



ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017

Reconciliation with Indigenous Women;
An Indigenous Women's Journey


*ONWA is a unified voice for equity, equality and justice for Aboriginal women
through cultural restoration within and across Nations.*

*A Voice for Indigenous Women
and their Families*




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Mandate

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is a not for profit organization that empowers and supports Aboriginal women and their families in the province of Ontario.

Affiliated with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), ONWA encourages the participation of Indigenous women in the development of Federal, Provincial, Municipal/Local government policies that impact their lives and ensure issues affecting Indigenous women and their families are heard at key government tables.

ONWA is committed to providing services that strengthen communities and guarantees the preservation of Indigenous culture, identity, art, language and heritage. Ending violence against Indigenous women and their families and ensuring equal access to justice, education, health, environmental stewardship and economic development, sits at the cornerstone of the organization. ONWA insists on social and cultural well – being for all Indigenous women and their families, so that all women, regardless of tribal heritage may live their best lives.

Guiding Principles

ONWA's guiding principle is that all Indigenous ancestry will be treated with dignity, respect and equality; benefits and services will be extended to all, no matter where one lives and regardless of Tribal heritage.

Vision

ONWA's VISION is to be a unified voice for equity, equality and justice for Indigenous women through cultural restoration within and across Nations.

Aims and Objectives

- To build relationships with all levels of government and other organizations to collaborate on all socio-economic issues affecting the well-being of all Aboriginal women and their families. (physical)
- To increase Aboriginal women's skills and capacity in planning, developing and managing an array of programs and services that directly impacts their lives and those of their families. (mental)
- To continue to work towards unity amongst Aboriginal women and their families to affect positive change in society in recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion for all people.
 - Through a communication strategy with our membership we will encourage a unified voice to fully participate politically to ensure Aboriginal women and their families are appropriately represented
- To promote and advance equality and social justice issues as they affect the realities of Aboriginal women's lives. (emotional)
 - Designing of resource materials and capacity development opportunities

- To preserve and promote the sacred roles of Aboriginal women and their families as valued and respected members in the community. (spiritual)
- Services are provided in a culturally respectful manner
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal women to learn and teach traditional ways to future generations that are unique to Aboriginal culture.



Leadership

The leadership of the Ontario Native Women's Association is comprised of a Grandmother's Council, Board of Directors, and Honorary Members (non-voting). The Board of Directors is comprised of sixteen Aboriginal women; four representatives from each region which must include a youth.

2015 Board of Directors			
Eastern Region	Southern Region	Western Region	Northern Region
Jo Anne Thibodeau-Audette Vice President	Dawn Harvard President	Roberta Wesley Secretary	Kelly Anderson Treasurer
Melinda Commanda Director	Wendy Sturgeon Director	Georgette Murray Director	Sharon Sapay Director
Betsy Connor Director	Gloria Alvernaz-Mulcahy Director	Cecilia Airns Director	Agnes Bachmann Director
Suzanne Knapp Grandmother	Elize Hartley Grandmother	Catherine Everson Grandmother	Corrine Nabigon Int/Grandmother
Mariah Abotossaway Youth	Jessica Winger Youth	Kayla Meekis Youth	Mary Anderson Youth

Honourary Members

Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell
Dorothy Wynne

Executive Committee

President – Dawn Harvard (Baltimore)
Vice President – Jo Anne Thibodeau-Audette (Little Current)
Treasurer – Kelly Anderson (Sioux Lookout)
Secretary – Roberta Wesley (Constance Lake)

President's Annual Report




On behalf of our Board of Directors, I am pleased to welcome our honoured Elders, Grandmothers, Delegates and Guests to this year's 44th Annual General Assembly. It is with great pleasure that I am reporting another successful year of operations for the Ontario Native Women's Association

Indigenous Women are central to the renewal of healthy and culturally rich pathways for families, communities and nations. In order to heal our families, we must reclaim our responsibilities as knowledge holders, and as protectors of culture, land and water, toward ensuring a good life for our children and youth and for the generations yet to come. Renewing our ties to identity will ensure family and community unity; renewing our responsibilities means taking up our rightful place as leaders.

The Province of Ontario announced its own commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls. In order to achieve these aims, we have impressed upon the provincial government the importance of Indigenous Women's Leadership. We are in a time of new beginnings as provincial and federal governments pledge to support the goals and aspirations of Indigenous communities through full adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as through the implementation of the national Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and official apology for the Residential School era in a context of Truth and Reconciliation. It is vital at this time, to ensure that the leadership of Indigenous women and women's organizations is recognized as central to the work ahead.

In addition, the Ontario government has committed to new moneys to end violence against Indigenous women and girls. ONWA is once again leading on initiatives that would broadly address the intersections of concerns that Indigenous women and girls have as they embark on healing and wellbeing. Our application to the Family Well-Being program will ensure that Indigenous women are supported where they come into contact with child welfare entities as a result of family violence. In addition, ONWA's work on Trafficking will create housing for survivors and women of experience. ONWA has articulated the importance of Safe Spaces for Indigenous women, which the province has taken up as a way of framing the work that is done to end violence and enhance wellbeing for our communities. It is important moving forward to recognize the leadership that ONWA's membership, staff, leadership and elders have all displayed in ensuring that these conversations continue.

We continue to advocate for Indigenous women's leadership at the international level as well. In May, I was able to speak at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in support of Canada's decision to fully and unconditionally adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), while reminding the audience of the fundamental importance of Indigenous women's



rights and voices in the unfolding conversation about Indigenous lands, cultures, political and economic independence.

Over the past year, our meetings with provincial leadership were constructive and engaging. I met with Premiere Kathleen Wynne, along with other representatives from ONWA, to reiterate that Indigenous women's leadership—in our own organizations—needs to be supported. We also met with Minister Tracey MacCharles to discuss the centrality of Indigenous mothers in all child and youth strategic work. In order to address violence in our communities, to create a context of renewed health and wellness, to address employment, housing and other issues that disproportionately affect Indigenous women who are at the center of our families, we need to honor Indigenous mothering as cultural, political and economic leadership. In addition, I met with the Leadership Round Table on Children and Youth, to continue to advise on the expansion of ONWA's Circles of Care proposal which would look to provide systems navigators for Indigenous women who experience violence and as a result, are unjustly put into contact with child welfare systems.

As we move into another year, I am optimistic about the opportunities ONWA has to continue to improve the lives of Indigenous women and their families throughout the province. Our focus remains on providing culture and gender-based services and supports throughout Ontario, while advancing our strategic priorities through advocacy and leadership. I am appreciative of all the work of the ONWA staff and Board of Directors and am confident that we will have another great year ahead.

In Unity,



Dawn Harvard, President

Executive Director's Report



On behalf of the Ontario Native Women's Association I am pleased to present to you our Annual Report. As always, it is with great pride that we review where we have been in order to move forward. Our organization has worked hard to represent, advocate and deliver services to Indigenous women and our families in the province of Ontario and we look forward to continuing to do so with honor and respect.

This year marks our 45th Anniversary of successfully advancing Indigenous women's issues across the province. Our accomplishments have not come easily, we have been dealt a colonialist card that was not stacked in our favor, as an Indigenous women's agency we have been up against great challenges in our movement towards equality; and yet we united for empowerment.

We have had to deal with the interconnections of racism, sexism and discrimination that has marginalized our women as not only do we experience high rates of racism as Indigenous people we as Indigenous women experience the highest rates of all forms of violence; and yet our resiliency has persevered.

We have been up against discriminatory policies like the Indian Act that was designed to systemically remove Indigenous women as leaders; and yet we found our voices.

Dealing with funding inequities that undermine Indigenous women's agencies and our right to design and deliver services with our women and children; and yet we continue expand our services in multiple communities. Reconciliation and the renewal of relationships can only occur when entrenched power-imbalances are redressed, achieving gender-equity is prioritized, and Indigenous women are fully restored to their original roles as visionaries and leaders.

Our leadership over this past 45 years has been fundamental in directly influencing key legislation and government policies and practices in addressing our inequality, a brief synopsis of our successes include;

- Advocacy in the Equality Clause of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom;
- Influenced the development of Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy; through our Breaking Free Report, A Proposal for Change; that documented the high rates of violence against Indigenous women in Ontario;
- The Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell case; that was a basis for ending gender discrimination in section 12.1.b of the Indian Act;
- The development of the Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women; that was the foundation of the Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women (2016) outlines the Ontario government's commitment of \$100

million over 3 years to supporting children/youth/families, community safety, policing/justice, prevention/awareness, leadership and improved data/research;

- ONWA has supported NWAC's call for a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/Girls through the Sisters In Spirit Campaign;

We must acknowledge the strength in our culture and traditions that have persevered through our challenges and continue to build our work with this foundation. When our women have unity through their cultural identity and traditional roles we will have healthy strong and vibrant communities. This is our vision for reconciliation. Reconciliation with Indigenous women must begin by re-centering women in the heart of the community and acknowledging our traditional roles, community values and the foundation that culture and traditions have played in our identity. Our women have been systemically attacked as a result of their historical leadership positions within our communities; we successfully controlled the economy, society, agreements, mining enterprises and the signing of the treaties for the benefits of the entire community. The path of reconciliation must start with ourselves and continue to unify our voices towards empowerment of our women for us to move forward in reclaiming our leadership. This means that we must walk a different path, we must find the courage to accept the province's apology towards reconciliation. We must take responsibility of ourselves, our families and community, and honor our cultures and traditions.

