

2022•2023 ANNUAL REPORT



BRUCE GREY
CHILD &
FAMILY
SERVICES





Julie Lipsett
Executive Director



Linda Van Sligtenhorst
Board Chair

It has been a year of change and growth for Bruce Grey Child and Family Services (BGCFS). This year was my first full year as the current Executive Director and the year has included planning for one of the biggest regulatory changes in a couple of decades; the Quality Standards Framework (QSF). We have been a leader in planning for this and are well positioned for full implementation this summer. Other regulatory changes such as Ready, Set, Go, which supports youth 18-23 years old have also been implemented.

Throughout the year, there has been a focus on an engaged workforce. We completed bargaining with CUPE 5058 and have a new collective agreement to cover April 22, 2022 to March 31, 2025. The Union leadership was instrumental in helping achieve an agreement that meets the needs of their members and the organization. We have also done the following to support an engaged workforce:

- ☛ A paradigm shift related to decision-making. This shift should better support staff to feel empowered and included in the short and longer-term decisions that are made; and,
- ☛ Revision of educational credentials to promote from within; and,
- ☛ HR review to better support recruitment and retention; and,
- ☛ Changes to how vacation is determined; and,
- ☛ All staff were trained on the Working Minds wellness training; and,
- ☛ Laptops for were provided to all staff.

We have moved to a new phase in our Signs of Safety (SOS) journey. We are focused on sustainment and embedding the service delivery model. This model, which has been adopted or committed to by all mainstream child welfare organizations in Ontario, is a model that is in place in many countries worldwide and focusses on developing safety plans and engaging the family’s network.

In February, the organization created a blended service team comprised of Child Protection workers from Intake and Family Services to provide service and support to Saugeen First Nation and Neyaashiingmiing. This team has been engaging with the First Nation Communities and local Indigenous service providers to identify areas of opportunity moving forward. This is exciting and should help ensure more consistency in workers and relationships for the Communities. BGCFS and Saugeen First

Nation have also continued our partnership in support of a Formal Customary Care Worker who is employed by the Community but works closely with BGCFS and our staff.

The work of BGCFS is not possible without the committed staff that work hard each day to support the children and youth of Bruce and Grey counties. We have had a stable workforce during the last year after a couple of difficult years while meeting the challenges of COVID-19. The way in which we work has likely changed forever but we could not be more proud of the staff that helped BGCFS through the unique circumstances that we faced for three years.

Services for complex youth continues to be at a crisis point for the sector. BGCFS has been in a position to support these youth, but a better and more sustainable approach is required. We are working closely with government sectors and officials to try and develop an improved and more supportive approach for these young people. This will be an ongoing priority for all child welfare organizations.

BGCFS continues to move forward with our commitments to Indigenous persons and communities. You will see more about this later in this AGM report. In addition to the commitments, we participated in the Indigenous Gathering at Walpole Island and the 2022 Indigenous Child and Family Well Being Conference. Both of these opportunities highlighted the importance of truth and the role BGCFS can play in reconciliation.

The next fiscal year will see the development of a new strategic plan. We expect extensive consultation with staff, stakeholders and the community in the coming months as this process begins. The plan will be our guiding light through the work of child welfare in Bruce and Grey for the next three to five years.

Thank you to the Board, volunteers, staff, foster, adoptive and kinship providers, students and community members that all support the work of BGCFS. It is the effort of all of us together that allows children to be safe and cared for in our community.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Linda Van Sligtenhorst

Linda is an energetic business owner and volunteer, mother of six, and grandmother of seven. Linda and her husband Fred raised a busy family and became foster parents where they cared for several children and did respite foster care.



Craig Ambrose

Craig is currently the Chief of the Owen Sound Police Service. He grew up and lived in rural Waterloo region and worked through the ranks of the Waterloo Regional Police Service during his 29 years prior to moving to Owen Sound in 2019.



Alison Fernandes

Alison is honored to be a member of the Board of Directors of Bruce Grey Child and Family Services as she has an innate passion for engaging and empowering children and families within our community along with supporting the frontline workers of BGCFS.



John Tamming

John has practiced law for 30 years in Grey-Bruce and has a solid and intimate understanding of the social support and other needs of the region. John has served on numerous boards and committees over the years, including serving as Owen Sound city councillor.



Chris Wren

Chris is a semi-retired environmental consultant. He completed his Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences at the University of Guelph. He is a former foster parent and now an adoptive parent.



