been updating our by-laws. Led by the Governance Committee, this review ensures our foundational documents support the agency's evolving model and reflect best practices in non-profit governance while remaining responsive to community values.

We've also prioritized board recruitment, with a goal of increasing representation from the communities we serve. We're actively seeking new members with lived experience, cultural knowledge, and a strong commitment to the agency's mission.

This year, board members attended the Foster Parent Recognition Event - an opportunity to recognize and thank caregivers who provide safe and loving homes for Indigenous children and youth. It was a meaningful reminder of why this work matters. Our board also continues to participate in and support the Indigenous Spirit Fund, the agency's philanthropic initiative. We remain committed to helping secure funding that supports culturally rooted, community-driven programs.

Looking ahead, the board will continue to support the implementation of the new governance model, strengthen recruitment, and ensure sound oversight of agency strategy and operations.

We are grateful to the staff, Elders, community members, and partners who work every day to support Indigenous children and families. The pages that follow highlight the impact of the programs and services we offer.



Mae Maracle NCFST Board President

MESSAGE FROM THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Over the past year, we have walked with intention, listening and being present to the medicine all around and leaning deeply into the teachings that guide our way. This has been a time of grounding into our renewed governance model - one shaped by the traditional teachings and laws of this territory, the Great Lakes Region, alongside matriarchal wisdom, traditional collective leadership processes, and a commitment to sustainability - not only in practice, but in spirit. We have been learning by doing, remembering through Ceremony, and building processes that reflect our values; relational, accountable, and interwoven with the land and one another.

This report is not simply a record of the year's activities – truly awesome and holistic in scope, but also a reflection of how we are actively living into a future shaped by ancestral knowledge, cultural resurgence, and collective care.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Protocol Development: Working with the 250+ First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis communities we serve to ensure that children and families accessing our services are receiving care and support in direct relationship with their communities and nations.
- Elders Advisory Council: Establishing a council of respected Elders and Knowledge Carriers who represent the nations we serve, providing ongoing cultural and spiritual guidance to ensure our work aligns with Indigenous knowledge systems and values.



- Expanding our Front-Door Reception Services: Meeting the in-the-moment spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical needs of community members through culturally grounded approaches that foster safety and well-being, and focus on both immediate and sustainable solutions.
- Kinship and Family Supports: Minimizing the number of children in care by focusing on meeting the diverse needs of families and centering our Kinship Program devoted to finding caregiving arrangements within family and community to keep children within their existing networks.
- Land-Based Programming: Deepening land-based opportunities both within the city and at our two land-based sites: Glen Rouge and our camp near Clarendon Station.
- Family Violence Supports: Expanding services to address the needs of entire families, including those who have caused harm, through a healing-centered, culturally informed lens.
- Community Resilience: Strengthening community capacity and self-determination through mentorship, peer-led programming, and gatherings that nurture belonging and relationship.

With deep gratitude, the Leadership Council thanks the Knowledge Carriers, Elders, staff, and community partners who have walked with us this past year, ensuring that all recognized First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people receive culturally specific, holistic care that meets their unique needs.

GOVERNANCE

HONOURING SPIRIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY: OUR PATH FORWARD

We began the work of renewing the governance model at NCFST with a vision of shared leadership guided by traditional Indigenous governance processes and collective wisdom.

To help us find the path, we first engaged in Ceremony, prayer, and kinship. Knowledge Carrier Diane Longboat wisely shared that everything we needed to renew our governance model was left for us by our ancestors. Our work wasn't about discovery, but about remembering.

Throughout 2024, NCFST engaged in a comprehensive process of reflection and ceremony, guided by the original intentions of founding board members and leaders, and advised by Knowledge Carriers, Elders, community members, and Indigenous scholars. In kinship we asked: what does it truly mean to govern in a good way? And, how can we ensure that our internal processes reflect the spirit and values we seek to uphold?

KEY OUTCOMES INCLUDED:

1

Redefining the roles and responsibilities of leaders from a top-down, exclusive model to an inclusive circular model that equitably values distinct gifts the and knowledge of all participants. It is thus the primary role of leaders to ensure all voices equitably heard, all are information is available, and support the decisionto making process and steward the decision forward, rather than operating as the single decision-maker(s).

4

The development of a Right Relations Agreement that outlines how we practice our values across the Seven Grandfather Teachings and what community members can expect from NCFST. 2

А commitment to the inclusion of Elders and Knowledge Carriers. Our newly formed Elders Advisory Council comprises vetted and recognized Elders and Knowledge Carriers from diverse nations to ensure all communities we serve are represented. We are profoundly grateful for the wisdom and guidance of our Elders as we walk with children and families on their wellness journeys.

3

A deepened and clarified articulation of our values, understood through the Grandfather Seven shared Teachings. Our understanding of these teachings informs practice across every aspect of NCFST and ensures we are all operating collectively and working in wavs aligned with our values.

5

Updated processes and policies that reflect our focus on collective governance, sustainability, selfdetermination, kinship, culture, the Land, and Ceremony.

6

A renewed commitment to values-led governance focused on shared decision making, strategy and service delivery guided by our collective understanding of our values.

CONSENSUS AS CEREMONY

Consensus is a sacred act — the weaving together of diverse voices into a shared, unified intention. As articulated in the Haudenosaunee and Anishnabek traditions, consensus means speaking and listening until all are in right relation with a decision. Consensus is focused on harmony, accountability, and spiritual clarity rather than power and authority. Over the past year NCFST began practicing governance from a collective rather than individual process.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Council decision-making guided by culture and collective values.
- Inclusion of a Kookum on the Leadership Council to ensure traditional ways of being and knowing, and ceremony are .
- The development of the Elders Advisory Council to ensure the wisdom of our Elders is heard with humility and respect, and put into practice.

LOOKING AHEAD

Indigenous governance is not simply a structure — it is relationship in action. With every decision we make, every child we serve, and every Elder who gifts us with their wisdom, we renew our commitment to walking in a good way to support the wellbeing of all First Nation, Inuit and recognized Métis children and families living or staying in Toronto region.

Our goals for the coming year include:

- Deepening land-based healing and cultural services.
- Strengthening kinship with First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis communities through the development of protocols, ensuring children receive supports guided by their nations and communities.
- Strengthening our cultural infrastructure in both physical spaces and spirit-based practices.
- Continuing the evolution of our renewed governance model.

We honour those who dreamed NCFST into being, those who currently carry the fire, and those yet to come. We offer deep gratitude to the community, staff and Knowledge Carriers who continue to walk with us on our journey and we commit to being humble stewards of this sacred work.

HOLISTIC HEALING SERVICES

Holistic Services provide culturally connected wellness and prevention support across all four directions (spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical). Our services continue to evolve to meet community needs as they arise.

FRONT DOOR WELCOMING SERVICES

Throughout 2024-2025 NCFST continued to transition beyond the post-Covid landscape and recognized the need for increased front door support to best welcome community members.

To support these efforts we made greater space in our 30 College lobby for cultural accessibility. The expanded NCFST Culture room is a space for community members to access medicines, cultural support, a cup of cedar tea and to connect in kinship with recognized Elders and Knowledge Carriers from nations across Turtle Island.



The Front Door Welcoming Team has been expanded to a comprehensive roster of staff to meet the diverse needs of community members. Folks are able to access in the moment, culturally grounded mental health and regulation support, program intake support, community kitchen and warm connection.