There is no community that has not been untouched by the violence we see in our families which is a direct result of colonialist policies like the Indian Act and residential schools. All peoples within Indigenous Canada are impacted by Indigenous women's lack of equality. Indigenous women are central to the future of our communities and are the foundation of our families. We must work together to make change across all boundaries and races to honor ourselves as women and our fellow sisters, daughters, aunts and grandmothers. As leaders, when we seek to address this issue the supports needed are not always there. In fact, for many of us in leadership positions, we are faced with working with social services, child welfare and education systems that continue to replicate colonialist practices. Systemic racism within these systems becomes a barrier for Indigenous women as individuals, communities and agencies.

In our most recent strategic plan, ONWA has renewed our commitment to work towards equality and our mandate to end violence against Indigenous women. For us, that means addressing the violence we see in our families and within ourselves. We need to heal our families so both women and men can assume our community, parenting and leadership roles. This is where the reconciliation begins. But it is just that, a beginning of our journey together.

Respectfully,



Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette, Executive Director

Client Services Department

The Ontario Native Women's Association Client Services department delivers the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program (AHBHC), Community Wellness Program (CWW) Health Outreach Program (HOW) Youth in Transition program (YITW) Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women program (MMIW), Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women EVAAW), and Nihdawin.

Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children



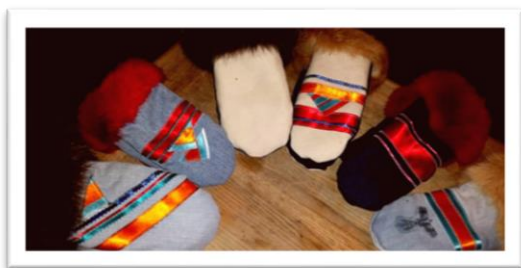
Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children (AHBHC) program provides healthy development services to children and families ages 0-6 years through family home visiting, service coordination, educational workshops, and referrals. The Family Home Visitor works one on one with the family. Home visits are developed through a plan of care and are offered weekly, biweekly and monthly.

The AHBHC program consists of 8 sites, located in Dryden, Hamilton, Ottawa, Geraldton, Kenora, Nappanee, Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay ON with 13 full-time staff. Throughout the year the AHBHC Family Home visitors delivered services to indigenous women, their children 0-6yrs

old, and their families. The Family Home visitors have conducted 4570 home visits to 1312 families. In addition to conducting home visits they are delivering traditional based activities which are culturally sensitive workshops: such as Baby Day, Rattle making, Seven Grandfathers Teaching, Infant Massage, Traditional Language, Drumming, Traditional skirt/shirt making, Tiny Tots Pow-wow, Mother's Day Pampering, and Mitt and Moccasin making etc. The Family Home Visitors provide families support and advocacy with CAS agencies across the province with assistance navigating the child welfare system and providing support in court cases.

Our staff continue to make drums with the families and have formed the ONWA Drum Group Passwewe Ikewug" – meaning Echo Women. All programs at the ONWA have clients and programs that participate

and contribute to making the drum group a success and is really enjoyed by all clients and families. AHBHC has completed 719 workshops and reached 22337 Indigenous participants through teachings and educational workshops. The baby picture is one of the ONWA babies born wearing ONWA's promotional shirt, "Mama's Milk does a Baby Good" The picture of the mittens were made by clients in the Greenstone area.



Community Wellness (CWW) Program

The Community Wellness (CWW) Program is designed to assist Aboriginal women and their families in the community who may be experiencing family violence or who may be struggling with maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

ONWA's CWW Program is available in three communities: Kenora, Dryden and Thunder-Bay, ON with a total of 4 full-time Community Wellness Workers. Our Community Wellness Workers have

conducted a total of 1673 home visits with their clients. The CWW program is design to assist indigenous women and their families in the community who may be experiencing family violence or who maybe struggling with maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Our CWW work one on one with families, host workshops, health fairs and other events in order promote health. Community Wellness Workers offered their clients Good Food Box which provided families each month with fresh fruit and vegetables,



with these food boxes they would educate families how to prepare healthy meals at home. Scared Tree which is held at Thunder Bay site provides meals and educational workshops to participants which served 365 participants , 9 Community Kitchens with 84 participants, for National Aboriginal Day, CWW held an education day which had 350 participants and NAD had 500 participants. There were various events through the year acknowledging Missing and Murdered Indigenous women such as the Full Moon memory walk with 150 participants, Valentines' day memorial walk and ceremony which had 108 participants, Sister in Spirit 70 participants; MMIW Pre inquiry with follow-up support circle had 365 participants. Lastly, our CWW program continues with our community garden which taught participants how to plant their own vegetables and how to maintain the garden during the summer months and prepare healthy meals from the garden, prepare herbs and preserves from what they

grew. CWW workers will incorporate our indigenous culture in all aspects of our programming for example participants have made regalia, shirt making, drum bag making and traditional beading. One participant stated she "enjoys the home atmosphere" while participating in programming or workshops.

Youth in Transition Worker (YITW) Program

The Youth in Transition Worker (YITW) program's goal is to support Indigenous youth in their successful transition out of the child welfare system into adulthood. YITWs will help youth to develop and pursue their goals, and will support them to identify, access, and navigate adult service systems relevant to their specific needs. The YITWs will also support youth to connect to existing supports and resources within their communities including, housing, education resources, employment services and training, life



skills training (e.g. financial management, household management), health and mental health services, and legal services. ONWA's YITW program is available in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay. The YITW provides many cultural activities which will build on their self-esteem and identity. Traditional foods and medicines were focused during this year with the clients and they have enjoyed learning about them. The YITW participated in 56 Workshops with 2806 participants. Both sites have a total of 25 clients.

Maamawi Parenting Program

Grounded in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the Maamawi Parenting Program focuses on teaching traditional parenting practices and has fostered knowledge exchange among the 241 program participants. Knowledge exchange includes traditional parenting, dental care, stress management, breast and bottle feeding, baby massage, baby proofing, injury prevention and positive discipline. This program has been successful with the clients due to the strong cultural component and is now being recognized as a valued program with clients that have a plan of care with CAS and those that are involved with the courts.



Single Parent Initiative (SPI) Program

This program assists single parents in graduating with their Grade 12 diploma from the Lakehead Public School (LPS). This is a partnership between ONWA and the LPS to deliver cultural enhanced programming which is incorporated into their studies. The classes are held at the ONWA satellite office in Thunder Bay, the students have access to the various programs in ONWA and the workshops available. There is also the benefit of having a childminder on site to assist the parents with their children while they are doing their studies. This has been a very successful program for the students who say they wouldn't have graduated without the supports and the unique setup that is available at ONWA. This fiscal year we had 5 graduates with one who was chosen to be the Valedictorian for the Graduating class of 2015-2016.

Delaney Kakekayskung has been a part of ONWA since September 2014 in the Single Parent Initiative Program. Delaney completed 5 credits while attending the SPI program and graduated in June 2016 as the Valedictorian of her graduating class. Delaney is a single mother of her 2 year old daughter and was able to bring her to school with her everyday thanks to the SPI program. Delaney is also a part of the Aboriginal Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program at ONWA, she has completed the Maamawi Parenting Program and always wanting to learn more about her culture. We are very proud of Delaney here at ONWA and wish her the best as she continues her Education in the Business and Accounting Program at Confederation College starting this fall.



These are the 5 graduates with some of their little ones for 2015-2016 with their very dedicated teacher in the middle.

The Justice programs at ONWA offer the following services to Indigenous people within the province of Ontario.

Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women (EVAAW)

Ending Violence Against Aboriginal Women (EVAAW) provides services to Indigenous women who have experienced sexual assault and various forms of abuse and violence throughout the province of Ontario. Service delivery host sites are located in Timmins and Sioux Lookout, as well as expansion services to Dryden with referrals and services provided to the surrounding areas of these communities. The Aboriginal Sexual Assault Workers



support, advocate for and assist clients who have experienced violence. Services provided are confidential and based on the client's plan of care to assist them on their healing journey. This year, a total of 115 clients were supported and 667 participants attended workshops and presentations.