Ellen Dirstein

Ellen recently retired after working for more than 40 years with children and families. Ellen has a master's degree in clinical psychology which has allowed her to work in the fields of education, mental health and child welfare.



Susanne Snowdon

Susanne is a registered nurse and is a member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.



James Rice

James is a former Crown Ward of Bruce Grey Child and Family Services. James attended the University of Guelph where he graduated with an Honours degree in Criminal Justice and Public Policy. While at the University of Guelph, James served on the Board of Directors for Bruce Grey Child and Family Services and was the Undergraduate Governor at the University.



Selwyn Hicks

Selwyn was determined to overcome the negative forces which surrounded him as a child, and made a decision at a very young age to dream big and aim high.



Andrew Martinen

Andrew was born and raised in the Toronto area. He received a Master of Divinity degree in 1988 after attending school in Canada, Great Britain and the United States.



Brittany Andor

Brittany was born and raised in Montreal Quebec. She received a Master of Arts degree in 2019 from the University of Guelph.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM



L to R: Kelly Ferris, Julie Lipsett, Anne Bester, Ryan Thompson and Rebecca Raynsford

The Senior Team welcomed Rebecca Raynsford to the team in May of 2022. Rebecca brings years of child welfare experience to her new role. Rebecca grew up in the Owen Sound area and started at BGCFS (former Grey CAS) in 1990 as a volunteer, progressing to the Summer Camp Coordinator and then to support positions like Emergency After Hours Worker before becoming a Child Protection Worker (former Bruce CAS) in 1995. In 2002, Rebecca became a Child Protection Supervisor and worked in many areas of the organization until her recent transition to Director of Service.

The Senior Team also welcomed Ryan Thompson to the team in June 2022. Ryan grew up in the Wiarton area and started working with Bruce CAS in 2006. His career started as a Child Protection Worker in the Family Service Department. Ryan joined the leadership team in 2015 as the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) supervisor. Following that assignment, Ryan was a Quality Supervisor, and a supervisor of Family Resource Workers and a Family Service team.



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ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING A VOLUNTEER?

Volunteers serve in various ways at Bruce Grey Child and Family Services helping to achieve our vision of engaged and caring communities where children and youth thrive in strong families. Currently, volunteers help with drives to appointments and mentoring/tutoring support. Volunteers play an important role in the lives of those we serve. With the support of BGCFS volunteers:

- A high school senior had the support and encouragement of a mentor in her pursuit of post secondary studies.
- A youth was assisted in getting their drivers license.
- A high school student was driven to his co-op placement.
- A runaway was driven home and reunited with family.
- A teen was being supported in their Independent Studies courses to help them graduate.
- Children were driven to visits with family.
- A volunteer with experience as a Realtor was matched with a youth seeking to secure their first independent housing arrangement.

To learn more about volunteering please email, inquiries@bgcfs.ca or call 519-371-4453.



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OUR COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS PERSONS AND COMMUNITIES

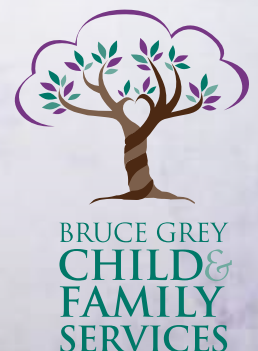
Our Commitment to reduce the number of Indigenous Children in Care.



Commitment to reducing the number of Court files that involved Indigenous children, youth and families.



Commitment to increase the use of Formal Customary Care Agreements.



RESOURCE FAMILIES

Meet Shelly and Larry Sheard



On the final day of school in 2000, life changed for Shelly and Larry Sheard. This was the day they welcomed the first child into their home as foster parents. Fostering had been something that the family had considered for several years but the timing was not right. That is until Shelly said to Larry one day “What do you think about fostering now?” ... the response, “I think the time is right.”

Many things have changed over 23 years. Most notably, the needs of the children are more acute and complex. The Sheard’s are using skills now they did not need in the past as each child presents them with their own uniqueness and opportunities. It takes a team to support

the children and families that care for them. Shelly also shares how many children will go to Nanny and Pops and when you foster a child, it is good to be comfortable with the plan of having them go and be with others too.

The Sheard’s have years of experience to share with others who may be considering becoming foster parents. Their advice would be to begin by providing respite as respite providers are a critical part of the team and what allows children to have successes in their placements. You will always have the support of workers who will regularly visit the home to see the children and ensure all requirements are being met and the children are safe and happy in their placement.

Shelly and Larry, and their family, shared the value of “helping where we could”. As they saw things in their own community that concerned them, they knew they had the family and support system that could help and support others. These values remain a large part of who they are and what motivates them to continue.

