

The background of the entire page is a warm, golden-toned photograph. It depicts several people, likely of diverse ages, holding their hands together in a supportive gesture. In the center, a small green seedling with several leaves is growing out of a dark, disposable cup. The scene is set outdoors with soft, natural light, suggesting a community garden or a similar outdoor activity.

RECONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

SIMCOE MUSKOKA FAMILY CONNEXIONS
ANNUAL REPORT
2022-23



Simcoe Muskoka
Family Connexions

Connexions Familiales
de Simcoe Muskoka



LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Hello Bonjour, Aaniin, Bonjour.

Last year, our agency responded to unprecedented and unique challenges in serving our communities. This annual report reflects some key highlights and progress in our collective efforts to work in partnership with children, youth, families, and communities towards building a better, more hopeful future.

We are all aware of the cumulative impact of the pandemic on services, staff, resource caregivers, and families in the community. Our staff and caregivers remained steadfast in responding to the needs of the community, advancing our strategic directions, while also reconnecting with one another and our communities. Our Board of Directors has been a voice at provincial meetings for the communities of Simcoe/Muskoka, and demonstrated strong governance, skill and commitment to advocate and support our staff and those we serve. All the success we achieved over the pandemic years is due to the strength of our collective, and this strength and commitment will bring us through the years to come.

The increased need for support and service for children, youth and families is evident in our service data. Mental Health child and youth virtual/walk in brief services increased by 22%, and of the children receiving service, there was a 20% increase in youth presenting with complex mental health needs. In the child welfare program, we have seen a 9% increase in referrals during a year where we had a 35% increase in youth remaining in our care. The successful recruitment of foster parents along with focused service delivery resulted in a 77% reduction of children in outside paid resource placements. In addition, 72% of children/youth who needed alternative care remain with their kin.

Our commitment and journey to building a foundation for equitable outcomes and reducing disparity and disproportionality of Black and Indigenous families in the child welfare system is supported by the launch of the panel for services to African decent families and our commitment to learning sessions at Rama First Nation initiated as part of our reconciliation process. Our obligations to better serve Francophone families has strengthened with increased capacity for French language services across the organization. Through our newly designated position and committee work we are building our staff's capacity to work with 2SLGBTQ+ youth to ensure identity needs are met, respected and present in all aspects of planning. We have strengthened and initiated alliances with health and social service partners such as the Muskoka Area Ontario Health Team.

A heartfelt thank you to all service teams, corporate services, resource caregivers, volunteers, and our Board of Directors for giving so much of yourselves in service to vulnerable children, youth, and families. We look forward to another progressive year with a focus on support, safety and wellbeing of those we serve, our staff, resource caregivers, and volunteers.

Thank you, Merci, Miigwetch, Marsi.

SHARON PENDERGAST
Chair, Board of Directors

GERALDINE DOOLEY-PHILLIPS
Executive Director

A photograph of two women and a baby. The woman on the left has dark hair and is wearing a green top. The woman on the right has curly blonde hair and is wearing a blue top. They are both smiling and holding a baby who is holding a stuffed animal. The background is a white brick wall.

Our Vision

**Safe Kids.
Healthy families.
Strong communities.**

A photograph of a young girl in a blue superhero costume with a red star on the chest and a red cape. She is standing in front of a wooden wall decorated with white stars. She has her arms raised in a celebratory gesture. To the left is a framed abstract painting, and to the right is a blue backpack.

Our Values

WE

We honour **C**onnexions

We are **A**ccountable

Respect is essential

Equity is foundational

A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a patterned shirt, and a young child with curly hair, wearing a blue apron. They are both smiling and appear to be cooking or baking together at a table. The background is a bright, modern kitchen.

Our Purpose

**To build safety and well-being with
children, youth, families and
communities.**

A man in a light blue button-down shirt and dark pants is leaning over, helping a young child with a yellow helmet and denim overalls ride a red bicycle. The child is smiling and looking forward. They are on a paved path with trees in the background.

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

We promote wellness, stability and a sense of belonging through effective services, quality care, relationship preservation, and connexions to community and identity.