The EVAW program hosted a variety of events throughout the year. One of them being participation in the Faceless Dolls project, which is a travelling exhibit to visually raise awareness and honour the lives of



the over 1000 missing or murdered Indigenous women in Canada. These sessions enabled participants the opportunity to create a living memory of their lost loved ones that will travel coast to coast and be seen by all. Participants indicated that having their loved one honoured and remembered in such a way assisted them with closure on their healing journey.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) program provides services throughout Northwestern Ontario to the families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and to those who have experienced various forms of violence, including domestic, systemic, racism, and assaults. The program is holistic, culturally relevant and individually suited to meet the unique needs of our clients in Thunder Bay, Kenora, and surrounding area.



The MMIW program plans the Sisters in Spirit Vigils that take place on October 4th provincially. These vigils honour the lives of over 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, as well as acknowledging the violence they experience as a national tragedy.

Our vigils give families and community members an opportunity to have a voice and share memories of their lost loved ones. We honour the strength of

these individuals who are left to speak for their loved ones. The ONWA hosts the SIS Vigils throughout the province of Ontario at various sites (Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Kenora, Napanee, Geraldton, Dryden, Ottawa and Hamilton) Over 600 people participated in SIS Vigils across the province.

ONWA hosts Traditional Healing sessions to provide clients with teachings on traditional protocols. Participants have the opportunity of meeting with him for one-on-one sessions to receive their traditional names, colour's, clans, doctoring, or whatever he is able to assist them with to heal. Al also facilitates medicine picking, where clients receive teachings on traditional medicines found within our community, the purpose of them and how to use them.

The MMIW also hosted "Taking Care of You" healing sessions throughout the province of Ontario in conjunction with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Pre-Inquiry. This was a vital component for the families who attended the sessions as they provided the supports they needed from reliving their experiences of loss and grief. Sessions were held in Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, Sioux Lookout, Kenora, Dryden, and Timmins. These sessions offered one on one with Traditional Healers and Elders; Rebecca Martell, Al Hunter and Catherine Everson. Over 220 individuals participated in the Healing Circle Sessions throughout the province. Each Healing Circle session was attended by direct family members, extended family members, friends, survivors and community members affected by Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. In the Southern Region the Healing Circle sessions provided a sense of relief and an opportunity for other Indigenous support staff, brought in for the Pre-Inquiry, to utilize care with the traditional support of Traditional Healers, Elders and community through the Healing Circle.

This year, the MMIW program supported 155 clients and 362 participants attended workshops and presentations.



(Traditional Healing)



Nihdawin “My House – A Place Where I Live” Program

Nihdawin “My House – A Place Where I Live” Program assists Indigenous people that are experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of experiencing homelessness within the city of Thunder Bay.

Nihdawin’s first and foremost mandate is the Housing First Approach which looks at assisting homeless clients with the tools and financial means they require to create, sustain, and maintain a self-sufficient life. Nihdawin clients receive a multitude of culturally grounded and relevant services that will assist them in achieving their personal goals.

The Nihdawin program participated in the Point in Time Count (PIT) in January where 289 homeless people were interviewed which revealed that of those, 213 were Indigenous people.

Nihdawin has successfully delivered presentations/information sessions to partnerships with various organizations that enhance service delivery and provide wrap-around services in preparation of the new Housing First Approach. Some of these partnerships are Youth Employment Services (YES), Thunder Bay Shelter House, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Kinnaweya Legal Clinic, Ontario Works/Ontario Disability, Thunder Bay Housing/Native Housing Corporation, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Thunder Bay Multi Cultural Centre, Faye Peterson, Beendigen, the Salvation Army for men, John Howard, PACE Community Centre, Alpha Court, Canadian Mental Health Association, First Nations Band Councils, Westfort Foods, Shoppers Drug Mart, Dilico Child and Family Services, Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, along with local motels food banks, landlords, treatment facilities, and potential employers.

All of our programming from sharing circles to ceremony offers culturally relevant supports in a safe way for participants. This fiscal year Nihdawin assisted 482 Clients, provided 2987 with healthy hot meals from the Wiisingyog Food Van along with seasonal clothing and items to protect them from the elements.

Community Development Department

The Community Development Department delivers education and awareness workshops and presentations to Indigenous women and their families. These programs are delivered provincially using a participant based approach.

Aboriginal Diabetes Education Program

The Aboriginal Diabetes Education Project, (ADEP), funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, began in 2002. The ADEP objectives are to support and increase physical activity in Indigenous Women and their families; to create diabetes awareness and prevention presentations and/or workshops to Indigenous Women and their families; to ensure information given out is age and culturally sensitive; and to develop presentations about proper foot care management for Indigenous Women and their families.

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

During the year, April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016, the Aboriginal Diabetes Education Project (ADEP) served 2,425 clients. The ADEP monthly elder's diabetes education sessions at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre continues to be a success with approximately 25 elders present at each session. Each year, the ADEP is invited to participate in the Canadian Diabetes Association's Diabetes Expo. Twice yearly, the ADEP partners with ONWA's Geraldton site and hosts two diabetes education workshops. The ADEP also partners with the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre and Southern Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative (SOADI) to host a Health and Wellness Day in November of each year. We partner with SOADI to host a Health and Wellness day in Hamilton, ON each March. This year, the ADEP developed two new relationships with 55+ Centre, Thunder Bay and Lakeview Manor Long Term Care Home and is in the process of delivering 7 workshops at each location to the Indigenous residents. The ADEP



(Mocc Walk 2016 Winner's Draw)

Coordinator has received training from Sanford University Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and the ADEP will be hosting these workshops at ONWA. Our first series of workshops regarding chronic disease self-management were facilitated in partnership with Wequedong Lodge which is a hospice for Indigenous people from northern communities receiving medical treatment in Thunder Bay. Many of the individuals coming for treatment are receiving dialysis or are dealing with other diabetes related illnesses.

The ONWA Mocc Walk 2015 was another outstanding success with 1,018 walkers participating across the province. The Aboriginal Diabetes Education program has delivered this provincial campaign since 2003 with 285 participants taking part. The Mocc Walk is a good example of how community mobilization begins in the home and flows out into the community.

Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Awareness Program

The Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Awareness Program (ARGAP) is committed to providing and delivering culturally appropriate services to Indigenous women and their families. It does this through advocacy, information and support, education and prevention, community awareness and individual referrals to other community agencies for their services and/or programs.

This year brought significant growth to the program; we were welcomed into Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School to conduct weekly programming. This high school provides education services to Indigenous youth from northern communities in Ontario. The outreach is to provide youth with opportunities to socialize within a healthy setting among peers. Bannock and tea is served and students are provided the opportunity to access community services such as those offered by ONWA. The ARGAP Coordinator utilizes this time to teach youth about traditional games and activities. In partnership with the ONWA Youth in Transition Worker, the students were provided with a Christmas Feast in which there were 100 participants.



The Nokomis program has been delivered through a partnership with the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program and the Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Awareness Program. The Nokomis Teachings program was designed to be a language and cultural program for Indigenous families. This program is very successful showing a steady influx of participants weekly at ONWA and has activities ranging from making feather cases, shawls with clan designs, canvas painting and rock painting to the Seven Grandfather Teachings with Indigenous families. With the restructuring of the departments, the ARGAP is focusing on delivering the program provincially and will no longer be delivering this program as part of their deliverables. Nokomis Teachings continues to be delivered by other ONWA programming.

The Ontario Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Program (OARGP) Working Group consists of provincial Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Coordinators and meets every quarter. This working group also hosts

an annual Youth Leadership Training in which Indigenous youth are able to access training activities. The second annual Youth Leadership Training was hosted in Thunder Bay in June of last year. During the Youth Leadership Training the participants participated in a variety of cultural awareness activities throughout the city of Thunder Bay and the surrounding area. Aboriginal Responsible Gambling Awareness training was also taught to the youth during this event.

The ARGAP Coordinator attended the Four Directions Responsible Gambling Awareness Conference held in Vancouver, British Columbia and was hosted by a local Indigenous tribe in partnership with the BC Lottery and Gaming Corporation. This conference provided the ARGAP program the opportunity to network and share best practices specific to Responsible Gambling and implement them into ONWA programming.

The ARGAP program attends various conferences yearly to stay up to date on resources and information related to Responsible Gambling. The program provided thirty (30) workshops and set up information booths in eight (8) communities provincially.


Aboriginal Skills & Employment Training Strategy

Ontario Native Women's Association has renewed their previous agreement, known as the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Program, with the Native Women's Association of Canada in an employment and training initiative targeted to unemployed Indigenous women living in urban areas. The goal of this program is to provide funds, which will assist Indigenous women to find permanent work and reduce their dependency on income support programs.



ONWA has structured the employment and training program around a labour market approach. This approach takes into consideration the labour market needs of the community in order to determine appropriate measures. The ASETS program is geared to urban based Indigenous women.