There are many ways to be part of the team that supports children and youth. You can foster, volunteer, or sit on the Board. When we asked Shelly one thing she would want people to know, she said “it’s harder than you think” but she also added ‘it is challenging but when you see progress, stability, that is very rewarding”.

Today, and every day, we thank Shelly and Larry, and all foster parents, for their decades supporting the children and youth in our area.

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of becoming a foster parent, please email inquiries@bgcfs.ca or call (519) 371-4453.



GET TO KNOW BRUCE GREY CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES!

Join us at our Foster Parent and Volunteer
Recruitment Event!

Learn how you can support your
community by becoming a foster parent
or volunteer.

July
12

1 - 7pm

Rain or shine

Harrison Park,
Owen Sound
• picnic pavilion

- Free snacks & drinks, limited free mini golf & paddle boating & fun giveaways available!

We're here to answer any questions
you have!



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If you're interested but can't attend,
contact us at: inquiries@bgcfs.ca



WE ARE COMMITTED TO THIS WORK

Bruce Grey Child and Family Services' received information that a youth had left their home and traveled over 600 kilometers and ended up in our area. This young person had been reported missing to police. From the onset, it was clear this was a story of a young person who made a bad decision and we identified quickly that there were no child protection concerns with respect to the caregivers.

We immediately began working to reunite this young person with their family, work began on Friday evening around 5:30 pm, went into the early hours of Saturday morning (4:00 am) and resumed promptly at 9:00 am on Saturday. We learned through our work that this family is Indigenous, and that the caregivers were incredibly worried about their child, because they knew that too many Indigenous youth who go missing do not return.

The family told us they simply had no resources to travel to pick up their child, as they do not drive and had no access to a vehicle. In the absence of a family plan, we had no choice but to offer a temporary placement. The family was cautiously grateful. On one hand, they were happy that their child had found who they believed to be good people, but they also shared their anxiety about foster care. With grandma being a survivor of residential schools, Mom being missing, and Dad having struggled in his life with the impacts of intergenerational trauma, they worried about the plan but were grateful that their child had a warm place to be. We did everything we could to minimize the impact of this situation for the

family. We ensured that the family had the foster home contact information and committed to get their child back to them as quickly as possible.

Knowing the time commitment it would take, the Supervisor reached out to the list of the After-Hours Emergency Service staff volunteer roster to see if we could get help so that we could support this young person's journey home, and still be available to deal with urgent situations here at home. There were numerous offers of support from staff willing to give up their weekend to help this young person reunite with their family.

The staff on the weekend navigated what seemed like endless complicating factors including the weather, the distance to the family, and inter-agency politics but we remained steadfast in our commitment to get this young person home. What we observed in all of the staff who helped this weekend was a solid commitment to Indigenous families and youth, and how staff never wavered once from keeping the youth at the center of the decision that was made. BGCFS was so happy to be able to say that this young person did not stay in care for 1 second longer than they needed to be. From the time of placement in the foster home, to the time of placement back at the family home was less than 24 hours!

We are so very proud of our staff for their commitment to this young person and their family.

Between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023
we had:

1275

CASES
OPENED TO
INVESTIGATION

538

FAMILIES
THAT
WERE
PROVIDED
SERVICE

As of March 31, 2023 we had:

58

CHILDREN
IN KINSHIP
HOMES



CHILD WELFARE FINANCIALS

for the fiscal year of April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

	For the year ended March 31/23	For the year ended March 31/22
Revenue		
Province of Ontario	\$ 19,975,015	\$ 19,523,596
Other revenue	864,607	851,375
	\$ 20,839,622	\$ 20,374,971
Expenses		
Salaries	9,913,462	10,465,827
Benefits	2,993,198	2,954,508
Travel	731,564	573,837
Training	115,840	125,376
Occupancy costs	551,400	510,361
Professional services - Non Client	363,733	193,479
Program	6,553	10,786
Boarding payments	3,117,298	2,973,900
Professional services - Client	145,748	49,435
Client Personal Needs	347,863	389,673
Health and Medical	91,199	96,797
Financial Assistance	98,584	43,399
Adoption Subsidy	864,910	768,952
Promotion and Publicity	42,026	45,792
Office Administration	193,562	196,370
Miscellaneous	301,724	265,906
Technology	579,581	366,893
	\$ 20,458,245	\$ 20,031,291
Excess of revenue over expenses for the year	\$ 381,377	\$ 343,680



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