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

Our child welfare and child & youth mental health programs responded to changing needs in the community. Most service volumes increased, with few remaining consistent with the previous year. While ongoing case numbers declined, we saw a significant increase in case complexity.

Highlights

7,798

child welfare referrals received (+9% from last year)

2,490

New Investigation cases



299

New Ongoing Cases
(-20% from last year)

65

youth remained under agency
care to support preparation for
transition



+ 35%

from last year



10

2 youth in care graduated from
secondary school and 1 graduated
from post-secondary school

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities



7

new foster homes approved from ongoing recruitment campaign (events, media releases, radio & print interviews, school boards partnerships and advertising)

This provided **10** additional placements and more children being able to remain within their community



77%

decrease from last year in amount of youth in private outside paid resources (OPR)



25

adoptions finalized



115

kinship service placements, on average

72%

of children who are temporarily in need of alternative care remained with their kin

Children & youth safe & well with families in their communities

Child & Youth Mental Health Services

342



+22%

from last year

brief service counselling (walk-in) clients served by CYMH



128

+7%

from last year

crisis assessment /interventions

371

out of 605 children eligible for
service presented with complex
mental health needs

+20%

from last year



Child, youth & family therapy (231), intensive services
(84) and youth served by the Youth Justice Program (18)
remained consistent with last year

We continued to provide service through the Coordinated Service Planning Program to 45 children, youth and families with complex special needs.

A person wearing a patterned shirt is sitting at a wooden desk, writing in a white notebook with a blue spiral binding. A silver laptop is open to the right of the notebook. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk environment.

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

We provide evidence informed services and maximize resources through a commitment to continuous improvement, privacy and accountability for outcomes.

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes



We completed our **Human Trafficking Protocol** and trained a roster of staff to become experts in the field

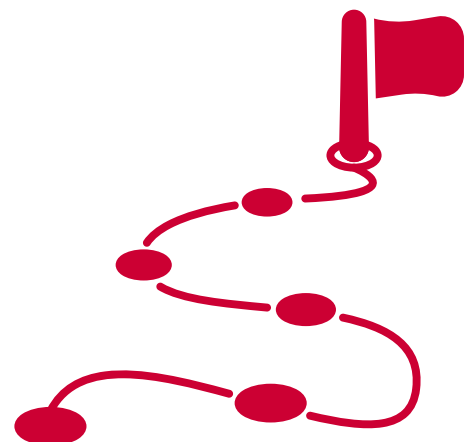
We eliminated our **Operating Debt** through expenditure and budget management strategies.



We continued to develop and support the complex needs of Children & Youth as they moved to transition to independence. This included the Youth in Transition Program (for Muskoka and Parry Sound) and the Educational Liaison program. We collaborated and connected with local resources to support mentorship, housing and address the mental health needs for youth leaving care. We also initiated the implementation of the Ready, Set, Go program.



We completed the research for the Milestone Tool/Program (MCCSS funded research project) to assess the validity of an online tool designed to support better outcomes for youth transitioning from care.



Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

BONJOUR!

We continued to make significant progress in our **'Active Offer of French Language Services'**

Ministry submission, achieving greater levels of compliance towards becoming a fully bilingual agency with equal quality client services in French and English.

This included the hiring for **14** Francophone Language Service staffing positions to better serve Francophone families



Service Delivery Implementation & Quality

Review Framework to ensure we are providing equitable service to groups who tend to be over-referred and overrepresented in child welfare services.

Property Strategy Implementation

included Redesign of the Bracebridge office, advancement on the Orillia office move plans, and back to work strategy supporting a hybrid work environment.



new Orillia Hub location

Illustration courtesy of the County of Simcoe.



new Bracebridge design

Innovation, Accountability, & Outcomes

Internal/HR

As a diverse and progressive organization, we are fortunate to attract a wide range of talents.

This resulted in **71** new hires



We piloted a new **Performance Management System** to grow and enhance our staff development tools.