Funds for the ASETS Program are intended to subsidize client-based training and related employment costs. The ONWA ASETS program delivers training and employment programming through the following three initiatives:



The Targeted Wage Subsidy Program provides wage subsidies to employers to encourage them to hire unemployed Indigenous women.

The Job Creation Partnership Program provides unemployed Indigenous women with on the job training opportunities to gain valuable work experience that will lead to viable employment prospects.

The Individual Training Initiative component is to help unemployed Indigenous women obtaining skills ranging from basic to advanced skills, through the Purchase of Training Programs. This initiative may also include Pre-Employment Supports for the purchase of uniforms and safety equipment for firm job offers and Mobility Assistance for confirmed job interviews and firm offers of employment where travel from your urban home base is required.

The employment assistance service support measure is to support organizations that will provide employment assistance services to unemployed, urban-based Indigenous women.

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED


The ASETS program delivered funding to 26 clients through various interventions with 15 obtaining sustainable employment following the intervention.

The ASETS program, in partnership with the ONWA Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, delivered in house services to the Single Parent Initiative (SPI). The SPI program is part of a larger partnership with the Lakehead Adult Education Centre and Lakehead Public Schools. This initiative assists single parents to obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma through: culturally sensitive programming, having a teacher available on site, having a childminder to assist with the children and creating an atmosphere conducive to education. The goal of the program is to provide single parents wrap around service support to ensure they complete their OSSD. ONWA was honoured to have a graduate of this program be elected as the Valedictorian for her entire graduating class. This included the SPI program as well as other sites that are partnered with Lakehead Adult Education Centre.

Building Aboriginal Women's Leadership Program

The goal of the BAWL program is to increase Indigenous women's leadership skills through culturally relevant training delivered in both a workshop setting and by utilizing e-based learning modules. Indigenous women are encouraged to take a more active role in understanding how governments and leadership function. In order to help achieve this, BAWL provides the resources they need, along with follow up training and supports as requested.

Some leadership resources that are available include training on social and economic issues, trends and implications, change management and becoming an agent of change, hands-on strategic planning, the challenges of leadership, and board development training.



Another component of this program is mentorship. The BAWL Coordinator fosters leadership development support by established ONWA members for women in less established member groups. Mentors provide effective community leadership within our member Chapters and Councils and for Indigenous women and their families across the province.

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

This year, BAWL has organized and/or attended 92 training sessions and/or significant activities that help to build Indigenous women's leadership. 4533 Indigenous women and their families have received training or participated in significant events including capacity building sessions and gatherings. In addition, there have been 24 resources developed to support Indigenous women's leadership development, and there are 66 mentors who feel equipped to take on a leadership role because of their involvement with the BAWL program.

Community Development Support Worker - Health Outreach Program

The Community Development Support Worker oversees the flow through of two Health Outreach worker positions with two membership organizations. This position is geared to supporting the delivery of the Health Outreach Program. The Health Outreach Program is designed to promote health and wellness to Indigenous women and their families. The promotion of healthy living and increased wellbeing is the focus of this program. The two membership organizations that deliver the program have two very different programs based on the needs of the community that they serve. The CDSW manages the agreement between ONWA and the flow through organizations. This includes information sharing with the delivery organizations.

BIIDAAJIIWUN INC. - THUNDER BAY

The Health Outreach program through Biidaajiiwun Inc. is focused on Indigenous youth in the community of Thunder Bay. The program is located in the area known as Westfort. This program provides participant based activities in the form of a community walk-in centre that partners with community organizations to provide workshops and information sessions related to health promotion. The HOW program also offers traditional activities such as traditional craft making, medicine picking and native language instruction. The program promotes other cultural activities such as memorial feasts to honour ancestors. The purpose of the the youth focused programming is to ensure that Indigenous youth have access to activities that promote their knowledge of culture and identity. The youth also participate in the Full Moon memory walk and the Valentine memory walk to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women.

SUNSET WOMENS ABORIGINAL CIRCLE

The Sunset Women's Aboriginal Circle delivers the Health Outreach Program from its Sioux Lookout office. This program is geared to Indigenous women and their families with a broader age range. Health promotion activities include such things as a breakfast program, food hampers, healthy relations and sexual health, smoking cessation and road hockey. Traditional activities include sharing circles, Buchinaage (Let's Play) and Medicine walks and medicine picking. A blend of cultural based activities and health promotion would be the Teddy Bear picnic that take part in. This activity includes drumming and naming ceremonies for the Teddy Bears with the children. Cultural promotion starts young and ensures that children and families learn the importance of cultural identity.

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

The activities combined for these two programs shows the following:

HOW clients: 297

HOW Home visits: 1263

Peer Counselling: 61

Advocacy and Referrals: 231

Mental Health Program

This program provides mental health non-residential treatment services to Indigenous women and their families when the individual is suffering from emotional, psychological or behavioural illness.

Specialized services also include community development, capacity building and networking, as well as coordination of educational/informational sessions. The program is delivered in both Thunder Bay and Sioux Lookout, with direct counselling and case management being the primary focus in Sioux Lookout and community development, capacity building and networking, as well as coordination of education/information sessions being the focus in Thunder Bay.

Programs and services include but are not limited to: prevention; health promotion, peer helping; intake, screening, and assessment; early intervention; case management; and traditional therapeutic approaches. Crisis intervention and trauma, and grief and loss counselling is also methodically applied in severe situations.



ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

Throughout the year The Mental Health Program conducted four (4) Community Engagement sessions for Mental Health and Addictions in regards to Phase Two of the Ontario Mental Health and Addiction strategy in Sioux Lookout, Kenora, Hamilton and Ottawa. This project was completed in partnership with ONWA's Research and Policy department.


A total of six (6) presentations were conducted throughout the year for capacity development training activities which included the provision of training for community-based mental health workers and/or professional mental health practitioners, in order to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop, implement, deliver, and evaluate effective programming for individuals, families, and communities in a coordinated manner. ONWA's mental health program was invited to Cochrane, Ontario to be a guest speaker at a Family Violence Conference to discuss the impacts of residential schools and how those impacts are seen in the alarming rates of domestic violence against Indigenous women, and amongst the Indigenous population, with a total of 25 participants. The Mental Health Program was also invited to discuss best practices regarding mental health and addictions, along with suicide prevention within communities in Toronto, Ontario at the Urban Aboriginal Forum, where there was approximately 30 people who attended the session. There was also Inter-agency training that included orientation to Indigenous culture/history and cultural practices in order to improve services to Indigenous clients. Throughout the year there were a total of 181 people who participated in these trainings and informative educational sessions. Further presentations that were conducted were as follows: "Who Am I?", "Be you. Love you.", "Embrace You –Understanding the Indigenous perspective to mental health and addictions and the Impacts of Residential Schools", "Community Based Suicide Prevention and Wellness", "Self-Harm & Cutting", "Grief and Trauma Training".

The Mental Health program also participated in the Fall Harvest where over 550 elementary students were able to learn about the four sacred medicines and the importance of mental health and wellbeing using traditional medicines and teas.

CLIENT SERVICES – STATS ON PROGRAMS

Through The Mental Health Program client service component (Sioux Lookout) a total of 22 clients were serviced, with a total of 167 visits conducted to support, educate and assist with reducing mental health issues and promoting healthy life styles.

The Mental Health Program, both locations combined also delivered group based activities such as the Out in the Cold Homeless Program, Less Stress Fridays, Lunch & Learn, Sewing 101, Kokum's in Training, Gurl's Group, Craft Circles, Healing Circles, Traditional Healing Ceremonies, and Sharing Circles. These activities were delivered in partnership with Elders, healers, community organizations, skilled professionals, and knowledgeable persons to offer a variety of participant and traditionally based activities to further support clients who struggle with mental health conditions/issues & diagnoses. During the year there were a total of 834 participants who were able to attend and benefit from these



additional activities. There was also 2 Traditional Feasts held that the mental health program coordinated and partnered with other programs where there was a total of 175 people in attendance.

Urban Aboriginal Policy Engagement Table

Since the 2014/15 fiscal year ONWA has been working in collaboration with the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) on the Urban Indigenous Provincial Engagement Table (UIPET). This joint initiative from Ontario's three main service delivery organizations including the Provincial Government committed to the creation of an Urban Indigenous Action Plan (UIAP) over three years with a goal to improve socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous peoples living in urban communities across Ontario.

Moving into the third and final year of the project direction is now focused on the creation and eventual implementation of the UIAP by the end of the 2016/17 fiscal year. The UIAP will culminate three years of collaborative work with the partner members of the UIPET:

- Organizing community driven engagements in fifteen (15) regionally represented locations
- Providing Indigenous based research analysis to provincial policies
- Implementation of community development projects
- Undertaking an "Analysis of Recommendations" concerning urban Indigenous issues in Ontario
- Hosting the Urban Aboriginal Forum

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

In the 2015/16 UIPET Work Plan, ONWA was allocated one (1) location out of the original ten (10) selected by the UIPET to facilitate Local Gatherings with Indigenous/non-Indigenous organizations, public/private stakeholders, and members of the urban Indigenous community. Having its main office in Thunder Bay, ONWA was allocated this location and engaged the local urban Indigenous community in November 2015. The recommendations from this engagement were captured in the Thunder Bay Local Gathering Report submitted to MIRR in December 2015 along with the other nine (9) locations.