Team	AGE Group						
	0-15	16-21	22-29	30-54	55+	Unknown	Total
Community Hubs	9	1	3	14	19	15	61
Healing Services	13	24	99	238	43	24	441
Housing		20	26	40	9	5	100
Total	22	45	128	292	71	44	602

Clients Served by Front Door Services:

We welcomed a peacekeeper role at our downtown lobby to support safety and wellbeing in the space for all sharing it.

The peacekeeper practices welcoming and safety from a cultural way of being, fostering safe space across all four directions.



Peacekeeper Kyle McDonald

CLINICAL SERVICES

NCFST offers a range of holistic, wrap-around case-management supports for community members at any point in their wellbeing journeys, including:

Holistic Case Management walks with individuals along their wellbeing journeys across all directions, including housing and food security, physical and mental health, goal setting, and self-regulation, all grounded in cultural ways of being.

Developmental Case Management that provides warm support for families in understanding and navigating developmental diagnoses, and in accessing culturally safe developmental supports.



Integrated Case Management supports individuals with concurrent mental health and substance use experiences. Services are centered on culturally relevant harm-reduction and wellness approaches, along with support in accessing and engaging in medical and other forms of care. Support is offered both one-on-one and in group settings, always with a focus on holistic, culturally grounded care.

THE MOOKA'AM CLINIC

The Mooka'am Clinic was birthed at the agency's beginning and was initially focused on providing culturally-led therapeutic support for those healing from sexual abuse and other impacts of

residential schools and colonial violence. Since then, services have expanded based on community feedback and need. Today, the Mooka'am Clinic provides counselling support to FNIM children, youth and families around a diverse range of issues impacting Indigenous people. The clinic served 414 FNIM individuals in 2024-2025.

Over 1,100 community members accessed multiple services through our Healing Teams during the 2024–2025 year.



This year, a strong focus has been placed on family work - recognizing that healing children also means supporting the entire family unit. By strengthening the family nucleus, Mooka'am helps foster resilience and long-term wellness.

Parents and caregivers have shared that they feel supported and empowered to help their children and families overcome the many barriers they've faced. The clinic has also expanded its resources and enhanced its space to be even more welcoming, culturally inviting, and safe for all who enter.

MOOKA'AM ART SHOW

A highlight of the year was the second annual Mooka'am Art Show, featuring powerful and expressive works created by clinic participants. The event celebrated healing through creativity and community and honoured the voices and journeys of those involved.











BEKAADENDANG (BEING PEACEFUL) PROGRAM

The Bekaadendang (Being Peaceful) Program evolved from the Mooka'am Clinic following increasing human-trafficking concerns and needs reported by community. The program provides intensive wrap-around culturally-led support for youth and adults at risk of, experiencing or exiting from human-trafficking. Programming includes individual and group support and peer mentorship.

In 2024, we completed a principles-focused evaluation of the program.

Key findings included:



Bekaadendang's guiding principles include trauma-informed care, cultural safety, 4quadrant medicine wheel approach, harm reduction, and after-care peer support.



Bekaadendang's guiding principles are adhered to effectively by staff and experienced within programming as reported by community member participants in the evaluation.



The principles are interconnected, working together to create a wraparound support model that is unique to the community member's needs.



Both staff and community members reported a positive impact on their practice and wellbeing respectively.



Community members, in their own accounts, attribute their newfound stability, confidence, and healing to Bekaadendang. The principles-focused evaluation affirms the positive impact of these principles and emphasizes their need for continued deliberate and intentional application within the program.



The meta-principles of prevention, education, intervention, and healing, observed in Bekaadendang, provide a foundational philosophy guiding the approach of holistic support services at NCFST.

Last year, 403 community members were served in the Bekaadendang Program



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2024 PRINCIPLES-FOCUSED EVALUATION INCLUDE:



To ensure the guiding principles are not only practiced but celebrated, they should be articulated more deliberately and uniquely tailored to Bekaadendang's service model. They should clearly demonstrate how the principles should be applied by the Anti-Human Trafficking team in a way that's deeply intertwined with their specific mission and values, as well as seamlessly integrated into staff training materials, onboarding, and orientation processes.



Team supervisors should continue to play an active role in fostering a culture of ongoing discussions about these principles, emphasizing their profound significance within team meetings, staff get-togethers, and during supervision.



This evaluation not only serves as a tool for elevating Bekaadendang but also offers insights into strategic program development. Future programs with aligned objectives should consider developing a distinct set of principles using the GUIDE framework to foster clarity, assess performance, and better serve the communities they support.













FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT

The family violence program at NCFST has always included support and treatment for those perpetrating violence, as we understand wellness and healing involves all family members.

To better support this work we have expanded our family violence program to include 'Male Engagement Workers' and 'Family Violence Prevention Workers', filling a longstanding need in services.

Our approach remains holistic and culturally-led, with a strong focus on healing for children, mothers, fathers, caregivers, and all family members.

This year, the Mdewgaan Healing Lodge supported nine mothers and nine children through three 16-week cohorts.

All graduates maintained sobriety during the program and developed detailed holistic safety plans. They also reunited with their children or enhanced steps toward reunification, including greater access and expediated reunification plans.

Following the program, one mother enrolled in college and continues to attend the aftercare group for ongoing peer support.

MDEWGAAN HEALING LODGE

Mdewgaan Lodge is a live-in Healing Lodge for Indigenous women with their young children and pregnant women who are interested in moving forward on their wellness journeys.

The Lodge provides a healing space for women and families who have experienced the impacts of intergenerational and complex trauma, including addictions and mental health concerns. The program supports keeping families together through culturally connected pre and post natal support, parenting and coping skills development for lifelong wellness.

Mdewgaan Lodge is guided by the sacred knowledge that culture is healing. Our approach to wellness is in culture, focused on balance across all quadrants of the medicine wheel and grounded in relationship between self with children, family, community, land, and environment. While the program is abstinence based, harm-reduction strategies are woven throughout programming to ensure participants are equipped with a range of wellness tools as they graduate.

23

SCARBOROUGH INTEGRATED TEAM

The Scarborough Integrated Team (SIT) comprises both prevention and intervention support for families to access within one program nest.

The team includes child and family wellbeing workers, counsellors, a family violence worker, and holistic case manager. They provide wraparound, integrated, and intensive support for families involved with Child and Family Wellbeing, with the goal of bolstering family strengths and fostering healing.

Families can access services tailored to their distinct needs in the moment – whether that is holistic counselling, housing support and/or enrollment in child and family wellbeing etc.

> TOTAL FAMILIES SERVED THIS YEAR:

> > 217

HH'S STORY

HH was referred to Violence Against Women Support Services by Child and Family Wellbeing (CFWB) from the Scarborough Integrated Team (SIT) following her escape of Intimate Partner Violence. She was staying in a shelter when I began working with her and the Child and Family Wellbeing Worker.

HH is a mother to two teenage children and had just recently given birth to her youngest child when she fled the abusive situation. All four family members resided in a one room shelter for several months. She was consistently supported emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually, by both workers. HH was able to receive COHB (Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit) and eventually moved into a brand new 3bedroom condo. We were able to provide her with furniture from the Furniture Bank (as she had absolutely no belongings) as well as gift cards for food and household items.