Focus on **Staff Safety & Wellbeing** with enhancement of wellness policies & procedures, launch of feedback survey and introduction of new wellness providers.



We continued to deepen our partnership and attract students from post-secondary institutions in the social work programs and were able to offer full-time placement opportunities.

A person wearing a red garment with a white and black circular pattern is seen from the side, looking out over a field of tall grass at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky.

Truth & Reconciliation

We commit to truth and
reconciliation with Indigenous
families and communities.

Truth & Reconciliation



Supporting the **Indigenous staff advisory**
and finalization of **Service Resource Guide**

Training deployment for all service delivery staff on
**An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and
Métis children, youth and families**
towards deepening the agency's approach to services to
Indigenous communities



All Leadership staff received the 2-day training from **RAMA**
Gdaankoobijiganaanig Connecting to our Ancestors

We hired a **Manager of Indigenous Service Provision**

We strengthened our partnership with
Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services to
collaborate in **supporting**
Indigenous Children & Youth.



Métis Nation
of Ontario 



We have strengthened and developed our
partnership with multiple Indigenous
Service agencies such as Métis Nation of Ontario,
local friendship centers and Native Women's
Associations, etc.

The background of the slide features a close-up photograph of several hands of different skin tones interlocking and supporting each other, symbolizing unity and partnership. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter.

Effective Communication & Partnership

We hear and value the voices of children, youth and families; partner with communities, colleagues and stakeholders to build networks; and advocate.

Effective Communication & Partnership

Fundraising and donations

Fundraising and donations through community partners and local businesses help fund our programs throughout the year to support families. This includes basic needs, summer camps, back-to-school and holiday assistance.

\$887,518

total in donations

\$110,026

collected through Holiday
donations

\$674,252

gifted through in-kind donations

\$88,764

given through other programs



6,200+

families & individuals
requests filled

99



volunteers

115

independent youth supported
during the Holiday Program

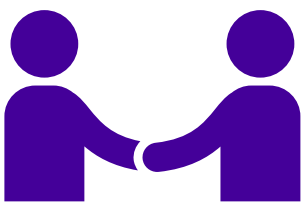
Effective Communication & Partnership

We celebrated our foster families through a Foster appreciation event and strengthened our partnership with the Foster Family Association.



We launched our new **Agency Website** to better serve community members and highlight all our services and programs.

Community Partnerships



Partnership with Muskoka Nipissing Parry Sound Child & Youth Planning Table and Simcoe County Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

We presented the **Mobile Behavioral Treatment Team** model and outcomes to provincial conferences and sector leadership. At the front end of service, 24 youth were supported and remained in their homes and communities. 12 children and youth in care received improved care and support. We estimated a total cost savings of \$927,516.

Effective Communication & Partnership

Community Partnerships

Ongoing work with the
Francophone Situation table
& strengthening internal capacity for
french service delivery.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale



The CYMH Practice groups formed a partnership with CMHA and Waypoint to enhance our knowledge and skills in working with people who struggle with mental illness and addiction.

Partnership with **Glowing Hearts Charity**
allowed efficiencies with our Back-to-school program.



Muskoka
& Area ONTARIO
HEALTH TEAM

We initiated a partnership with the
Muskoka Area Ontario Health Team
to join local care providers and streamline
processes for better outcomes.

Effective Communication & Partnership



Children & Youth received programming
from our partners at
Shak's (Stay Humble and Kind) World
where we hosted events.

We continued our community partnership with
**The Simcoe Muskoka Black
Community Development Council**
whose goal is to build community capacity to
better serve black families.



Events & Celebrations

We participated in **Pride Events**
including Collingwood Pride with the
intent to show our continued support to
the 2SLGBTQ+ community.



We hosted a **Volunteer luncheon**
in April to recognize the essential work
of our volunteers.

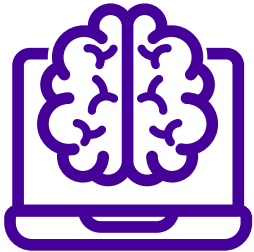


Equitable Practices

We advance an organizational culture, workplace, policies, programs and services that are equitable, inclusive, and trusted. We ensure the provision of active offer of French language services.