The Urban Aboriginal Local Gatherings brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss community priorities and experiences in relationship-building, partnerships, and networking, as well as priorities for improving community well-being more broadly. The Local Gatherings led to the creation of Community Development Projects to move toward an action plan to address priorities that were previously identified during the Local Gatherings. Action plans were focused on issues such as youth mental health, cultural sensitivity, and ending violence against Indigenous women and girls.

The Analysis of Recommendations gathered recommendations from leading publications over the past twenty years and echoed a number of priorities identified by communities. These priorities include: cultural sensitivity and awareness, education, training and employment, health and wellness, housing and homelessness, food security, justice and community safety, and reconciliation. There has been some action on the part of government and service providers to address some of the key recommendations highlighted but many of the recommendations remain outstanding.

Another key activity completed was that the Urban Aboriginal Forum brought together urban Indigenous organizations, mainstream organizations, government stakeholders, the private sector, and non-profit organizations from across Ontario to share wise practices around partnerships and relationship-building in urban Indigenous communities. The Forum demonstrated that there is a large



network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations that are ready and willing to act in designing and delivering services aimed at improving outcomes in communities. The Forum managed to include 35+ speakers, attendees from over 150 different organizations across Ontario, including 15 separate Ministries, and including presence from Minister Zimmer. The well-rounded presence of local organizations, main stream organizations, and government agencies provided excellent dialogue and follow up questions at each of the workshop sessions.

The main focus of the 2016/17 fiscal year is the development and implementation of the UIAP following the conclusion of all planned community and ministry engagements. Each of these key activities has provided invaluable perspective from a range of stakeholders in the urban Indigenous policy and service delivery communities. The findings from these activities collectively provide a preliminary framework and a strong foundation to inform the creation of an evidenced-based, community-informed UIAP. ONWA has ensured that the UIAP framework acknowledge and commits to provincial initiatives that incorporate the perspectives and voice of Indigenous women such as: the Walking Together: Ontario's Long Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, and Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking.

Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy

The Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy was a one year program funded by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The purpose of the program was to determine what the needs were of the urban Indigenous population of Thunder Bay. The program design included three positions: TBUAS Cultural Coordinator, TBUAS Youth Outreach Leader and the TBUAS Research Assistant. Through the collaboration of these three positions, a better understanding of the needs, gaps in services and community partnership building would take place.

THUNDER BAY URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY (TBUAS) – UAS CULTURAL COORDINATOR

The UAS Cultural Coordinator was responsible for being a support and a liaison between the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee (UAAC), who provides direction to the Thunder Bay UAS and the homelessness partnership strategy (HPS) initiative. The UAAC is a committee of community agencies, as well as community members, with a working committee of 12 members and governmental partners.


Through the assistance of our UAS Policy Analyst; 6 engagements were held surveying the greater community to create a comprehensive plan. Additionally, the Policy Analyst held 12 interviews with various community members including but not exclusive to executive directors of local agencies.



THUNDER BAY URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY (TBUAS) -YOUTH OUTREACH LEADER

The Thunder BAY Urban Aboriginal Strategy Youth Outreach Leader was responsible for engaging the urban Indigenous youth of Thunder Bay to ensure that their voice was heard in the community plan that was being developed. The previous TBUAS Community plan spoke to the needs of Indigenous youth's voice being heard. The TBUAS Youth Outreach Leader was responsible for ensuring that youth were represented at all community engagements. Another component of this project was to train youth in the area of leadership. Involving them in the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Advisory Council was essential to this. Two youth representatives were nominated and fully participated in all activities of the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Council.

A key focus of the program was to pinpoint gaps in services, risk areas and priorities with the intent of increasing urban Indigenous youth participation in the economy. The TBUAS Youth Outreach leader has provided the youth in the community with a unique volunteer opportunities to be active in the community of Thunder Bay and in the community planning process. The youth attended a train the trainer session in Toronto. The TBUAS Youth Outreach Leader networked with community to determine service provision and community organizational needs.



TBUAS Youth Outreach Leader coordinated with the youth to mentor the youth to facilitate workshops and training with and for urban Indigenous youth that focuses on strengthening employment readiness. The youth participated in various capacities at all community engagements to strengthen their individual skills.

The Youth Outreach Leader had been very active in conferences, workshops, information booths and community meetings in the Thunder Bay region and ensured that youth participated in these as well. Partnering organizations included the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre and the Creighton Youth Services to recruit young people in the Thunder Bay Area and young people coming from surrounding communities and were new to the city. This position was on the following committees: Community Coalition Unified for the Protection of Children and Youth (CCUPCY) and the Creighton Youth Service Cultural Committee.

THUNDER BAY URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY (TBUAS) – RESEARCH ASSISTANT

This report is included in the Policy and Research department under Education and Employment entitled Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED

The TBUAS Program, in partnership with various ONWA programming, delivered services to the following number of participants: Nihdawin Food Van 120, Information booths 75, Presentations 254, Community Engagements 12, and face to face interviews 20. These activities were essential in gathering the voice of the urban indigenous community of Thunder Bay.

This program was completed on March 31, 2016.

Program Activities Offered Throughout the Year

The following programs are offered throughout the year, many are held weekly, biweekly or monthly throughout the year, and some are seasonal or based on the events within the community. Monthly calendars are distributed during regular programming, at our reception area, posted on our website, and on social media. Our activities are open to all family members. Most times, participants are offered healthy lunches and refreshments at ONWA workshops and events.

These are the program activities that were offered for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

Buginaage

An interactive session filled with informational games that teach participants about a variety of subjects and/or programs that Community Wellness encompasses.

Community Kitchen

The Kitchen is held on the last Tuesday of each month, this event shares knowledge with clients of creating healthy meals on a budget.

Drum Circle

Held every Wednesday morning, this event provides opportunities for participants to learn and practice traditional drumming songs. This also provides staff who are in the ONWA drum group, Passwewe Ikewug (Echo Women) the opportunity to practice and learn and share songs with our community.

Earth Day Celebration

In honour of Earth Day, this workshop focuses on activities and Teachings that honour Mother Earth.

Family Gathering

The AVFL Thunder Bay program hosts a gathering for the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Thunder Bay. The gathering includes an opening ceremony and smudge followed by a feast to honour the lives of our missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Food Van - Wiisinyog

In partnership with *Shkoday Abinojiwak Obimiwedoan*, ONWA runs a Food Van to provide hot lunches to those who need them. The Food Van distributes hot lunches in Port Arthur from 12:00 pm until 12:30 pm and Fort William from 1:00 pm until 1:30 pm.

Full Moon Ceremony

ONWA hosts a monthly Full Moon Ceremony depending on participation.



KO e-Health: Children and Challenging Behaviour

A collaborative event, *KO e-Health* and ONWA cohost educational sessions via videoconferencing to northern First Nation communities in Ontario.

Maamawi

An 8 week program, the Maamawi “All Together” Parenting Program is offered three times per year. The 7 Grandfather Teachings are the foundation of this program and educational workshops range from breastfeeding to child development. Upon completion, the participants will receive a certificate.

Medicine Picking

ONWA invites members of the community to participate in medicine picking. An Elder will be sharing their knowledge of traditional teachings and culture of the medicines native to the territory.

Mocc Walk

The Mocc Walk challenge is an annual event (May 1 – June 30) and is intended to increase awareness about diabetes as well as to promote physical activity among Aboriginal people across Ontario. Participants are enticed to get active, have fun, and win some great prizes! They do this by recording the number of minutes spent walking, tallying up points at the end of the challenge and submitting them to ONWA. One point is earned for every 10 minutes of walking. The more points accumulated the more chances of winning a great prize!

Nokomis Teachings

A weekly event, the Nokomis Teachings engages the participants in traditional and cultural workshops.

Sacred Tree

An 8 week program, the Sacred Tree program is offered three times per year and is a program that focuses on building a healthier community.

Sharing Circle

Under the guidance of an Elder, a Sharing Circle is held every third Monday of the month. This event encourages self-reflection and healing activities and the participants will also benefit from traditional teachings and peer support. The focus of this circle is to support Aboriginal women and their families that have a family member who is missing or has been murdered.

Single Parent Initiative

In partnership with the Lakehead Adult Education Centre, ONWA provides a culturally appropriate setting for the Single Parent Initiative, a continuing education program, to assist single parents in obtaining high school credits to the ultimate goal of acquiring their GED.



