

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic

Overview of Services

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic provides legal advice and assistance to residents of the District of Thunder Bay, particularly Indigenous people, who need assistance with poverty law issues. We help people get income maintenance benefits and maintain access to housing.

We offer our services at no cost to people with low incomes who meet our financial eligibility guidelines.

The main areas that we deal with are income maintenance – Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, CPP Disability, Employment Insurance, Canada Child

Benefit – and preventing evictions.

In addition to casework, our staff are involved in community development projects, public legal education workshops, outreach activities, and law reform initiatives.

Our main office is in Thunder Bay and we have full-time branch offices in Geraldton and Marathon with toll-free phone numbers. Armstrong and Whitesand are serviced by a legal worker that travels to the community approximately every two months.

Legal workers travel regularly to various towns and First

Nations communities throughout the District.

We also have a toll-free phone number that can be dialed from anywhere in the District.

Kinna-aweya is an independent, non-profit corporation overseen by an all-Indigenous Board of Directors. We are funded by Legal Aid Ontario.



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Cultural Coordinator Update

By Ann McGuire



Boozhoo, Kinna-aweya,

This past May, I completed reading all the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada at our weekly staff meetings. We had time to discuss, reflect and enact what we can in our office space to protect and promote the safety of Indigenous peoples in our community.

May 5th was the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Red Dress Day) and I displayed our Red Dress in the lobby of the Thunder Bay office. Starting July 2nd, we will be reading the Calls to Justice from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG.

On a personal note adding to my journey of promoting public education and awareness for MMIWG, my artwork of my sister, Jamie McGuire that I painted with The Medicine Lines of Womanhood Commemorative Art Project (ONWA), will now be on the cover of She is Wise magazine.

The magazine launched June 21, which is National Indigenous Peoples Day. Copies will be available at the Thunder Bay office, along with copies of the Reconciliation with Indigenous Women Report for July. Miigwech,
Ann McGuire

Canada Child Benefit



Canada

The Canada Child Benefit has become a very significant part of low-income families' income. Our clinic has been retained by parents whose benefits are being reviewed by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

The CRA requests extensive information and sometimes it can be very difficult and at times costly to get this information. If parents are not able to provide this information, their benefits are cut off. Once this happens, overpayments, often totaling tens of thousands of dollars, are declared against them.

We are able to provide assistance for Canada Child Benefit matters. In addition, the Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) can assist: Patty Hajdu Constituency Office: 3 – 705 Red River Road, 766-2090, toll free at 1-888-266-8004 and Marcus Powlowski Constituency Office: 1 - 905 E. Victoria Ave., 625-1160, toll free at 1-800-667-6186.

New Directions Speakers' School



New Directions Speakers' School was founded in 2008 through an initiative of the Thunder Bay & District Injured Workers' Support Group in collaboration with various community partners, including the Lakehead Social Planning Council and the Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic.

The school's main purpose is to develop public speaking and leadership skills and to raise awareness of social justice issues. The school is open to anyone who is an injured worker, living in poverty or facing other economic challenges. The school attempts to address and overcome barriers to participation and promotes an atmosphere of peer support and mutual aid.

This free 14 week course runs twice a year teaching public speaking and leadership skills in an environment of peer support and within the context of education in social justice issues; guest speakers present on issues relating to disability, poverty, and unemployment. If you are interested or would like more information, email speakersschool@gmail.com!

New Hours of Operation

In Thunder Bay, the summer office hours will now be the regular office hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 12 noon, and 1 pm to 4:30 pm!

Intake is available on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We have limited intake capacity; first come, first served.

In the branch offices, our legal workers travel to various communities. Intake availability varies; however, there are full-time administrative assistants in our branch offices, who can provide assistance and referrals.

Access to Justice at Ontario's Administrative Tribunals

By Claire Littleton

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Like all community legal clinics across the province of Ontario, Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic appears regularly before administrative tribunals on behalf of our clients. Most frequently, we appear at the Social Benefits Tribunal and the Landlord and Tenant Board, helping our clients access social assistance programs and preserve their housing. These tribunals are responsible for making decisions that have a massive impact on the daily lives of low-income Ontarians.

Unfortunately, over the past several years there has been an erosion in public trust in our tribunals. Media reports have highlighted concerns regarding the appointment process for tribunal members, the quality of adjudication, significant delays, and the removal of almost all in-person hearings.

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic, together with most other community legal clinics across the province, has supported Bill 179, the 'Fewer Backlogs and Less Partisan Tribunals Act'. The purpose of this act is to "ensure that Ontario's adjudicative tribunals deliver accessible, timely, expert, inclusive, impartial and just resolutions of legal disputes by establishing an independent monitoring and advisory body."