HH continues to be supported by NCFST via counselling services from SIT, as during this time of safety and stabilization, HH's husband died by suicide. With the ongoing support for HH and the children, H.H continues to meet her goals around staying employed, attending night school, and providing for all her children.

This is just one of many success stories for the Scarborough Integrated Team.



EARLY YEARS

PRE AND POST NATAL DTEBASHKINE BAWAAJIGE (DREAM KEEPERS)

This team provides wrap-around, intensive support to expecting mothers or mothers who have recently given birth.

With a 'whatever it takes' focus, workers provide a range of diverse support to walk with those expecting in navigating the journey in safe and culturally connected ways.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

In Spring, the team hosted its second annual Water Carriers Honouring Event, celebrating over 60 mothers and caregivers with a beautiful afternoon of lunch, traditional teas, drumming, songs, and heartfelt gifts.

In partnership with Anishnawbe Health Toronto, a Celebration of Life Ceremony was also held. In June, the Honouring Male Caregivers event brought families together for ceremony and a joyful group outing to a Toronto Blue Jays game.

The Winter Solstice Season brought warmth and joy to over 500 families. The celebration featured drumming, storytelling, crafts, and surprise visits from Santa, superheroes, and even the Grinch! A delicious turkey lunch catered by The Flying Chestnut added to the festive spirit.

On December 19, the Come Shop with Me – Holiday Edition welcomed over 100 community members to select gifts, books, food, clothing, and hygiene items.





CHILD CARE

This year, childcare programming focused on community strength and supporting staff and families.

The team reinforced that strong communities are built on teamwork and togetherness. Policies and processes were strengthened to meet families' needs while upholding professional standards and centering cultural ways of being. With a high staff retention rate, Scarborough Childcare celebrates a supportive, cultural work environment and strong relationships with families – built on trust and open communication.

The childcare program is focused on supporting Indigenous caregivers with in-the-moment needs. The centre provided temporary daily care for a young child, allowing him to stay connected with his cousins and be cared for by his auntie until his return to Thunder Bay.



ABORIGINAL HEAD START

The Aboriginal Head Start Program is rooted in the belief that every Indigenous child deserves a strong, culturally grounded start in life. Through a holistic approach to early childhood development, the program nurtures each child's spiritual, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical growth.

By weaving Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and values into daily learning, the program fosters a deep sense of identity and belonging. Children are encouraged to explore, express, and connect – building empathy, confidence, and a love of lifelong learning.

With a strong focus on wellness and community, Aboriginal Head Start creates a vibrant, supportive environment that prepares children for a smooth and successful transition into primary school and beyond.





EARLYON

Aboriginal EarlyON centres are located at our downtown, east, and west locations and offer free, drop-in programs for parents and caregivers with children from birth to six years old.

These inclusive EarlyON centres provide culturally grounded drop-in programs that strengthen parent-child bonds, offer parental education, and promote healthy child development while being culturally grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

OVER 1,060 CHILDREN AND 780 FAMILIES ACCESSED OUR EARLY ON PROGRAMS DURING THE 2024-2025 YEAR.

Our teams are on hand to provide guidance, support, and connections to a network of resources. These centres play a crucial role in connecting the community to a diverse range of engaging programs, services, and workshops and further connecting families and their children to additional services within and outside of NCFST.



MIDDLE YEARS

The After School Program, for children in grades 1–6, ran throughout the school year and hosted a vibrant March Break Camp. Activities included bowling, movies, an escape room, rock climbing, and a visit to the Royal Ontario Museum. These experiences helped children build friendships, explore new environments, and reduce isolation.



YOUTH SERVICES

Indigenous youth living or staying in the Toronto Region are faced with the growing pressures of urban living, while interfacing daily with the ongoing impacts of colonization, including discrimination and violence. Our services are designed to provide culturally connected supports to bolster resilience across all four directions: spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical.

Youth Services at NCFST are grounded in culturally vibrant drop-in spaces across the city where First Nations, Inuit, and Métis folks ages 16 to 29 can gather in community to learn, laugh, and connect as Indigenous people.

NATIVE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE

Our drop-in space, the Native Youth Resource Centre, is staffed with friendly, familiar and relatable workers who provide in-the-moment support with whatever youth may need.

Programs include hot, fresh and traditional daily meals and snacks; housing support including a youth shelter and transitional housing; education, employment and skills development; justice advocacy; health and hygiene supports; access to Ceremony and Land Based activities; a music recording studio and an art studio to support selfexpression.

- 8,624 Visits to NYRC
- 6,639 Referrals Made for Supports
- 20,980 Meals Served

YOUTH EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

INDIGENOUS YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SKILLS BUILDING PROGRAM - 14 PARTICIPANTS

A two-season program that supports Indigenous youth in developing employment skills, strengthening their inherent gifts, and pursuing education through cultural connection and traditional ways of being.

Three youth were accepted into Toronto Metropolitan University's Indigenous Creative Writing class, a major achievement and a step forward in their educational journeys

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM - 17 PARTICIPANTS

In partnership with Centennial College, this program provides intensive wrap-around support to community members completing a certification in Office Administration, including a placement. We are honoured to host many of these student placements and thank partner organizations for also supporting in this capacity.



The largest graduating class to date celebrated their success at Centennial College's new Abuilding for Indigenous learners, in the beautiful 'Basket Room'.

A new cohort began in September, with four students graduating in May. One graduate, a longtime NYRC participant, became the first male graduate of the program.

Another graduate was offered a trainee position at NCFST.



7TH GENERATION YOUTH PROGRAM - 42 PARTICIPANTS

The 7th Generation Youth Program supports Indigenous youth in harnessing their creative skills through a range of expressive mediums.

 \blacklozenge

A youth artist was featured at the Creemore Festival of the Arts, hosted by Water First, and sold merchandise throughout the weekend.



Water First collaborated with a youth to create a fundraising hoodie, followed by additional merchandise with two more 7th Generation artists.



In December, 7th Generation hosted a youth art contest for the NCFST holiday e-card. The winning artist's work was featured and led to further collaborations with Water First and Tribal Lands.











MOTHERCRAFT ECE PROGRAMS 8 PARTICIPANTS

An intensive post-secondary program in supporting community in navigating the barriers and challenges of obtaining a post-secondary education in Early Childhood Education.



Five online cohort students graduated in May 2025.

CENTENNIAL ECE PROGRAM 5 PARTICIPANTS

A program that supports Indigenous community working in the field of early childhood education to obtain their post-secondary degree in early childhood education.

Participants c
graduation Ju
education

are looking forward to une 2025, after 3 years of





CAMPS

Indigenous people living in urban spaces deserve barrier-free access to land. While folks living or staying in Toronto have access to parks and green spaces, the medicine available in wild(er) and larger natural environments is critical to wellbeing.

We are honoured to steward land located near Clarendon Station, Ontario, in the form of an all-season community camp offering on the land cultural experiences for children, youth, and families, aligned with the teachings of the territory and the seasons.

Camp programs offered throughout the past year included: day summer camp, overnight week-long summer camps, family camps, kids-in-care camp, youth berry fasting, youth harm reduction, language camp, and staff development retreats.

Summer Camp included 8 weeks of overnight camp, hosting 232 children, youth, and families.

Spring, Fall, and Winter overnight camps hosted 410 community members, over 22 camps.





