

Director of Administration - Beth Ponka
Report to Board of Directors – for the Board meeting May 1, 2021

Administration

- An additional lockdown has been announced by the provincial government, taking us now through to May 20. Staff who are able are working from home. Our office space can accommodate more staff than what our office employs and still be well within compliance with the public health guidelines. We have PPE, air purifiers, maintain social distance, wear masks, use hand sanitizer, and most staff have received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine. Most staff feel comfortable if they need to be in the office.
- The annual Board and Staff Strategic Planning session was held, led by Diane Walker. It was a good session and the report and board work plan is being included in the materials distributed for the meeting on May 1 for further discussion and development. Diane has expressed her interest in continuing her work with the board and assisting with the development of the board work plan. We should provide her with some direction on how the board would like her to get involved. Nathaniel Moses participated as our Knowledge Keeper at the strategic planning session and led a teaching during the lunch break.
- Our semi-annual internal training and wellness session was held prior to the strategic planning session. Staff participated in a sound therapy session and completed the Reconciliation in Education certificate program offered through the First Nations University of Canada. This certificate program is also available to the Board of Directors and any new staff members for one year (March 2022).
- The Board Executive met in March and April, and a special meeting was held among myself, the Treasurer and the President to review the draft financial reports for the year ended March 31, 2021, and the updated proposed budget for 2021-22.
- The Interim Agreement with LAO was signed to meet the deadlines imposed by the changes to the legislation. The consultation process for LAO's proposed draft rules has begun and Sally, Alta and I have participated in some of the consultations. Sally and I have also participated in the managers' meetings organized by the ACLCO. Sally will be drafting a submission on behalf of our clinic.

Financial

- We are finishing the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021, with a surplus of approximately \$22,542. We were able to use our funding to maintain our staff positions and fill vacancies so that we could continue to provide high quality legal services to clients in the District of Thunder Bay, despite the pandemic. Although we weren't able to travel, our staff came up with creative ways to continue to provide services while respecting public health guidelines. We were able to invest in office renovations, equipment and PPE to make our offices safer and to enable staff to work remotely. We are well-positioned to be able to provide in-person services (following public health guidelines) when it becomes safe to do so while being able to accommodate staff working remotely as needed.
- The clinic's annual financial audit is scheduled for May 25-27. This is the last year of our three year RFQ so a new RFQ will need to be prepared and sent out by the end of July.
- An updated budget has been prepared for fiscal 2021-22 for review and approval by the board.
- Our funding application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Community Resilience Fund in the amount of \$150,000, to support the evolution of our ID services program in the context of the pandemic, was denied. We will continue to reimburse fees through our MOU program using the funds received for the TDC program. We will continue to work with the academic team at LU to seek out funds to support the project. We are participating in the ID Action Group and will work with them to develop a strategic plan for the continuation of the Awenen Niin ID Services project.

- We have purchased laptops for board members. They are available for pickup at the Thunder Bay office or we can try to arrange delivery. The branch office staff travel to Thunder Bay in May so we can arrange for them to bring the computers back with them. This year we have budgeted to pay a stipend to Board members to help cover costs for internet and phone, which have become essential to be able to participate effectively as a Board member. We can also supply or reimburse for office supplies and any other reasonable cost to help enable you to fulfill your role as a board member – please just ask!
- All payroll and required remittances have been paid.

Human Resources

- Caycie's baby, Harvey Lawrence James Ezack, arrived early on April 5, weighing 5 pounds, 11 ounces. Mom and baby are doing great. Harvey participated in his first Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic staff meeting, via zoom, to meet everyone.
- Patricia Fenton's last official day in the office will be May 14! We are planning a retirement celebration for her via zoom on Thursday, May 13, at 1:30 p.m.
- We posted and recruited for a legal worker position and Allister McGillivray has been hired to begin on April 26 as a staff lawyer on contract until December 24, 2021.
- Larissa has been accepted to Columbia University for the 2021-22 academic year. She is requesting an unpaid leave of absence August 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022 which is reasonable and can be accommodated; Melanie has agreed to work full-time in the summer/fall and Claire is coming back in October.
- We received 13 applications for the administrative assistant position. Sally and I discussed it at our management meeting and we've decided to defer the recruitment for this position until later in the summer. Jessica is finishing school and is able to start in our office full-time on May 3.
- We did not get a match for next year's IPC placement.
- Katrina Langevin, our IPC student this past academic year and summer student last year, may join us again this summer part time.
- Ann McGuire joined our office for approximately 6 weeks mid-March to April on placement through the Confederation College's Aboriginal Community Advocacy Program. She completed a project highlighting some of Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic's actions in Reconciliation, which I'm attaching to this report for your review.
- The ACLCO's Pension Committee has released their report and we are gathering information about the two different plans that are being suggested for consideration. I've organized sessions for northern clinic staff with each of the companies, DPPlus and OPTrust, as well as a northern consultation with members of the ACLCO committee.
- I've been invited to sit on the ACLCO's Pay Equity Committee. We've had a couple of meetings so far to develop our Terms of Reference and to develop a Call for Proposal to retain a pay equity consultant.
- Pam Leblanc, our admin assistant in the Geraldton office, is recovering from her surgery and is expected to return to work at the beginning of June.

Community Development, CD, PLE & Partnerships

- The LPRF contract expired in March and Angie is no longer working with us in the Awenen Niin ID Services Program. We have several MOUs in place to support various agencies in providing ID services and we are continuing to work with the academic team at LU to develop additional systems to provide birth certificate services in the community.
- Angie was involved on a number of committees. Molly will now be our clinic's representative on Poverty Free Thunder Bay and I will be the clinic's representative on the board of the New Directions Speakers' School
- The Private Members' Bill on ID fee waivers was defeated by the Conservative government at second reading. This was an expected outcome. Awareness was raised about the issue and the barriers people face accessing ID.
- The consultants for the Indigenous Legal Needs Assessment are scheduling the last of the consultations with clinics. Catherine Banning, one of the staff at Indigenous Community Engagement (ICE) was recently appointed by the provincial government as a lay benchner of the Law Society of Ontario – the second Indigenous person to be appointed to the LSO bench in its 224 year history.
- We provided information to a human resources consultant who is conducting a salary equity survey on behalf of Nokiiwin Tribal Council staff.
- Several staff and Board members participated in Diversity Thunder Bay's webinar with Jesse Wenten in commemoration of the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Other

- My oldest son, Matthew, became ill in January. He experienced a psychosis induced in part by social isolation caused by covid, resulting in hospitalization. I was able to travel to BC and spent several weeks helping him get better. I really appreciate being supported in working remotely during this time.
- Sally and I participated in a northern ED meeting and ACLCO managers' training session. There is a new ED at the Algoma clinic and an interim ED has been hired at the Sudbury clinic to fill in for Monique's upcoming maternity leave. The ED at the Grand Nord clinic is also going on maternity leave soon.
- I attended a meeting to discuss ways to encourage LAO to develop a more holistic services approach for clients. The result of the meeting is that a community of practice list serve will be launched to enable interested clinic staff to work together on this topic and develop resources.
- Sally will report highlights of the legal work and great outcomes that staff have continued to obtain for clients during the pandemic. Everyone is working really hard, particularly Sally. Sally has continued to lead the clinic through the many changes and challenges that have presented themselves, including but not limited to the pandemic, staff turnover, and the LAO modernization process. Thanks Sally.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Ponka



Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic Commitment to Reconciliation

“Kinna-aweya” is the Ojibway word meaning “Everyone”

by Ann McGuire, April 2021