While Bill 179 did not pass second reading in the Provincial Legislature, the underlying concerns about Ontario's administrative tribunals remain. If you care about this issue, reach out to your local MPP to express your support for better access to justice for Ontarians.

Centralized OW and ODSP intake

By Claire Littleton

As part of the provincial government's effort to modernize the delivery of social assistance, there are three ways to apply for OW or ODSP – online, over the phone, or in-person. Applications submitted online or by telephone are reviewed by a centralized office at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). If an application is granted, the case will be transferred to the local OW or ODSP office for what the Ministry calls "life stabilization services". If the application is denied, the applicant should be informed of the decision and of their right to appeal.

OW recommends that, when completing the telephone or online application, all household members should be present with documents ready, including your Social Insurance Number, your OHIP card, immigration papers and banking information.

People who are unable to complete the application online or by telephone can go to the local Ontario Works or ODSP office to complete an application.

The online application is available at www.sada.mcscs.gov.on.ca

To apply for telephone call 1-888-999-1142.

If your application is denied, you may have the right to appeal. You can contact Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic for information and advice. You can also get more information about your legal rights at www.cleo.on.ca.

Good Food Box



Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is a host site for the Good Food Box program in Thunder Bay.

The Good Food Box is a non-profit program for families and individuals who want to purchase quality, fresh, local produce at a lower price than shopping at grocery stores.

You can purchase a box for \$22. Boxes are ordered and paid for by the first Thursday of each month. Food is available for pick up at the legal clinic on the 2nd last Thursday of the month.

This means food is accessible at a time when some have less money available for buying food. There are many other host sites throughout the city, to make it easier for people to pick up their food. To find the host site closest to you, call (807) 345-7819.

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

By Chantal Walterson

The Geraldton and Marathon branch office staff continued their participation in the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program. The Community Volunteer Income Tax Program is a collaboration between community organizations and the Canada Revenue Agency. Through this program, community organizations such as Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic host free tax clinics where volunteers complete tax returns for people with a modest income and a simple tax situation. The completion of income tax returns is very crucial to our clients as it insures that families, individuals and elders continue to receive government benefits such as Canada Child Benefits, GST, Trillium and the Canada Carbon Credits without interruptions. Income tax clinics were held on all First Nation communities that the clinic services. **For the period of June 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024, a total of 521 income tax returns were completed.**

What is Advocacy North?

By Megan Stuckey

It took me a year to fully understand Advocacy North. This program was initially described to me as *an initiative of the 11 northern clinics*. That was about as clear as mud. What kind of initiative? And how does one lawyer, working in Sudbury, meet the needs of 11 clinics spread across a region the size of France? The answer was simple: *ask*. Each year I ask again, and each year Kinna-aweya tells me the same thing: *visit us*. Of my 46 days on the road last year, I spent 30 in the Kinna-aweya catchment area. This adds up to 20% of my total working days spent in your region. I return to Thunder Bay each spring and fall to visit the same senior apartments, teaching the residents about senior scams (they never tire of that topic!). In Marathon I join your staff as guests at the First Nations, offering what services I can. And just this week I drove to a rainy Geraldton for the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day BBQ to speak on Power of Attorneys and the dangers of joint bank accounts.

My greatest priority has been ensuring that Advocacy North remains a program for all of the north. That means providing services from the road, attending communities, and assisting seniors face to face. Advocacy North is just one small part of what the clinics provide to a vast population, and I am grateful to be a small part of your clinic.

CERB Repayments

By Melanie MacKenzie

It has been four years since the federal government rolled out its emergency pandemic programs and many of our clients are only learning now that they have to pay back the money.

Between March and October 2020, the federal government paid out nearly \$82 billion in CERB to 8.9 million Canadians. A 2022 auditor's report found that \$4.6 billion was paid to people who shouldn't have qualified.

Our office has seen an upsurge in calls from clients who have been told that they owe tens of thousands of dollars back to the Government of Canada. For many people, even people without disabilities and low literacy, the eligibility was confusing. Although everyone's circumstances are different, anecdotally, clients have told our office that they were assured by friends and family that they were eligible and that the benefit was for all Canadians.

As people living on a fixed income, including Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan disability, our clients do not have the means, four years after receiving the money to pay it back.

The result of having to pay back the benefits is causing our clients, who already live far below the poverty line, deeper financial hardship

In certain circumstances, our office may be able to help. Otherwise, we are referring people to their Member of Parliament.