Sisters In Spirit Vigil

ONWA has hosted the Sister's in Spirit vigil for the community. Sisters in Spirit Vigils are held to raise awareness of the alarmingly high rate of missing and murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Canada. Come out and support the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal Women.

Teddy Bear Picnic

The City of Thunder Bay is hosting the Teddy Bears Picnic at Vickers Park from 12 noon - 3 pm on Tuesday, July 15th. Children, parents and teddy bears are invited to enjoy an afternoon of free crafts, activities and entertainment. ONWA participates in this community initiative as a vendor – informational booth, activity booth, and provides lunches to its clients.

Traditional Healing

This year, we were fortunate to have Al Hunter, a Traditional Healer from Manitou Rapids, come in every second month for individual appointments with our clients. Requests for healing/doctoring, naming, colour, and clan ceremonies including traditional counselling are available upon request.

Wiisokewin

"Cooperation, Sharing, Helping, Holistic"

The themes of this weekly Healing Circle are co-operation, sharing, helping and holistic. It is held every Tuesday evening and facilitated by an Elder. Various ceremonies will be shared including those that will identify your Clan, Anishnaabe name, doctoring, traditional colours and traditional teachings.

Policy and Research Department

ONWA's Policy and Research Department continues to inform provincial policy and legislation that impacts Indigenous women and their families. The Policy and Research department gathers, assesses and disseminates information in order to promote cultural understanding and assessment toward ensuring healthy and wholistic service provision for Indigenous women and their families. We work to create ethical best practices in research and capacity building through enhancing Indigenous women's information governance. In addition, Policy and Research continues to articulate and advance an innovative culturally rooted, gender-based analysis (CR-GBA) approach to research, rooted in ONWA's approach to programming and services.

The Policy and Research Department also continues to address current government policies and legislation through promoting a strengths based, Indigenous women-centered policy stance on a number of diverse issues.

The Policy and Research department works in six key areas including:

- Indigenous Children and Youth
- Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women
- Indigenous Women's Health and Wellbeing
- Housing and Employment for Indigenous Women and their families
- Education and Cultural Competency
- Environmental Issues

Indigenous Children and Youth

In order to facilitate Indigenous control of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS), the Ministry of Children and Youth Services requested input regarding an administrative/governance body to oversee the implementation and evaluation of programs and services delivered by the Strategy. As a result of the discussions at the Technical Table, the concept of a governance model that is supportive of Indigenous control was formed.

The aim of the OICYS is to take a strength-based approach in Indigenous programming and service delivery that is rooted in culture, and culture driven models that identify success as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual behaviors and well-being. ONWA's work within the OICYS addresses key gaps around Indigenous mothering and child and youth wellbeing, while supporting resilience, Indigenous identity and belonging. ONWA has worked to address key legislative change through the ongoing review of the Child and Family Services Act, the emerging provincial FASD Strategy, and current collection of narratives regarding Indigenous child and youth programs and services in a Community Assets Mapping project.

Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women

Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women has continued to be one of ONWA's central priorities this year. In light of the recent announcement regarding a long awaited Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, the Ontario government's strategy to end violence against Indigenous women and moves towards developing a Trafficking Strategy, it has been a busy year. ONWA has been a member of the following Committees and Subcommittees over the past year:

- The Joint Working Group to End Violence Against Indigenous Women
- The JWG Indigenous Caucus
- The National Aboriginal Women's Summit Working Group (JWG & Caucus)
- The Terms of Reference Development Subcommittee (JWG & Caucus)
- Human Trafficking Subcommittee (JWG)


ONWA continues to be a leader on Indigenous women issues within the province, including working on the development of a long term strategic plan on addressing violence against Indigenous women that was the foundation of the Province's recent "Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women". With this strategy, "Ontario and Indigenous communities are coming together to end the cycle of violence and ensure future generations of Indigenous women can live the way they deserve — with safety and respect." (Ontario, 2016).

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women



On December 8th, 2015 the federal government announced that it would conduct a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. ONWA attended and ensured representation at all the Pre-Inquiry Consultation Sessions that followed and that were held by the federal government as well as kept abreast of all activities related to the Inquiry. ONWA also conducted an analysis of the pre-inquiry consultation sessions and submitted its findings and recommendations to inform the design and implementation of the National Inquiry. Over one hundred family members of Missing and Murdered Indigenous women came to the launch of the MMIW Inquiry. ONWA strongly supports NWAC's position that reform of Child Welfare and the Criminal Justice System needed to be addressed in the Inquiry.

In addition, ONWA provided Healing Support Sessions throughout the province to ensure that those affected by the announcement of the National Inquiry into MMIW were provided with traditional follow-up support and aftercare. ONWA's MMIW Healing Support Sessions were held in the following



locations: Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, Kenora, Sioux Lookout, Dryden, and Timmins between January and the end of March 2016.

ONWA also attended the 2nd National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women held in Winnipeg, Manitoba February 25th to 26th, 2016. Outcomes of the 2016 National Roundtable on MMIWG include:


- Supports for cultural competency, with a particular emphasis on anti-racism and anti-sexism that is designed and led by Indigenous Peoples.
- Addressing socio-economic gaps for Indigenous Peoples.
- Supports for families throughout the Inquiry, inclusive of better communications between families and policing, women's groups and other important organizations.
- The creation and implementation of a national campaign aimed at improving public attitudes in order to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Human Trafficking

ONWA successfully released its *Sex Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls* Paper in February of 2016. This paper highlights the need for additional research and programming to address the high rates of sex trafficking of Indigenous women. In this area, ONWA also continues to analyze policies, legislation and emerging trends in this area to inform policy development and provide strategic direction to address and combat this growing concern. ONWA hosted two Human Trafficking engagements which provided the most complete and comprehensive data on the crisis of trafficking and Indigenous women in Ontario. Among ONWA's recommendations were the creation of Trafficking Safe Houses for Indigenous women and girls. From the data ONWA ascertained the importance of housing, employment and other socio-economic concerns as well as trauma treatment and healing for Indigenous women and girls who have survived sex trafficking and also as a way of preventing trafficking. ONWA prepared recommendations and submitted them to the province of Ontario to inform the development of a provincial strategy to combat human trafficking

Indigenous Women's Health and Wellbeing

ONWA accomplished a great deal at the Urban Indigenous Health Table or UIHT (previously known as the Urban Aboriginal Health Table) through the promotion of health and overall wellbeing for Indigenous women and their families at this key provincial table. ONWA's work in Mental Health and Addictions highlighted the unique needs of Indigenous women while emphasizing a strengths based perspective on healing and wellness. For Indigenous women and mothers, overall wellbeing or wellness in relation to their original responsibilities as caregivers and creators of life, as holders of culture for coming generations, and as land and water stewards and protectors, was documented through a series



of regional Northern engagements, toward informing Ontario's *Open Minds, Healthy Minds* Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Housing and Employment for Indigenous Women and their families

ONWA's Housing Policy Analyst has ensured that Ontario's Housing First strategy is informed by a gender based, Indigenous cultural approach. The Housing Policy Analyst supports the ongoing requirement of improving access to safe affordable housing for Indigenous women and their children in Ontario. There is a direct linkage between a lack of safe affordable housing and the high levels of poverty, violence, poor health, low educational attainment, lack of employment and involvement in the justice and child welfare systems that Indigenous women and children experience. ONWA's focus is on providing housing policy research, analysis and recommendations to support Indigenous women and their children in attaining culturally appropriate housing.

The ONWA Housing Policy Analyst supports the Executive Director in her role as board member of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS). OAHS and ONWA have made great strides together as partners, working collaboratively to advance housing related issues affecting Indigenous peoples across the province. In addition, ONWA continues to utilize the Ontario Urban and Rural First Nations, Metis and Inuit Housing Policy Framework to advocate for increased funding and resources.

ONWA is actively monitoring and providing input on discussions related to the province's Update of the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS). ONWA took a strong position that within the LTAHS, particular priority needs to be given to Indigenous women and their families, particularly for Indigenous women who are fleeing violence and require safe and affordable housing. ONWA has also argued that an increase in transitional units and the reduction in wait-times for those units, also needs to be prioritized.

Education and Employment

THE URBAN INDIGENOUS PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT TABLE (UIPET)

The UIPET is a collaborative table with Indigenous partners at the OFIFC and MNO. A major accomplishment over the past year, was the Urban Aboriginal Forum. The Forum highlighted examples of Best Practices throughout the province in partnership and community development between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. ONWA ensured that the voices of Indigenous women and their families remained central to this gathering, articulating the importance of safe and sustainable housing, mental health supports and ending violence against Indigenous women. This forum was an opportunity to show ONWA's province-wide reach in addressing and ending violence in all forms against

Indigenous women, including lateral violence, while highlighting wise practices in supportive services for Indigenous mothers together with their children.