"I am writing on behalf of my family to recognize Jade Medwedyk, who exemplified strong leadership and compassion during the NCFST Day Camp. Jade consistently demonstrated a children-first, strength-based approach, ensuring every camper's emotional and developmental needs were met. She went above and beyond— asking my daughter what movie she'd like to see and what color she wanted for her tie-dye shirt, even when she couldn't attend. That shirt is now one of her most treasured possessions. As a social worker with 18 years of experience in children's mental health, I can confidently say Jade is the kind of staff member I'd want on my team. She, along with Madelaine, Joey, Damian, and Austin, made my daughter's summer unforgettable. Despite our family's financial struggles, this camp brought light and joy into our lives. My daughter, who struggles with shyness and anxiety, was able to shine."



HOUSING

The Housing Program at NCFST offers community members across all ages an opportunity for stabilization and self-determined growth. Community members can access housing supports wherever they are on their housing security journey. NCFST offers housing from shelter to deeply affordable rental housing, along with a range of programs including housing advocacy support, brief housing support, and eviction prevention. Community members are supported on their individual journeys, connecting with their culture, expanding their circles, developing a housing plan, and strengthening life skills to prepare them for long-term sustainable and independent living.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WOMEN'S PHASE 1

After three years of renovation, we reopened the doors to the Women's Phase 1 Transition Home. The renewed space features enhanced amenities, including a new fire safety plan and monitoring equipment for fire alarm, upgraded air conditioning unit to heat pump, replaced covering on back stairs and replaced concrete stairs at the front entrance, additional storage cabinets in kitchen, and painting of staff office.



61% of community members accessing our housing program found permanent housing supported by Housing Case Managers.



The housing supports team served 285 individuals in accessing support for rental arrears, first and last, and navigating various subsidy programs.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING MEN'S PHASE 2

The Men's Phase 2 Transition Home community and staff collaborated on the construction of a vegetable garden, and built a sweat lodge for all of community to use.

NIIZOODENH MSHIIKENHIK (TWIN TURTLES)

Since opening its doors in April 2023, the Twin Turtles Indigenous Youth Shelter, operated by NCFST, has been providing a safe and culturally grounded refuge for Indigenous youth aged 16 to 29 who are experiencing homelessness.

Located in The Annex, this 14-bed facility offers 24/7 wraparound support, including case management, housing navigation, nutritious meals, laundry services, and access to vital cultural programming. Youth have the opportunity to participate in ceremonies, feasts, land-based activities, and other community-building experiences that foster healing, identity, and connection.

Over the past year, Twin Turtles has become more than just a shelter - it's a place of belonging, empowerment, and transformation, where Indigenous youth are supported in reclaiming their paths and building brighter futures.











COMMUNITY HUBS

SCARBOROUGH CHILD AND FAMILY LIFE CENTER

The Scarborough Child and Family Life Center thrives through a multiservice approach, deepening partnerships with the Toronto District School Board, Pan Am Center, Toronto Public Health, and the Toronto Zoo. Service integration expanded to include Indigenous mental health projects, dental programs, vaccine clinics, and enhanced services through the Ode'I Min Clinic - ensuring culturally based healthcare that reflects community needs.

30 COLLEGE STREET

Among the many services available at our downtown community hub, the communityrun Butterfly Boutique is a notable update. Five dedicated community member volunteers completed a 5 month term at the Butterly Boutique, a free and accessible gently used clothing and caregiving shop space for community members to access what they need, when they need it. We thank our five volunteers for their commitment and energy, and look forward to a new cohort of community members to enhance job readiness skills and connect at the Boutique!

ODE'L MIN CLINIC

This year also marks the 5 year anniversary the Ode'l Min Clinic, which supported 1,444 patients through 1750 appointments in 2024 – a testament to its vital role in community wellness. The clinic is a very low barrier medical space where community members can access medical care. this includes currently in their care. Caregivers are able to attend medical appointments with their children the team at Inner City Health Associates, led by Dr. Suzanne Shoush, for stewarding this important partnership.







By Charlotte S.



By Richae M.

ORIGINAL ART SUBMITTED BY CHILDREN AND YOUTH ASSOCIATED WITH NCFST
CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS CULTURE THROUGH ART AND CEREMONY AT SIR OLIVER MOWAT COLLEGIATE

C In a meaningful collaboration with the City of Toronto, the Toronto District School Board, and Native Child and Family Services, we brought Indigenous teachings and creative expression to life at Sir Oliver Mowat Collegiate.

The day began with a Smudge Ceremony, inviting students and staff to clear the space and set positive intentions. This powerful opening grounded participants in Indigenous traditions and created a respectful atmosphere for learning and reflection.



Students explored the Seven Grandfather Teachings, learning about their origins and how these guiding values - shared across Turtle Island - continue to shape Indigenous ways of being. Inspired by these teachings, students created artwork that reflected both the symbolic animals and their own identities. Each piece was a unique expression of creativity, resilience, and cultural understanding, culminating in a vibrant collective display.



Throughout the day, staff from all three partner organizations encouraged students to engage deeply, ask questions, and reflect on how these teachings could be applied in their daily lives. The event sparked rich conversations about ceremony, Spirit Names, cultural identity, and the role of art in storytelling.

This experience not only celebrated Indigenous culture but also strengthened relationships between community partners and laid the groundwork for future collaborations. It was a powerful reminder of the importance of creating safe, inclusive spaces where young people can learn, express themselves, and connect with Indigenous knowledge in meaningful ways.

SM'S STORY

SM is a resilient single mother of three young children, under the age of six. As a former foster child with NCFST, she has overcome significant personal challenges with strength and determination. Her journey is a powerful example of perseverance, and she continues to build a brighter future for herself and her family. Through her active participation in parenting programs, SM has shown a deep commitment to both her children's development and her own growth. Her positive energy and uplifting presence bring inspiration and joy to those around her.

SM's dedication extends beyond her role as a mother. She recently graduated from Centennial College and is now pursuing further education through courses at Toronto Metropolitan University. At the same time, she remains actively engaged in supporting the Indigenous community. She volunteers at The Butterfly Boutique, where she takes great pride in organizing, cleaning, and helping with daily operations. Her commitment to giving back speaks to her generous spirit and strong sense of community.

We are so proud to share that SM was recently hired as an Educational Assistant Trainee at the Native Youth Resource Centre (NYRC), a well-earned milestone that reflects her hard work and determination.

The Dream Keepers Team is honored to support SM on her journey. Despite the many obstacles she has faced, she continues to move forward with grace, courage, and resilience. We are proud to walk alongside her and her family as they continue to grow, thrive, and pursue new opportunities.

MOUNT DENNIS ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE

Throughout this past year, the Mount Dennis Aboriginal Child and Family Centre focused on raising awareness of Indigenous and community issues.

Events highlighted Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Every Child Matters, Black History Month, Orange Shirt Day, and Indigenous Veterans Day.

These events sparked meaningful conversations and strengthened community understanding and solidarity.



MALVERN ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE

The Malvern Aboriginal Child and Family Centre continued to centre programming around community needs, interests, and strengths.

Guided by Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing, the Centre supports all ages—from the youngest to the oldest. Food sovereignty remains a priority, with weekly community lunches and food components integrated into all programs.

Thanks to generous donations and partnerships, Malvern's pantry remains well-stocked to meet ongoing and increasing community needs.