Eviction Prevention Project

By Sarah Racine

The Eviction Prevention Project (EPP) continues to work with the staff of Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic to provide services to clients in obtaining and maintaining sustainable housing. The focus of this program has continued to preserve tenancies of those who are still in sustainable units, and shelter divert those that are unhoused. We also have a substantial amount of Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) clients who need assistance with annual reviews, paying arrears, connecting with the tenant outreach workers. In doing this work, we have built strong relationships with agencies, including TBDSSAB.

The EPP team often will go into the community and meet clients where they are. We do this to create an accessible environment, and ensuring best care.

We continue to offer Housing Application Groups at both the Brodie Public Library, and Waverley Public Library. These groups allow EPP clients to complete housing applications, including private-market rentals, rent geared-to income rentals. We are also able to assist clients with subsidy applications and a one-time payment application for arrears (Housing Security Fund). We provide light snacks and tablets for clients to use. We also have resources such as; Rental Companies, Websites, Application Forms, and Tablets to use.

Through the Reaching Home directives, our program is able to assist our clients with food resources, some emergency shelter items (tents, tarps, sleeping bags) and storage of property. Having these resources available has become a staple in our service delivery.

Weekly we participate on CHAT to connect with other community agencies and provide services when available to those experiencing homelessness. On a monthly basis, we participate on the Housing and Homelessness Coalition, ID Action Group, Shelter Diversion and Eviction Prevention and Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee. All great community partners that ensure we are delivering the best services to our clients and community members.

Ontario Disability Support Program – Rate Increase

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates increased by 4.5% effective July 1, 2024. This inflation-based increase applies to basic needs and shelter maximum amounts, board and lodge amounts, the amount provided for a couple where both have disabilities, and amounts for services provided by a long-term care home or specialized care residence.

This will be the second annual inflation adjustment to ODSP rates – the first one, in July 2023, was a 6.5% increase.

Unfortunately, no changes are being made to Ontario Works rates.

Canada Disability Benefit

The Federal Government announced in their April budget that the long awaited Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) would be available starting in July 2025. The benefit will be capped at a maximum of \$2,400 per year, or \$200 per month.



Canada

It was initially believed that this program would lift people with disabilities out of poverty. If the benefit remains capped at \$2,400, this will not happen.

To qualify for the CDB, you must already be receiving the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), which is already hard to get and only people with specific restrictions qualify. In addition, only a doctor or nurse practitioner can fill in the DTC forms, and many people in Ontario do not have one because of the current family doctor shortage. Making the DTC the gateway to the new CDB will only increase barriers for people who are most in need of the CDB, including those living on a low income.

With so many problems, there will be consultations held in the Fall for more input.

Canadian Dental Care Plan

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) will help make the cost of dental care more affordable for eligible Canadian residents.

Applications now open for:

- Seniors aged 65 and over
- Children under the age of 18
- Adults with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) provides dental care coverage to Canadian residents who have an adjusted family net income below \$90,000 and who don't have access to dental insurance. For eligible Canadian residents, the CDCP will help cover the cost of various oral health care services.

To learn more about the CDCP, please visit the government website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental/dental-care-plan.html>

7 Marathon and District Chamber of Commerce's 7th Annual Business Awards Gala



Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is elated to announce our recent nomination and acceptance of the Employee Satisfaction Award at the Marathon and District Chamber of Commerce's 7th Annual Business Awards Gala. The gala recognizes the well-deserved efforts of the districts businesses, organizations and individuals based on various award categories.

The Employee Satisfaction Award underscores Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic's steadfast commitment to creating a positive and enriching work environment that promotes employee growth, development, and well-being. Through initiatives such as professional development opportunities, employee recognition programs, and a supportive leadership team, our clinic has fostered a culture of collaboration, trust, and empowerment.

Congratulations and a big thank you to Miriam McCutcheon and Brandi DeJonge, our Marathon branch office staff.

Seniors Expo

By Miriam McCutcheon

The Marathon Branch Office was invited to participate in the Seniors Expo that was held at the Marathon Peninsula Manor on June 5, 2024.

The event was very well attended by residents of the Manor as well as seniors/members from the public.

There was a wide variety of local organizations, service providers and businesses from the community on hand showcasing their services and opportunities that are available for seniors. We had Kinna-aweya's slide show running for them to watch. We also had a variety of CLEO pamphlets available for them with respect to senior issues - housing, wills & power of attorney, care homes, elder abuse, rights, etc. The Manor provided a nice BBQ lunch for everyone.

We also advised people that we would be back on June 18th with Megan Stuckey from the Advocacy North Program. She held a PLE and also did appointments for those that needed her services. There was a lot of interest.



