

Director of Administration - Beth Ponka

Report to Board of Directors – for the Board meeting November 27, 2021

Administration

- We organized and held the Area Community Meetings and Annual General Meeting for the clinic. Congratulations to all of our Board members who were re-elected in their communities and to the new executive. It is wonderful to welcome Jamie McGinnis back to the Board and on the Executive. Bonnie Vermette is no longer on the Board.
- We continue to be closed to the public and screen visitors before they are allowed to enter the office. We have had clients in the office for hearings and appointments but we are still keeping it to a minimum. The ACLCO organized a training session for managers on developing vaccination policies; the prevailing thoughts are that it is reasonable to require existing employees to follow public health guidelines with respect to the pandemic, and therefore, it is acceptable to have mandatory vaccination requirements (unless there is an approved exception). I will need to update our policy to include vaccine requirements. All new employees are required to be double-vaccinated as a condition of employment.
- The proposed amendments to the by-law were approved by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. A new by-law is ready for execution by the President and Secretary of the Board and I am updating the clinic pamphlet to reflect the change to “Indigenous”.
- We are moving forward with digitizing our documents. All client documents going forward are digitized and we are working on digitizing the accumulated files from the last 10 years. Sufficient space has been created that the front reception area is going to be re-organized to be more functional and have more space – we no longer require the two 4-drawer lateral file cabinets that have been there for many years.
- Legal Aid Ontario is moving forward with updating the clinic’s computer infrastructure. We will be migrating to Windows 10 and Office 365 and will be receiving new computers in the new year.

Financial

- We were successful in our funding application for a Housing Social Navigator and Housing Intake Support Worker under the federal Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy. The purpose of the project is to prevent evictions for our client community. Funding for the project is in place until March 31, 2022 and is administered by the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre. Our first “Dialogue” with the funders is at the beginning of December.
- We are working on a possible application for funding through the Ontario Trillium Foundation to continue the work of the Awenin Niin ID services program. The deadline is December 8 and the funding is for one year, maximum \$150,000. I have a coaching session booked with an OTF staff member to discuss our application’s “fit” with the funding criteria.
- We transferred seamlessly to the DBPlus/CAAT Pension Plan November 1, 2021. Everyone is extremely appreciative of the opportunity to have a true pension plan and thanks the Board very much for supporting this initiative.
- We’ve received notice from LAO regarding our surplus re-allocation for fiscal 2020-21 and have received our allocation for COVID funding.
- I completed the first part of our annual funding application for Tenant Duty Counsel services through the Advocacy Centre for Tenants in Ontario (ACTO).
- All payroll and required remittances have been paid.

Human Resources

- We've had many new faces at the clinic resulting in a lot of time and energy spent with onboarding and orientation. Newcomers since my last written report include Lauren Aho and Megan Belluz with the Eviction Prevention Project; Matthew Jollineau, a first-year law student at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law who is joining us for the academic year as our Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) placement student; and Don Morrison, a retiree who is joining the clinic as a volunteer with the Awenen Niin ID Services project. We've also been approached to host a paralegal placement in December/January and have already been approached by a law student who wishes to intern here for the summer and is able to obtain funding independent of the legal clinic.
- Claire Littleton has returned from her maternity leave. It's really wonderful to have her back in the office. Claire makes an incredible contribution to the work of the clinic.
- We had our semi-annual internal training session leading up to the AGM. We had an all-staff meeting, training on CIMS, and an education session put on by the new pension company. Our wellness session included a fire, birch bark tea and teachings with Metis elder Jim Bowles, as well as a nature walk.
- A job posting is being circulated and posted on Indeed, for a legal worker/lawyer for a six-month contract starting in January - when Molly goes on maternity leave. Allister's contract will also be extended until the end of June. Caycie is expected to be back from her maternity leave in July 2022 and we will hear from Larissa whether she plans to return to her job at the clinic or not.
- The ACLCO's Pay Equity Committee circulated a survey and hosted a training session for managers. They will be doing a follow-up training session in the new year. I am hoping to obtain insights about how to deal with new job categories; how to provide fair wages that comply with pay equity while maintaining equity for existing employees; and how/when our clinic can expect to achieve pay equity.
- Julia Michano, our admin assistant in the Marathon office, is on a medical leave. Her leave is being extended in one-month increments by her physician which makes it difficult to replace her. We will need to look at a longer-term solution in the new year if it isn't more clear when she may be able to return to work.
- We had information sessions for staff with Service Canada to learn more about their income maintenance programs and Thunder Bay Counselling Centre to talk about their financial empowerment tool.
- All of our support staff are members of the Association for Administrative Professionals. Teri recently completed certificates in Accounting Fundamentals and Sage 50 Accounting Level I and Level 2.

Community Development, CD, PLE & Partnerships

- Lauren Aho and Megan Belluz have been hired on contract for the Eviction Prevention Project, which is funded by the federal government through *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*. Lauren and Megan are providing assistance to tenants who are our clients, to help prevent evictions.
- Esma Haider is the CLW responsible for the Sexual Harassment in the Workplace project. At the AGM in October we got to meet Esma in person for the first time, even though she's been working with us for over a year.
- As a partner in the ID Action Group, we have participated in ID clinics held at the NorWest Community Health Centre in August and Roots to Harvest in September. I was a presenter for a training session for agency staff who are looking to provide ID services to their clients. 35 people registered for this zoom

event. An ID clinic at Wequedong Lodge is planned for November 25. We are also working again with Judith Monteith-Farrell on introducing another Private Members' Bill on ID services and to advocate for kinship agreements to be recognized by the Office of the Registrar General.

- Our annual Christmas mail-out to our community partners will include a copy of our Annual Report; 10 pamphlets; a Christmas greeting; and information on how to contact us to schedule an information session on clinic services. We hope to send this out during the first week of December.

Other

- The northern EDs are considering organizing a northern regional training session before the fiscal year-end. If it goes ahead, it will most likely be in Thunder Bay as it is the most central and cheapest training site in the north.
- We had our seasonal feast over zoom which was largely attended by board and staff. Nathaniel Moses provided a smudge and teaching.
- I'm happy to share that I passed the CHRP exam and can proceed to the next step of certification. CHRP stands for Certified Human Resources Professional.
- LASA 2020 was proclaimed in October and the new Service Agreements with Legal Aid Ontario went into effect on October 18. Sally has submitted a follow-up letter outlining some of our concerns with the new Service Agreements and the ACLCO continues to advocate for legal clinics in Ontario.
- Angie Lynch, a former employee who finished employment with us in March as our ID Services Coordinator, passed away in October. In October I also attended a memorial service for another former employee, Paul Reid, who worked with us for a brief period of time in 2015 as a CLW, who passed away in September.
- The ACLCO has been organizing various training sessions for managers. I attended a session on financial management as well as the session on "Vaccine Policy Considerations" mentioned at the beginning of this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Ponka