EARLYON PROGRAMS: SUPPORTING FAMILIES NEW TO CANADA AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Our EarlyON programs play a vital role in supporting families and strengthening community ties, particularly within the context of our Indigenous hubs. By fostering inclusive, culturally responsive environments, we help ensure that all families - regardless of background - feel welcomed, supported, and empowered.

A recent example from our Mount Dennis location illustrates this impact. A newly immigrated family began attending the EarlyON program with their four-year-old child, and two older siblings. Despite having lived in Canada for several months, none of the children were enrolled in school. The family, unfamiliar with the education system and lacking proper documentation, had been denied admission at several schools. They were understandably anxious and unsure of how to proceed.

THE HEART OF COMMUNITY

A senior with multiple medical issues had been housebound due to dead scooter batteries. When the Malvern team checked in, they quickly ordered replacement parts.

The senior was deeply moved by the gesture, and the story was shared at a Community Council meeting. Council members were so inspired they voted to cover the cost through fundraising showing how this community truly functions as a family.



Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the EarlyON team (including their Child and Family Navigator) stepped in to advocate for the family. Drawing on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child— which affirms every child's right to education—they worked closely with the family and local school authorities. As a result of their advocacy and support, all three children were successfully enrolled in school: one in kindergarten, one in Grade 6, and the eldest in Grade 11. This not only ensured the children's access to education but also helped the family feel more connected and confident in navigating their new environment.

This story reflects the core values of our Child and Family Centre Hubs: community care, advocacy, and inclusion. By supporting families from all walks of life, we uphold the Agency's commitment to building a stronger, more equitable community where every child has the opportunity to thrive.



CHILD AND FAMILY WELLBEING

Child and Family Wellbeing Services at NCFST are grounded in our shared understanding that children are our most sacred bundles, and families deserve to be together safely, and in alignment with their distinct cultural practices and ways of being. We apply this by providing prevention, early intervention and protection services in relationship with families, their communities, and Nations.

Our approach supports families in healing and being together safely, which includes support for the entire family focused on strengthening circles and developing more tools for lifelong wellbeing.

We acknowledge the historical and ongoing harms of the child welfare system on First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples and strive to practice in ways that are accountable to these impacts through processes grounded in kinship and healing.



432 FIRST NATIONS SERVED BY NCFST ACROSS 122 FIRST NATIONS

FIRST NATIONS SERVED BY NCFST - FY2024-25

- Wikwemikong
- Taykwa Tagamou Nation
- Sagamok Anishnawbek
- Wasauksing First Nation
- Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
- Attawapiskat
- Long Plain
- Temagami First Nation
- Cote First Nation 366
- Grassy Narrows First Nation
- Long Lake No.58 First Nation
- Walpole Island
- Cat Lake
- Wabaseemoong Independent Nations
- Chippewas of Nawash First Nation
- Rainy River First Nations
- Birdtail Sioux
- Upper Mohawk
- Waywayseecappo First Nation Treaty Four 1874
- Lake Manitoba
- Mikisew Cree First Nation
- Kinistin Saulteaux Nation
- Oneida Nation of the Thames
- Munsee-Delaware Nation
- Muskowekwan
- York Factory First Nation
- Stellat'en First Nation
- N'Quatqua
- Sioux Valley Dakota Nation
- Onion Lake Cree Nation
- Abegweit
- Peepeekisis Cree Nation No.81
- Shuswap Band
- Poplar Hill
- Mishkeegogamang
- Little Black Bear
- Apitipi Anicinapek Nation
- Fishing Lake First Nation
- Muskoday First Nation
- Matachewan
- Kispiox

- Curve Lake
- Serpent River
- Garden River First Nation
- Nipissing First Nation
- Beausoleil
- Alderville First Nation
- Fort Severn
- Bay of Quinte Mohawk
- Sheshegwaning
- Mississauga
- Lac La Ronge
- Cross Lake Band of Indians
- Big River
- 📕 Gull Bay
- Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Dokis
- Aamjiwnaang
- Eagle Lake
- Batchewana First Nation
- Mohawks of Akwesasne
- Lac Seul
- Magnetawan
- Rolling River
- Membertou
- Couchiching First Nation
- Norway House Cree Nation
- Brunswick House
- Deh Gáh Got'ie Dene First Nation
- Tootinaowaziibeeng Treaty Reserve
- Annapolis Valley
- Canupawakpa Dakota First Nation
- Pictou Landing
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Lake St. Martin
- 🔲 Ts'il Kaz Koh
- Chippewas of Georgina Island
- Hiawatha First Nation
- Shawanaga First Nation
- Nibinamik First Nation
- Barren Lands



- Ojibway Nation of Saugeen
- Albany
- M'Chigeeng First Nation
- Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation
- Constance Lake
- Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek
- God's Lake First Nation
- Henvey Inlet First Nation
- Kawacatoose
- Yellow Quill
- Sheguiandah
- Moose Deer Point
- Whitefish River
- White Bear

Sandy Lake

Neskonlith

Dakota Tipi

Eskasoni

- Blood
- Shoal Lake No.40

Oromocto First Nation

Sturgeon Lake First Nation

Ts'kw'aylaxw First Nation

Opaskwayak Cree Nation

Cheslatta Carrier Nation

Saddle Lake Cree Nation

Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point

41

The Key First Nation

Lac Des Mille Lacs

Sucker Creek

Penticton

Michipicoten

Wahnapitae

Whitesand

Fort William

Chippewas of Rama First Nation

Atikameksheng Anishnawbek

Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation Government

Iskatewizaagegan #39 Independent First Nation

KIN FAMILY FINDING PROGRAM

Our focus is always on supporting families in staying together safely, and when this is absolutely not possible, our Kin Family Finding Team works diligently to find extended family or community caregivers to keep children within their existing networks and territories.

This also includes supporting caregivers with a monthly per diem, ongoing cultural and community connection through events, ceremonies, and other social engagements.

> Number of children and families served **161**

KINSHIP CULTURAL GATHERINGS

Conservation and Community: A Day at the Toronto Zoo

Our second annual Zoo event was attended by 60 individuals. The day included teachings, a feast, and time with the resident falcon and their Zookeeper.

Winter Solstice Celebration

An afternoon full of kinship and connection through culture, performances, crafts, gift giving, and much laughter, with over 100 individuals in attendance!

EK'S STORY

As a child who was brought into care and adopted, EK grew up in a loving home and reconnected with her birth mother and siblings once she was older.

She was called upon by her brother to care for her niece this year, and despite being in school and not having children of her own, EK stepped up to care for her infant niece. The Kin team wrapped around EK to support the family, including a monthly per diem.

EK is providing a Kinship out of Care placement for her niece and has truly embraced the process with love, compassion and culture.

EK maintains the hope that her brother will one day be able to parent his daughter full time, but for now, she would not have it any other way.





CAREGIVER'S STORY

6 I am sending you this message with a happy heart. Thank you so much for inviting us to such a wonderful celebration of family [Winter Solstice Celebration].

Everything was perfect. The way we were greeted at the entrance, the setup, the build a Medicine Bear with the sage and cedar and making a wish was beautiful, the ornaments so nice and easy for the children, the man at the Photo Booth was so helpful and nice, I loved the smudging, the food was amazing, and the servers were so patient, the raffle was a nice touch, and the headbands.....spectacular!