Office Expansion

By Beth Ponka

On March 1, 2024, Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic expanded its Thunder Bay office. In addition to our existing office space on the entire lower level of 86 S. Cumberland Street, we are now also leasing half of the upper level in the same building.

The upper level provides additional office space for our legal staff and support staff, as well as providing a new kitchen, cultural space, and a board room with gorgeous views of Nanabijou (Sleeping Giant) and Gichigami (Lake Superior).

Our lower level is where our reception, intake, and hearings offices continue to be located and our main point of contact for our clients and the public.



Comings and Goings

By Beth Ponka

Two of our staff lawyers are presently on maternity leave. In their place, we have hired Allister McGillivray and Matthew Jollineau. Allister previously worked here on contract as a staff lawyer and Matthew has worked with us off and on, in various capacities, since his first year at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law. We wish Molly MacDonald and Caycie Soke much happiness while they enjoy their time with their growing families.

Terri Zeleny started working with us in November 2023 as an Administrative Assistant. She replaces Kelly King, who was the successful candidate for the Community Legal Worker/Intake Worker position. Congratulations Kelly!

Jessica Barry is back in our office working full-time for the summer. She will continue her post-secondary studies in the fall while working part-time as one of our Administrative Assistants.

David Spies recently completed his Integrated Practice Curriculum (IPC) Placement in our office. An IPC placement is when students at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law are in their last year of school and they spend one academic term working in a law office. Matthew Jollineau is one of our previous IPC students too! In September 2024, we will be welcoming Jenny Chapman as our IPC placement student in the 2024/25 academic year.

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, we also hosted a Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) student placement. Alexandra Bula volunteered in our office a few hours each week, assisting with research, document management, and hearings preparation. Thank you Alex and best of luck with your studies!

The Board of Directors of Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is comprised of seven directors representing our five constituent communities:

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Alta Fenton, President and Chair | Thunder Bay |
| Candace Davies, Vice-President | Nipigon |
| Cindy Whittington, Secretary-Treasurer | Thunder Bay |
| Robyn Medicine | Thunder Bay |
| Angela Nodin | Armstrong |
| Andrea O’Nabigon | Geraldton |
| Theresa Ray | Marathon |

Directors are elected at our Area Community Meetings in September, to serve two-year terms that are renewable.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation to our Board of Directors, who are all volunteers who devote their time and energy to overseeing the work and delivery of services for Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic.

Staff Members

Geraldton Office:

Chantal Walterson
Pam Leblanc
Community Legal Worker/Licensed Paralegal
Administrative Assistant

Marathon Office:

Miriam McCutcheon
Brandi DeJonge
Community Legal Worker
Administrative Assistant

Thunder Bay Office:

Jessica Barry
Megan Belluz
Kim Facca
Teri Hofer
Cindy Johnson
Matthew Jollineau
Kelly King
Tracey Lawrence
Claire Littleton
Molly MacDonald
Melanie MacKenzie
Allister McGillivray
Ann McGuire
Beth Ponka
Sarah Racine
Caycie Soke
Administrative Assistant/File Digitization Clerk
Housing Intake Support Worker – Eviction Prevention Project
Community Legal Worker/RSW
Executive Assistant
Executive Assistant
Licensing Candidate (contract)
Community Legal Worker/Intake Worker
Community Legal Worker/Licensed Paralegal
Staff Lawyer/Coordinator of Legal Services
Staff Lawyer (on leave)
Community Legal Worker/Licensed Paralegal
Staff Lawyer (contract)
Cultural Coordinator
Director of Administration
Housing Systems Navigator – Eviction Prevention Project
Staff Lawyer (on leave)



Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic

Main office:
86 S. Cumberland St.
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 2V3
Phone: 807-344-2478
Fax: 807-345-2842
Toll Free: 1-888-373-3309



We're on the Web!

www.kalc.ca



The clinic's main office is in Thunder Bay and there are two branch offices in Geraldton and Marathon. Each branch office is staffed by a full-time legal worker and a full-time administrative assistant and the legal workers are supervised by lawyers in the Thunder Bay office.

The branch office legal workers travel to the following First Nation communities: Moberg, Pays Plat, Long Lake 58, Ginoogaming, Aroland, MacDiarmid, and Lake Helen. In addition, they have also travel to the following non-reserve communities: Manitouwadge, Schreiber, Nakina, Jellicoe, Beardmore, and Nipigon.