ONWA supported the Regional Planning process which was a subset of UIPET work. Regional Planning provided ONWA with an opportunity to expand on its partnerships with Indigenous organizations across the Thunder Bay region, inclusive of our participation in the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee (UAAC) and its strategic planning needs which were captured through engagement and reporting.

URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY

ONWA received funding from MAA to host the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) in Thunder Bay for the 2015-2016 year. Working closely with the Urban Aboriginal Advisory Council (UAAC), this project involved the development of a Community Plan for Thunder Bay. Five community engagement sessions were held which sought input from Indigenous community members about what would make Thunder Bay a better community for urban Indigenous peoples. The results from these engagements fed into the Community Plan, which was provided to the UAAC. Recommendations from these engagements included the provision of safe spaces—free from violence and racism—for Indigenous women and youth, employment and training for Indigenous youth, and sustainable and accessible housing for Indigenous women and youth.



(ONWA staff at the Urban Aboriginal Forum)

SAFE AND ACCEPTING SCHOOLS

Phase Two of the Safe and Accepting Schools (SAAS) project was completed this year, with a toolkit called *Transforming Perspectives: An Indigenous Knowledge Bundle for Educators* developed. The toolkit built upon the findings of Phase One of the SAAS project, which involved community engagements with Indigenous students and youth in Thunder Bay and identified priorities for educating youth about ending violence against Indigenous women. ONWA has applied to Chiefs of Ontario (COO), for additional funding for Phase Three of this project, which will expand upon the initial toolkit to deliver curriculum about ending violence against Indigenous women more widely across the province.



Environmental Issues

Policy and Research worked to weave cultural teachings about the environment into each of our projects this year, while identifying gaps with respect to environment and wellbeing. ONWA's garden program was expanded to include community caretaking, seed planting and teachings, with an understanding of the continuity of water, land and human wellbeing (mind, body, heart and spirit). Food security was emphasized throughout the teachings and elders who remained involved with the garden also participated in other engagements. In addition, and as per our AGA resolution on Sustaining Mother Earth, ONWA's Mother Earth campaign will add cultural teachings about water, land, traditional foods and medicines, into all programming, policy and research design.

Research

ONWA's research team focuses on developments in research that affect Indigenous women and their families and is developing an Indigenous Women's Research Framework that respects our traditional values and strength based approaches.


This involves conducting strengths-based and community-driven research projects with Indigenous women and their families. The research team ensures that research undertaken by ONWA is in alignment with the ONWA Research Framework and is of benefit to Indigenous women and their families in Ontario. Some of the successful projects undertaken over this past year include:

REBUILDING THE CIRCLE

The Rebuilding the Circle research project has continued into 2015-2016. The focus of Rebuilding the Circle research is to examine the impacts of violence on children and youth. The research looks at the intersection between violence, child welfare and related systems from the perspective of Indigenous women who have witnessed violence in childhood or experienced violence in adulthood. During this year, ONWA developed and disseminated surveys for service providers working with Indigenous women who have experienced violence and Indigenous women themselves who have experienced violence. In total, 101 participants completed these surveys. In addition, one on one interviews were conducted, again with both service providers and survivors of violence. In total, 32 in-depth interviews were completed in Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton and Niagara. The results of the surveys, interviews and literature review on violence against Indigenous women, the impacts of witnessing violence on children and service provision for Indigenous women experiencing violence are culminating in a final report which will be distributed to all ONWA membership and will be used as an advocacy tool to secure programming for Indigenous women experiencing violence.

BREAKING FREE, BREAKING THROUGH

The *Breaking Free, Breaking Through* research project was completed in 2014 yet continued into this year as we finalized the video aspect of the project. The research project used an innovative, arts-therapy approach to examine the ways in which Indigenous women demonstrate resiliency. In partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the research was



carried out in Thunder Bay, Fort Frances, Ottawa, Hamilton and Timmins. A public awareness video, designed to educate the public on the importance of culturally based services for Indigenous women and their families seeking to leave violence situations was created in 2015. The video will be formally launched in 2016 so that both ONWA and the OFIFC can utilize the public awareness video in the various advocacy work that we do.

ABORIGINAL SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMMUNITY RESPONSE INITIATIVE

The Aboriginal Sexual Violence Community Response Initiative (ASVCRI) project was completed this year. This project was partnership between five Indigenous partners of the Joint Working Group to end violence against Aboriginal women (JWG) and sought to increase community capacity to address sexual violence against Indigenous women. Although the project was a collaborative effort between the five Indigenous partner organizations, ONWA was overseeing the project being carried by the Native Women's Centre in Hamilton, Ontario. The final report, which will be a culmination of all the sites where the partners hosted the project is being coordinated by the OFIFC and is anticipated to be completed and released in 2016. The outcome of the ASVCRI project included increased capacity and the strengthening of information governance for Indigenous organizations in order to better address sexual violence against Indigenous women.

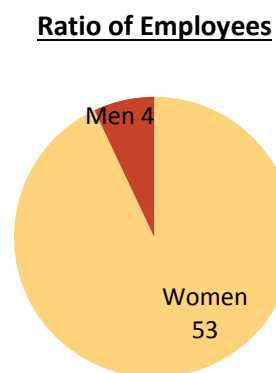
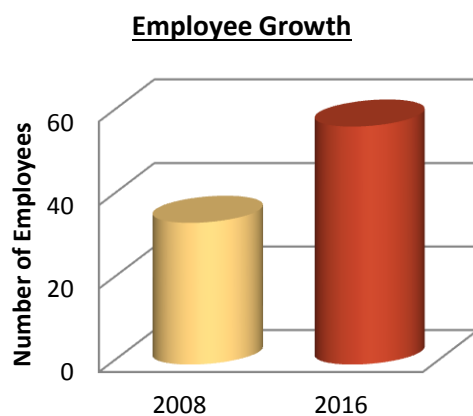
Core Funding

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (MAA) provides a small amount of core funding to assist with ONWA's internal operations and administration. This funding supports core staff salaries including Management, Communications, Human Resources, and Finance.

Human Resources


The Human Resources Department works strategically with all Employees, Managers and Directors to ensure the goals of the organization are met while balancing the needs of the workers. Human Resources ensure all human resource functions of the organization are done consistently, fairly, equitably, safely and within the parameters of various bodies of legislation to mitigate liability for the ONWA. They play a strategic role in strengthening the organization's foundation including the implementation of the ONWA's Human Resource Management Plan.

Since ONWA has opened, we have experienced tremendous growth growing from 10 staff to 57 employees across all offices. The ONWA employs 45 Indigenous workers and 12 non status workers of which 53 are Women and 4 are men.



CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT

1. To work in partnership with all Manager's and Director's to provide support and guidance on all Human Resource functions.
2. To attract and retain a well-qualified and diverse workforce in partnership with Manager's and Directors.
3. To administer an attractive yet fiscally responsible salary and benefit plan.


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4. To advise employees and supervisors on matters pertaining to employee relations. This includes but is not limited to employee performance, employee conduct and/or workplace concerns.
 5. To develop and administer sound policies that keeps the ONWA in compliance with all legal requirements including Human Rights, ESA, OHS and Canada Labor Code.
 6. To provide information, direction and interpretations pertaining to the ONWA policies, processes and benefits.
 7. To develop and implement training and development programs for employees.
 8. To develop and administer an employee performance evaluation plan.
 9. To maintain accurate employee records.
 10. To respond to internal and external requests for employee information as required.
 11. To ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees as well as candidates for employment at the ONWA.
 12. To initiate and maintain employment contracts.

Recruitment and Retention – All job descriptions have been updated and are consistent with one another. Recruitment efforts will be focused on the needs of the organization and finding candidates that meet our specific skill set and requirements. We will use a variety of recruitment methods which are current and provide a higher rate of return such as Chronicle Journal, Workopolis, Indeed, HRDC, web and other formats. Retention has improved and will continue to strengthen with the continued focus of attracting the right candidate. Exit interviews are held and the process is currently under revision along with reference checks.

Employment Agreements – New agreements were drafted and distributed to all staff for resigning. The new agreements are consistent with each other and provide a current template for the ONWA to use going forward which covers all facets of the employment relationship upon hiring. The agreements are in line with current legislative practices that protect the worker and the organization. These agreements help the ONWA to strengthen their relationship with the employee in providing a clear and transparent platform.

Pay Equity Plan – A Pay Equity Committee was formed and all jobs were evaluated and graded based on the Hay system. Jobs were then classified in bands and each band was given an equitable and current salary scale. This plan helps position the ONWA to move forward and grow. It will assist in attracting and retaining qualified candidates to perform the work required of the organization now and for years to come.

Policies & Procedures – All policies and procedures of the ONWA were reviewed and discussed and re-written with the entire management and legal team to provide a current, legal and reasonable guideline for employee's to follow. These will continue to be reviewed, amended and recommendations will be



made to ensure the ONWA and ONWA Employees have fair processes in place that comply with legislative requirements. All policies and processes are grounded in culture with the ONWA mission and vision in mind while following the seven grandfather teachings.

