

Director of Administration - Beth Ponka
Report to Board of Directors
January 27, 2024

Administration

- An amazing opportunity has presented itself for an expansion of our office space in Thunder Bay – half of the upstairs office space of our existing building is currently available and being offered to us at a good price by our landlords. We've previously requested that the landlord give us the first right of refusal if space becomes available. The previous tenant has left and we went on a tour. It's perfect! It includes two fully accessible washrooms and 8 additional rooms/offices. This opportunity is possible due to the confirmation of funding under the Eviction Prevention Project, through to March 2026.

The timing for this opportunity is uncanny. The quotations for the other projects that we were contemplating for our existing office came in and they were even higher than I was expecting – approximately \$50,000 for the reception area project alone, plus \$6,000 to add a door and sidelight for the EPP office. It seems like a much better use of our funding to put the money towards the costs of expanding upstairs, which is needed to accommodate the EPP program and the other projects and activities that we host.

We are bursting at the seams. Currently I have Jessica and Ann both working out of the Board Room and Megan and Sarah share an office. The Board room is also an overflow client interview room. There is sufficient office space upstairs to reconfigure the two spaces so that we have hearing rooms, client interview rooms, file storage, and additional offices to support our staff and projects instead of trying to squeeze in more offices and interview rooms. We can expand upstairs and work on securing funding to make it sustainable after March 31, 2026. I look forward to talking to you about it more and I've taken the liberty of scheduling a tour of the upstairs at 12:30 on Saturday, January 27, when we are all together.

- The strategic planning committee met and is organizing the annual board and staff strategic planning session. Kari Chiapetta will be facilitating the session. We will be developing a work plan flowing from our strategic plan as well as engaging in the Personality Dimensions exercise.
- An Area Community Meeting was held in December at Whitesand First Nation, to replace Lawrence Wanakamik, who was elected Chief of Whitesand First Nation at the beginning of November. Angela Nodin was the successful candidate elected to represent the Armstrong/Whitesand area.
- I have reached out repeatedly to the Marathon landlord to secure a lease renewal for our office in Marathon. They have promised that I will have a copy next week to bring to the Board meeting.

Financial

- Chantal Walterson successfully applied for a grant through the CVITP. We will be receiving over \$4,000 which I would like to earmark for a special item in Geraldton. Chantal and Pam have provided a few suggestions and we will move forward with that.
- The lease renewals for the vehicles is on back order with Marostica Motors.
- I haven't received any information from CIBC about our request for a proposal for banking services. I've sent an email to our contact and will give an update once I hear back from her.
- All payroll and required remittances and reports have been completed.
- The annual Service Proposal and funding application for the Tenant Duty Counsel Program are both due on January 31, 2024.

Human Resources

- We've implemented monthly training sessions for all staff. Our first session was training on OneNote, a Microsoft planning and organizing tool, followed by a discussion and overview of ODSP medical reviews.
- Molly MacDonald is now on maternity leave and Elizabeth Garofalo has been hired on contract to replace her until July 2025.
- Caycie Soke has shared with us that she is also expecting a baby. Her due date is staff participated in our semi-annual Internal Training Session and became certified in Mental Health First Aid Training.
- The Health & Safety Committee is meeting regularly and recently reviewed and updated the policy on "Emergency Office Closures".
- Since the last Board meeting, Terri Zeleny has joined the clinic as the new Admin Assistant/Receptionist replacing Kelly King, who is now the new Intake Worker/CLW. Terri and Kelly have both been doing fantastic in their new roles.
- David Spies has joined the clinic as our IPC student from the BLFL. He'll be with us until mid-April.
- Claire, Caycie and I interviewed three candidates for an IPC placement next year. Hopefully we will match with at least one of the students and ideally, we would be matched so that we could have a student in each of the two school terms next year.
- We are planning our semi-annual internal staff training and a wellness session in March. Esma Haider is going to join us in person – she will be coming up from Toronto.
- The Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Project is scheduled to finish at the end of March 2024. I took over supervising Esma after Molly left for maternity leave. We have been meeting on a weekly basis to wind up her project. I will be providing her with written notice at the end of January.
- The 2023 evaluation cycle has begun. Staff Annual Progress Reports are due on January 31 and evaluations are due to be completed by supervisors by March 31.

Projects & Partnerships

- We have received notice that the EPP project will be extended for 2 years! This is so exciting and opens up additional possibilities for our office. I've met with our current landlord, Mark Garofalo, and they have submitted a proposal to enable us to rent the space upstairs for two years. Together with some of our other income and resources, it is feasible and desirable to expand into the space upstairs.
- The final community consultations for the Indigenous Legal Needs Assessment have been held in our three communities and throughout the north. A final report should be received by the end of February, so that the project can be wrapped up by the end of March.
- I am a member of the BLFL Indigenous Admissions Committee. I reviewed and assessed applications for the upcoming academic year.
- As co-Chair of the New Directions Speakers' School, I'm involved in various meetings, including serving as Chair of their ONCA committee.

Other

- The Policy Committee met and has started reviewing our Operations Manual and policies. The Organizational Chart was the first one reviewed and a couple of small updates were made. That policy will be reviewed and discussed at the Board meeting.
- Claire and I met with the other northern executive directors and Lenny Abramowicz, the ED of the ACLCO. A letter will be sent to LAO requesting additional funding for learning and training. Lenny informed us that the ACLCO continues to meet with LAO to secure a new funding arrangement for clinics. Nothing has been confirmed yet and we haven't received any additional funding at this time.
- We had our seasonal feast on December 21.
- I will be re-certifying my Standard First Aid and CPR next week.

I look forward to seeing you all next week at the Board meeting. Safe travels.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Ponka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beth Ponka