Geraldton and Area

404 Main Street, Unit A
P.O. Box 1090
Geraldton, ON P0T 1M0
Phone: (807)854-1278
Fax: (807)854-1542
Toll Free: 1-866-875-4952

Marathon and Area

#101 – 52 Peninsula Square
P.O. Box 658
Marathon, ON P0T 2E0
Phone: (807)229-2290
Fax: (807)229-0486
Toll Free: 1-866-389-1477

Important Dates to Remember:

Area Community Meetings are held every year in Armstrong, Geraldton, Marathon, Nipigon, and Thunder Bay. These meetings provide members with an update of the legal clinic's activities over the past year.

This year, the meetings are scheduled as follows:

Thunder Bay: Friday, September 13, 2024 – Noon – Prince Arthur Hotel, Bertrand Room

Marathon: Monday, September 16, 2024 - 5:30 p.m. – Wilson Memorial Hospital, Board Room

Geraldton: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 - 5:00 p.m. – Thunderbird Friendship Centre
(to be confirmed)

Nipigon: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 - 5:30 p.m. – Resource Centre, Lake Helen Reserve

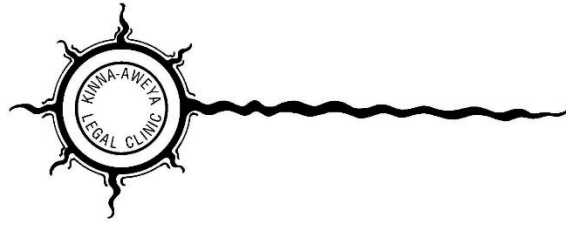
Armstrong: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 - 6:00 p.m. – Whitesand Health Centre – Board Room

The following Board member terms are expiring at these meetings:

Cindy Whittington (Thunder Bay), Robyn Medicine (Thunder Bay), Andrea O'Nabigon (Geraldton), and Angela Nodin (Armstrong).

The Annual General Meeting: Saturday, October 26, 2024 9:30 a.m.
Superior Inn Hotel and Conference Centre
555 Arthur St. W., Thunder Bay, Ontario

Membership in the legal clinic is open to people 18 years of age and older who reside in the District of Thunder Bay and who are of Indigenous ancestry. Membership application forms will be available at the meeting for new members, or complete application form attached.



KINNA-AWEYA LEGAL CLINIC Membership Application

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

(Street and Post Office Box Number if applicable)

(City/Town)

(Postal Code)

CELL PHONE _____ HOME _____

DATE OF BIRTH* _____ EMAIL _____

(DAY/MONTH/YEAR)

*to confirm that member is at least 18 years of age

Full Membership in the Legal Clinic shall be open to any person of Indigenous descent who is a resident in the District of Thunder Bay in the Province of Ontario and who is eighteen years of age or older.

Associate Membership shall be open to any interested persons.

Honorary Membership shall be open to any person who, in the opinion of the Board of Directors of the Legal Clinic or that of the Full Members at an Annual General Meeting of the Legal Clinic, merits such special consideration.

Only Full Members of the Legal Clinic shall be entitled to hold office in the Legal Clinic, to sit on the Board of Directors of the Legal Clinic, to be elected as delegates at General Meetings and to vote at any meetings of the Legal Clinic.

Persons applying for membership in the Legal Clinic shall be added to its membership register upon receipt of their application. The Board reserves the right to terminate membership for good and proper reason.

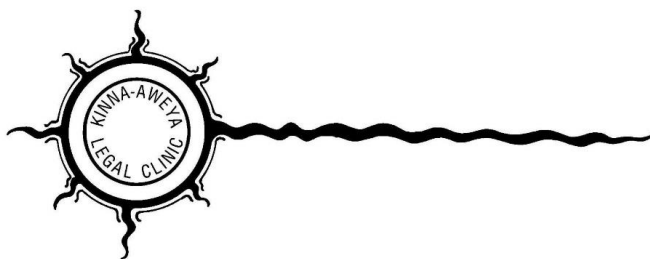
The Directors may set membership dues and fees, if any, by By-law. Currently there are no dues/fees.

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP FULL _____ I am a person with Indigenous ancestry

ASSOCIATE _____ HONORARY _____ (Approved by the Board)

SIGNATURE

DATE



Benefits of being a member of the legal clinic include:

- Access to information about the programs and services offered by Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic
- Information about poverty law issues such as social assistance, tenant rights, community development, and law reform
- Supporting the clinic in providing vital services in our community
- Annual newsletter
- Invitation to attend Annual Community Meetings held in each of our five main communities (Armstrong, Geraldton, Marathon, Nipigon and Thunder Bay) every September.
- Opportunity to attend Annual General Meeting in Thunder Bay October. Travel expenses and accommodations are paid for delegates coming from the outlying communities.
- Ability to become a member of the Board of Directors