Evaluation Process – A complete evaluation process was developed and recently implemented. This process will help the ONWA to strengthen their relationships with all employees by providing ongoing and transparent feedback on their performance. The evaluation process allows for two way feedback between the Manager and their Employee to ensure program deliverables, goals and challenges are met. It is comprised of a:

- 3 month probationary review
- 6 month probationary review
- Yearly performance appraisal
- Self-appraisal
- Salary review

Training – Human Resources is working with the ED on training priorities. All employees' will have been trained on policies and procedures and have completed any legislative training required. This will be an annual process. In addition, all employees will attend Lateral Violence Training and all Management will go through extensive Leadership Training this fall. Training is ongoing and something which will be reviewed continuously throughout the year and based on program needs, deliverables, succession planning and legislative requirements.

Communications

Oral history tells us that storytelling has been part of our culture across generations, it grounds us in our culture and sense of being as we tell the stories of our people in our own cultural lens that comes from a place of resiliency and strength. Today ONWA has remodeled our Media and Communications team that are an integral part to our overall strategy and success as the "Voice for Indigenous Women and their Families in Ontario" and ways to record and respond to significant events through an Indigenous Women's lens. By writing our own history we began to change society and reclaim our traditional roles as community leaders.

The Media & Communications department aims to take an Indigenous Women's leadership role across the province in the Inquiry to Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women with community coordination and information sharing. ONWA will lead in providing information to communities, families and agencies. This will allow for quick easy access to information and build capacities within Indigenous women's agencies and others. Effective communication will generate a supportive network for survivors, family members and loved ones of MMIW with a dedicated website in the development stages. We also successfully launched the video from *Breaking Free, Breaking Through*. This video was developed in alliance with the OFIFC and was created as a result of the understanding that Indigenous

women face much higher rates of violence and of what is necessary to help Indigenous women to break free of violence. What we learned was that women are stronger together when they are given space to build relationships, practice culture and share experience. Together the women found their spirit of resilience and strength within families and communities.

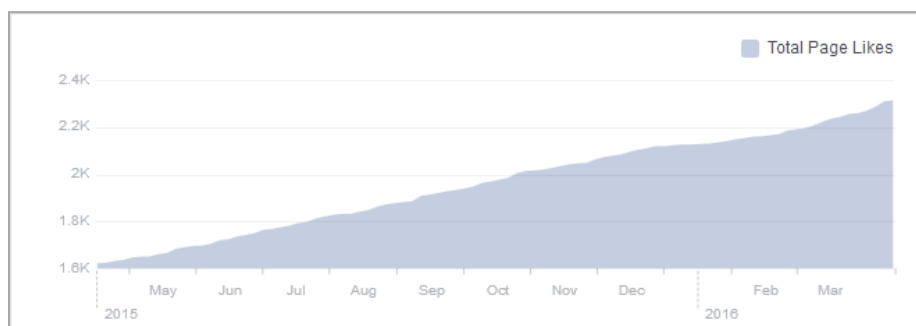
ONWA is committed to an open and transparent communication process and will strive to strengthen our communication efforts through media relations, printed publications, advertising, online and social media. The Communications department consists of a Public Relations Coordinator and a Communications Clerk.

Social media sites have been important, influential and where most people go for news. ONWA is strategically utilizing such platforms to increase the reach of ONWA's voice, and to increase awareness surrounding ONWA's strategic priorities, programs and events. Social media is an effective tool that can help reach the broader community, our youth audiences, and those who reside in remote and northern communities across Ontario. To accomplish this ONWA's Media & Communications department mainly utilizes the ONWA website (www.onwa.ca), the Facebook platform (@ONWA7), and the Twitter platform (@_ONWA_).

For this fiscal year:

ONWA has written and published 14 media releases including the release of the 22 page Paper on Sex Trafficking of Indigenous Women in Ontario (a position paper), the Announcement to End Human Trafficking, the Inquiry to Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, and ONWA Represented Indigenous Women at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

- ONWA has 2,320 'Likes' on our Facebook page, an increase of 698 since the last fiscal.
- ONWA has 988 'Followers' on Twitter, 402 of which are 'New Followers' since the last fiscal.
- ONWA's website (www.onwa.ca) has had 445,246 'Page Views', and 152,673 'Visitors'.



Facebook Page Likes:

2015-Apr-1: 1,622

2016-Mar-31: 2,320

Total Increase: 698

Finance

The non-consolidated financial statements of Ontario Native Women's Association, which comprise the non-consolidated statement of financial position as at March 31, 2016, and the non-consolidated statements of operations and changes in net assets and cash flows were completed and published on July 12, 2016 compared to the previous year of September 19, 2015.

The annual revenue from operations increased by 11.2% to \$5,899,887 while expenses increased by 9.8% to \$5,879,448 resulting in an annual excess of \$20,439 compared with the previous year deficit of \$49,034.

The finance department has increased their capacity by hiring a full time Payroll Clerk in April 2016 which allowed existing employees to concentrate on cash management and reporting. This restructuring will allow ONWA to shorten the year end reporting cycle in 2017 with a completion date in June and has increased the finance department's ability to implement all new finance policies and procedures for effectiveness and efficiencies.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

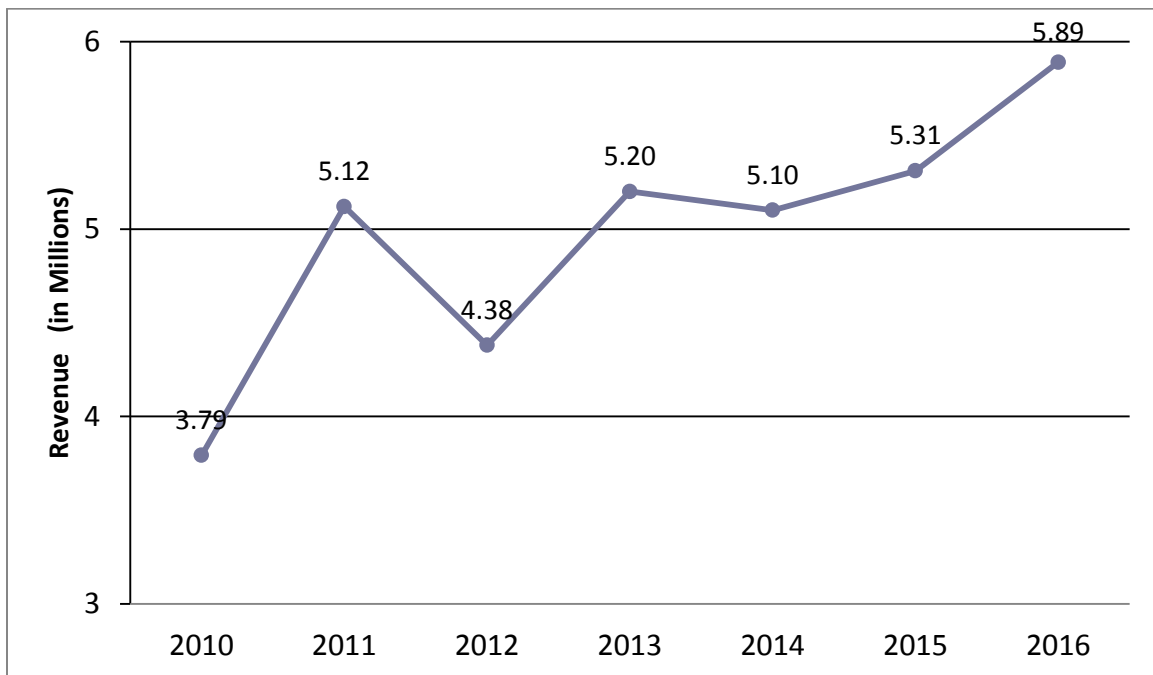
Finance manages and controls the financial functions of all programs in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Finance maintains daily banking management, payroll, accounts payable, financial analysis, budgeting, long range planning, and financial reporting. The department reports to the Executive Director to ensure compliance on reporting the financial stability to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Native Women's Association.

Fully audited financial statements available from the Ontario Native Women's Association:

CONDENSED FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year ended March 31	2016 (\$)	2015 (\$)
OPERATIONS		
REVENUES		
Schedule of Revenue	5,763,088	5,542,154
Deferred Revenue	136,799	(234,666)
TOTAL	5,899,887	5,307,488
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries & Benefits	3,089,878	2,879,933
Program & Client Services	2,312,178	2,062,184
Administration	477,392	414,405
TOTAL	5,879,448	5,356,522
(Deficit) Surplus for the year	20,439	(49,034)

GROWTH IN FUNDING, 2010-2016 (IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)



EXPENDITURE BY SERVICE, 2016