I saved the best for last, Ashton (traditional dancer) and Dave (Knowledge Carrier) were inspiring, and it was precious to receive their beautiful gifts. RJ said he would love to learn how to dance like that, and he was in awe of his regalia.

All the staff and helpers were so friendly and just so lovely. From start to finish, it was such a great time.

The children all looked so engaged and so happy. With my whole heart, we are so grateful to have been a part of such a thoughtful, fun, afternoon. Miigwetch. **99**



ALL OUR RELATIONS WORKER-BAND ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, NCFST served 432 members across 122 First Nations. This highlights the enduring importance of kinship and collaboration with the First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis we serve.

Toronto has long been a meeting place for many diverse nations. Today there are over 25,770 First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis people living or staying in Toronto region.

In 2024, NCFST served 431 members across 122 First Nations in the child and family wellbeing program. We are committed to facilitating open dialogue with nations through kinship and protocol practices, ensuring that community members receive services that are aligned and culturally specific.

This year, NCFST finalized a comprehensive service protocol with Moose Cree First Nation. We are deeply grateful to walk in relationship with Moose Cree First Nation, ensuring their members receive services in alignment with their community.

We are in process with many other nations and look forward to strengthening kinship ties through protocol and ceremony.

CONNECTIONS AND PERMANENCY REVIEW CIRCLE - RESPECTING OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND BILL C-92

In 2024, we launched a review circle to reassess the placements of children in care to ensure all family and community connections have been explored, and that the child's culture is centered, practiced, and respected in line with Bill C-92.

The circle includes recognized Knowledge Carriers with lived experiences of the system.

Objectives:

- Review the adequacies of the current placement and ensure that family and community-based care options are prioritized.
- Ensure that the child's cultural identity, family, and community ties are respected and maintained in line with Bill C-92.
- Ensure that decisions regarding the child's care are made in consultation with the family, child, and respective FNMI representatives.

Connections and Permanency Review Circle will oversee the reassessment process for all children currently in care.

LW'S STORY

I am here in Toronto because a beautiful lady opened her home for me. She believed in me when no one else did. My journey began with a job as a summer camp assistant and drove the van up to Dreamers Rock. My children grew up going to summer camp every year and volunteering their time and occasionally worked with Greg (Flynn) who helped shape their lives with his guidance.

It's then I met so many beautiful people who have worked at Native Child and Family Services for the past thirty-four years. My first exposure to the agency was in the basement at 22 College St. Over the years, I have seen the agency grow and grow with so many people coming and go but leave their footprint in this beautiful agency, like Kenn Richard. He always said give the job to the man in cowboy boots. For me, he is the man who gave me a teddy bear in his rain boots during my first Christmas in Toronto.

I want to give my gratitude to Kenn Richard, Charlene Avalos, Jamie Toguri and Shirley Kendall for this beautiful agency. Native Child and Family Services for all their work, my children and I would not be where we are, today, if not for their amazing work. I don't think I am alone but forever grateful for watching the agency grow with so many people. Miigwetch for all your work and giving my children and I the foundation and strength to change and grow, to Native Child and Family Services of Toronto.

LILLY'S STORY

The children's services team started working with Lilly in the Ready, Set, Go program when her file was transferred from another agency to access services better aligned with her identity.

When we first met her, Lilly was navigating a great deal of pain and uncertainty. Understandably guarded and hurting, she carried with her the weight of many difficult life experiences. Through it all Lilly demonstrated tremendous courage and resilience. Lilly's worker, Jordan, walked with her through many challenges—like many youth searching for stability, purpose, connection and control—Lilly sometimes made risky choices. The kinship between Lilly and Jordan created space for trust and safety in developing safer practices, connecting more deeply with cultural ways of being, and setting goals across all four directions (spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical).

Today, she is a vibrant, self-assured young woman who radiates strength and joy. She knows her worth and is actively working toward the future she envisions for herself.



With the support of the Bridging the Gap program, Lilly is now transitioning from supportive housing into her very first apartment—a remarkable milestone. She's been enthusiastically preparing for this move, and what makes it even more special is that she'll be living in the same building as her older brother. Their bond is a testament to the love and loyalty that has carried them through shared hardship, and we're thrilled to see them continuing to grow and support one another.

Lilly often jokes with Jordan now—reminiscing about the past with humor and self-awareness. "Remember when you had to come pick me up from..." or "Remember when you found out I was...". These moments of reflection show just how far she's come. She's not only surviving - she's thriving. We are so proud of Lilly. Her journey is a powerful reminder of what's possible with trust, community, and compassionate support. There is no doubt that she will continue to do amazing things in this world.



66 Aanii ! I just wanted to reach out and let you know how grateful I am for you. The fact that you reached out to us, just to see how Storm and I were doing is amazing! For you to care speaks volumes about you as a person. I needed to tell you that. In the midst of life. You thought about us and our wellbeing!! That touched my heart sooooooooooo much. When I told Storm you called, he was like, "Really? That's so kind of him. There needs to be more people like him in this world."

I am so grateful to have you in my corner. Not only are you trying to help with funding, but you're also understanding of our situation in mental health is amazing. 'Put your son first' is what you said. I thank you for that.

My kids are the most important part of my life, and I am so grateful for your caring personality. We don't celebrate thanksgiving because of its true meaning. But we do take the time to mention what we are grateful for, and you are 1 of them! Miigwetch. Your kindness means a lot. 45

CULTURAL SERVICES

Culture is woven into who we are and how we work. It is inherent to our ways of being and knowing, and we are grateful for the recognized Elders, Knowledge Carriers, and Cultural Support Workers who foster cultural learning and connection for community members and staff alike through ceremony, land-based activities, pathways to healing through traditional knowledge and language revitalization. The circle comprises Elders and Knowledge Carriers from a range of First Nations, reflective of the diverse community we serve.

The culture team comprises:

Alita Sauvé - Tahltan Nation, BC / Cree, Treaty 6 SK Vivian Roy - Wikwemikong First Nation, ON / Anishnaabe Rosary Spence - Fort Albany First Nation, ON / Mushkego Cree Dave Bolton - Walgisla, BC / Heiltsuk Aaron Sauvé - Tahltan Nation, BC / Cree, Treaty 6 SK Freida Gladue - Moberly Lake, BC / Saulteau First Nation, Treaty 8 Abigail Taylor - Moose Factory, ON / Moose Cree First Nations

Over this past year, Cultural Services has focused on ensuring cultural practices and ways of being are, respected and practiced in right relationship. This year has been one of growth, reconnection, and our unwavering commitment to cultural resurgence. Each teaching shared, fire lit, and drum raised has been a step toward the restoration of Indigenous ways of being for children, families, and staff.



COMMUNITY AND LAND-BASED HEALING

- 19 Community Sweat Lodge ceremonies were held throughout the Spring, Summer, and Fall at Rouge National Urban Park. These included community and staff-requested sweats. Over 157 attendees participated before closing the lodge in November for the Winter season.
- 8 Full Moon Ceremonies were held regularly, bringing together 65 community members to honour lunar teachings and cycles.
- 4 Seasonal Agency Ceremonies were held in April, July, October, and January to honour and feast our agency's sacred items, our ancestors, and acknowledge the changing of seasons. These sacred spaces helped to anchor our collective healing, reflection, and cultural direction.