Equitable Practices

We continued to make progress in our 3-year equity plan with the following highlights:



We delivered key learning and development sessions including **142** staff attended the Critical Reflexivity session; **315** staff attended the

Collecting Identity-based Data session;

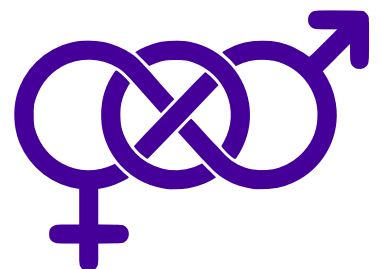
96 staff participated in the 3-Day Equity Workshop and **110** for the Gilbert Centre's Safer Space training.



Continued review of **human resource policies** using an equity-based lens.

We hired a **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE)**

Youth Support Worker to support the children and youth we serve.



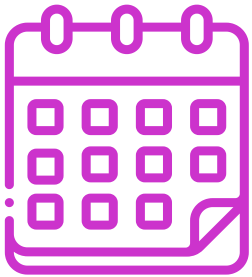
Equitable Practices



We developed and launched the
Afri-CAN Carib Connexions (ACCC) Black Affirming Services Consultation initiative

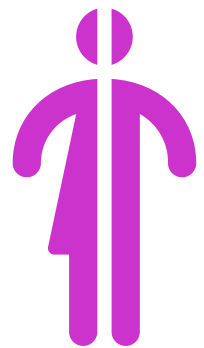
in collaboration with ACCC members and the OVOV Committee.

The panel has received and supported over 120 referrals provided from direct-service staff in need of support when working with Black children, youth and their families.



Finalization of an internal Inclusive **Approach to Holidays, Observances & Celebrations Guide** to recognize monthly Observances and in line with the Equity & Inclusion Implementation Plan.

Development of the agency's Corporate Services:
Gender Inclusive Washroom Policy & Procedure in support of the conversion of all single-stall washrooms across the agency into gender inclusive washrooms.



We expanded our **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities** committee membership along with its purpose to include psychological wellbeing and a focus on mental health, to continue meeting the requirements of the AODA Act and beyond.

Equitable Practices



We continued to support the work and achievements of our **Equity committees:** Afri-CAN Carib Connexions (ACCC), One Vision One Voice, the Anti-Oppression/Anti-Racism, AODA committee, Indigenous Staff Advisory and initiated a 2SLGBTQ+ committee who are tasked with implementing the equity strategy.

Each advisory body has its own work plan that is directly connected to the agency's overall equity and inclusion implementation plan.

The agency continues to support the work of equity in the sector through its membership to OACAS's provincial committees and initiatives, and participation in CMHO's community of practice.



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies



Children's Mental Health Ontario
Santé mentale pour enfants Ontario

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

For the year ended March 31	2023	2022
Revenues		
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	\$ 49,214,464	\$ 49,093,977
Ministry of Health	\$ 2,505,300	2,377,412
Other	\$ 3,982,260	3,957,528
Gross Revenues	\$ 55,702,024	55,428,917
Expenses		
Administration and other	\$ 16,935,496	16,187,411
Boarding rate payments	\$ 11,586,856	11,988,376
Salaries and wages	\$ 27,289,637	26,517,898
Gross Expenses	\$ 55,811,989	54,693,685
Excess of revenues over expenses for the year	\$ (109,965)	\$ 735,232

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-23

PRESIDENT:

SHARON PENDERGAST

VICE PRESIDENT:

GISELE FORREST

TREASURER:

MICHAEL ILORI

SECRETARY:

DEBBIE OPOKU-MULDER

OACAS PROVINCIAL LIAISON:

COURTNEY CRAIGIE

STEVE CLEMENT

MARY-ANNE DENNY-LUSK

ROBERT GERBRANDT

DONNA GOODWIN

ALISON GREGORY

JEFF HARPER

GWEN LINDSAY

HANS MUNTZ

TAMARA OBEE

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