- Traditional Healing Sessions, with Knowledge Carrier Colin Mousseau, provided individual healing sessions from December 2024 to March 2025 to more than 61 community members and staff across four multi-day visits.
- A Cedar Bath Ceremony was held at Mdewgaan Lodge, led by Knowledge Carrier Rosary Spence, in response to a request from the cohort of women at the lodge engaged in deep healing work.
- A Naming Ceremony was held in February, reinforcing the reclamation of identity and cultural belonging for 23 community members.
- End-of-Life Care and Grief Support was offered for two families with Indigenous Funeral Services and a Traditional Death Ceremony. Ongoing grief support continues for families coping with loss.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY PROGRAMMING



- We continue to offer weekly Cree language classes for four children in care, nurturing their connection to identity, culture, and ancestral knowledge through language.
- Five families and two youth received support through Original Talking Circles, guided by Knowledge Carriers and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and healing.



- Hosted Children in Care Cultural Camps in both June and December, including land-based learning and Elder support.
- Hosted an Anishinaabemowin language Immersion Camp during March break at NCFST's overnight camp with 22 participants. The 5-day event included language immersion learning, storytelling, and intergenerational connection.
- Provided weekly cultural guidance during Child and Family Wellbeing (CFWB) case management meetings, helping to ensure that all decisions are grounded in cultural knowledge, values, and the best interests of Indigenous children and families.
- Delivered Virtual Cultural Teachings for Foster Parents throughout the season to learn Indigenous ways of being and enhance caregivers' ability to support Indigenous children with cultural humility and awareness.





COMMUNITY EVENTS AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES

- 27th Annual Pow Wow (Sept 28): Attracted over 1,000 participants, including dancers, drummers, singers, families, volunteers, partners, vendors, and staff. The event reflected the community's vibrancy, resilience, cultural pride, and we held space to honour our MMIWG2S+ relatives.
- Round Dance (Feb 15): Despite a major snowstorm, 89 community members gathered to reaffirm their kinship and spiritual renewal through ceremony and song.
- Pride on the Land (June 19): Created space for Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ community members to host a sweat ceremony with an emphasis on cultural safety.
- Luminato Festival and FabCollab's Indigenous Grooves (June): Knowledge Carrier Rosary Spence shared and honoured the Red Dress Commemorative Art Project at last year's event. These partnerships offered meaningful opportunities to uplift Indigenous culture and support collective remembrance and healing.
- Grief and Loss Training (Mar 18): Knowledge Carrier Vivian Roy led the first of many meaningful sessions for staff, emphasizing emotional wellness through Indigenous frameworks and ways of being.













BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN NCFST

This year, the Cultural Services team continued to deepen our collaboration across departments and programs:

- Integrated cultural supports into case conferences, healing plans, and team training with Child and Family Wellbeing, Early Years, and Holistic Services.
- Co-hosted a land-based immersion training for EarlyON staff in October, providing hands-on learning in Indigenous pedagogies.
- Created space in our seasonal ceremonies to recognize and honour staff and community members, including feasting of our agency's eagle staff, drum and Red Dress.
- Collaborated with HR to enhance Indigenous recruitment strategies, promote cultural safety, and ensure culturally grounded outreach and onboarding.

As we look ahead, we are committed to continuing to listen, to learn, and to lead with our Ode'min (heart).

We are honoured to walk this path in service to the community, and we hold strong to our responsibility to hold space for healing, growth, and cultural resurgence.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The success of our work is deeply connected to the strength of our relationships in the community:

- We hosted two week-long Elders and Knowledge Carrier Retreats at NCFST's overnight camp in the Spring and Fall, offering space for connection, renewal, and cultural exchange. Twelve respected Elders and Knowledge Carriers shared guidance that deepened our commitment to cultural integrity, community wellbeing, and responsible leadership.
- We welcomed volunteer groups from BMO, Scotiabank, and Canderel for culturally grounded relationship-building days that fostered mutual learning and meaningful engagement.
- Worked alongside Parks Canada, and with the support of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, to formalize harvesting protocols at Rouge National Urban Park, strengthening shared responsibilities to land stewardship and cultural practice.
- Delivered Virtual Cultural Teachings for Foster Parents throughout the year to enhance caregivers' ability to support Indigenous children with cultural humility and awareness.

ENHANCING CULTURAL INTEGRITY

The success of our work is deeply connected to the strength of our relationships in the community:

- Our Knowledge Carriers and Cultural Resource Worker responded to daily requests for medicines, ceremony, and cultural guidance, ensuring that every interaction honours our traditions.
- We ensured all programming was led by Elders and Knowledge Carriers wherever possible, to protect the authenticity and lineage of Indigenous knowledge.
- Invested in infrastructure improvements at Rouge National Urban Park to enable consistent access for community members to sweat ceremonies and on-the-land activities.
- Relocated the Cultural Services team to a more suitable space at 30 College, creating a welcoming environment for counselling, teaching, and community connection.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DECOLONIZATION

Quality Assurance and Decolonization (QAD) is a strong and active department focused on community driven service improvements, legislative compliance, data reporting, strategic planning, research and analytics.

2024 was an active year for us as we supported the agency governance transition process, implemented a fuller privacy breach reporting system, completed our first full year in operations of our new complaints process, expanded our areas of responsibility in reporting and data integrity - all of which has necessitated the expansion of our team from 2 staff in 2019, to 4 full-time staff in 2024-2025.

One of the most critical areas of work for our analysts is pathwaybuilding between service users and agency decision makers. We do this through: 1) the development of a publicly accessible complaints tab on our website, allowing service users to submit complaints directly to leadership; 2) the implementation of a service user feedback survey called Share Your Truth, which collects service user experiences annually; and 3) service user consultations and program evaluations. In 2024, QAD managed 28 service complaints dealing with issues related to service quality and completed a large-scale service evaluation for the Bekaadendang Team (providing services to victims of human trafficking) which highlighted all the ways in which NCFST infuses culture and care into its programs and services for vulnerable community.

Since 2019, QAD has developed and implemented a culturally informed research vetting process which elevates only Indigenous led research projects for partnership. Our process highlights proposals that deliver results directly improving the lives of the community served by NCFST. In 2024, QAD vetted 6 proposals, with 4 being green lit through a process which includes community consultation. These current research projects are all ongoing at NCFST and serve to improve our service delivery or fill gaps in existing programming.



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HUMAN RESOURCES, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, FINANCE, AND ADMINISTRATION

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources files of all current employees have been prepared for the digitalization project and expected to conclude by the end of May 2025.

The cleanup of employee data on the HRIS system is ongoing. The development of the police record checks policy and procedure, which began in January, is completed. The revision of NCFST HR policies is in progress.

We continue to focus on recruitment and retention of First Nations, Inuit and recognized Métis folks, while working closely with allied staff to strengthen allyship practices This annual report reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and alignment with the Seven Grandfather Teachings, showcasing our achievements and dedication to community, culture, and technological advancements.

EMPLOYEE STATISTICS

ACTIVE EMPLOYEES:

347

EMPLOYEES WHO SELF-IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS:

172 (44% OF CURRENT STAFF)

While we do not currently count affiliated staff members, we would like to acknowledge with gratitude the service of those who are partnered with or have Indigenous children.

IN-HOUSE TRAINING SESSIONS DELIVERED

- ADP Police Record Check process
- ADP new LMS and assigned legislative training to all agency staff on the following topics:
 - AODA: How to lend a helping hand
 - OHSA Health and Safety Awareness Training for Employees
 - OHSA Violence and Harassment Training in the Workplace for Employees Parts 1 and 2 Combined
 - Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Part 1: What Is WHMIS?
 - Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Part 2: How WHMIS Works
- Manulife Benefit facilitated by Life Benefits Solutions

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

The IT team has effectively resolved persistent challenges through automation, new technologies, and proactive measures, leading to increased complexity in our cloud-based hybrid systems.

Our technical leadership, recognized by the Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario's IT Working Group and Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' IT Leadership Group, has been pivotal in establishing network automation, telephony, cybersecurity, data quality practices, and AI readiness in response to Bill 194.

NCFST actively leads and collaborates in multi-agency forums, driving continuous improvements in technology investments as an active co-chair.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- The cloud intranet site, Maamiginan, is now live and shared with guests who visit our office, celebrating the heritage and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis across Canada. The intranet enhances event advertising, content presentation, and workflow efficiency by connecting forms, policies, and scheduling to file management.
- Significant advancements in data analysis, quality improvement, and case management systems. Upgraded case management applications migrated to the cloud improve scalability, performance, and security while reducing costs.
- Collaborative efforts with partner agencies led to the development of a Child and Family Wellbeing Case management application aligned with regulatory requirements. The Jordan's Principle Case Management solution addresses specific compliance needs, and preparations for the Indigenous Information System (IIS) are underway to deliver an integrated, modern platform.
- Enhancements were made to Salesforce and a pilot data management platform support analytics and reporting.

ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES

The Administration and Facilities teams continued to support our frontline workers and service delivery.

Specific projects completed during the year include: replacing the cooling tower at 30 College, replacing the windows at two of our housing facilities, and purchasing two new hybrid vans, to support community transportation at our Transitional houses.

FINANCIALS

Funding for fiscal 2024-2025 decreased by 1% compared to the prior year, mainly due to a decrease in the level of funding received from the federal government.

Total funding for fiscal 2024–2025 was \$60,011,586, which includes Child and Family Wellbeing funding of \$25,056,659 and Holistic Services funding of \$34,954,927. The comparative total in fiscal 2023–2024 was \$60,801,959, which included Child Welfare funding of \$26,811,206 and Holistic funding of \$33,990,753.



FUNDING 2024-2025

	Total Funding
Total Child and Family Wellbeing	\$25,056,659
Holistic Services	
Children's Mental Health and Family Wellbeing	5,440,442
Organizational Enhancement	4,945,300
Transitional Housing	5,885,583
Scarborough Enhancement JT, Mt. Dennis & Malvern Hubs	2,997,677
Youth	1,656,974
Head Start	1,835,981
Tikinagan	645,905
Day Care	2,021,958
Volunteer Drive	998,846
Kin Finding	1,357,889
Scarborough Programs	1,284,795
Family Supports	1,900,452
Indigenous Culture	869,639
Social Recreation	528,834
Jordan's Principle	226,091
Administration	2,358,561
Total Holistic Services	\$34,954,927

Total Child and Family Wellbeing and Holistic Services

\$60,011,586

FUND DEVELOPMENT

2024-2025 saw the Fund Development team continue our work helping NCFST staff develop and deliver the programs and services that our community members need.

Working in close collaboration with the Leadership Council and staff, the Fund Development team supported NCFST with effective fund development, stewardship, reporting, and government and stakeholder relations. The result was close to 16 million dollars in new or renewed funding, and the effective stewardship of 52 funding relationships whose financial contributions ensured that NCFST staff could deliver 139 culture-based programs and services critical to the health and wellbeing of the children, youth and families we serve.

This year, Fund and Community Relationship Specialist, Priya Acharya, helped the Housing team renew close to 5 million dollars in funding for the Transitional Housing program – ensuring the continuity of this critical program for the next three years. She also secured new funding from Indigenous Services Canada for our Family Violence Prevention Program worth \$246,355.

We worked more diligently than ever to effectively steward community-based donors to contribute to our work through financial support and in-kind giving. Thanks to these efforts, led by Fund and Community Relationship Specialist, Anjli Saddi, we fundraised \$330,849 for our programs including our On The Land Camps, our annual Community Pow Wow, and Food Security programs.

~\$16M DOLLARS

IN NEW OR RENEWED FUNDING

STEWARDSHIP OF **52** FUNDING RELATIONSHIPS SECURED FUNDING FOR **139** CULTURE-BASED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND EVENTS

This past year, the Communications/Public Relations, and Events team continued to uplift community voices, strengthen cultural connections, and support staff through meaningful initiatives and communications. Our team was honoured to host culturally significant gatherings including our 27th Annual Community Pow Wow, Round Dance, Annual General Meeting, and the National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration.

We strengthened local partnerships through events such as the 1000 Lanterns Festival with the Chinese Cultural Centre, and the inaugural First Pitch at a Toronto Blue Jays game, in collaboration with TD Bank Group and Blue Jays Care. We also teamed up with Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment to distribute over 400 tickets for Indigenous Celebration Game Night with the Raptors and Marlies, and co-hosted the launch of World Kindness Day at the Malvern hub with Humaniti International.

Our team continues to focus on building strong communication foundations internally. We optimized our agency Intranet for better performance and usability and began streamlining agency communications through the development of branding kits, templates, and one-pagers for programs and social media use. We continue to work closely with departments to streamline communications-related processes and amplify initiatives. A new Communications Plan for 2024–2025 was created along with supporting policies. Video storytelling remains a vital tool - highlighted by our Truth and Reconciliation Day "Report to Community" and Governance model videos, featuring voices from NCFST leadership, Elders, and community members. The agency's official website is undergoing a thoughtful redesign to improve accessibility and support a more user-friendly experience.

Chi-miigwech to all community members, partners, and staff who walk with us on this path of connection, healing, and truth.



TO OUR FUNDERS

MIIGWETCH - NIA:WEN - MARSEE - KINANA'SKOMITIN - NAKURMIIK - THANK YOU!

- ABORIGINAL LABOUR FORCE DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE (ALFDC)
- AUBREY & MARLA DAN FOUNDATION
- CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF TORONTO
- CENTENNIAL COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS &
 TECHNOLOGY
- CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION OF CANADA
- THE CITY OF TORONTO
- COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS OF CANADA
- DAILY BREAD FOOD BANK
- EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
 CANADA
- FAMILY SERVICES OF PEEL
- GRANT THORNTON
- INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA
- KINARK CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
- MINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY AND
 SOCIAL SERVICES
- MINISTRY OF HEALTH
- MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
- MIZIWE BIIK ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND
 TRAINING
- MIZIWE BIIK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
- MLSE FOUNDATION
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 CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- NIKE FOUNDATION
 - ONTARIO ABORIGINAL HEAD START
 ASSOCIATION
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 - ONTARIO FEDERATION OF INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES
 - ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
 - PETER GILGAN FOUNDATION
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 - RIGHT TO PLAY
 - SCOTIABANK
 - SECOND HARVEST
 - STRIDES TORONTO
 - TIPPET FOUNDATION
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 - UNITED WAY GREATER TORONTO ANCHOR
 AGENCY FUNDING



30 College Street, Toronto, ON M5G 1K2 416.969.8510 info@nativechild.org

www.nativechild.org



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