

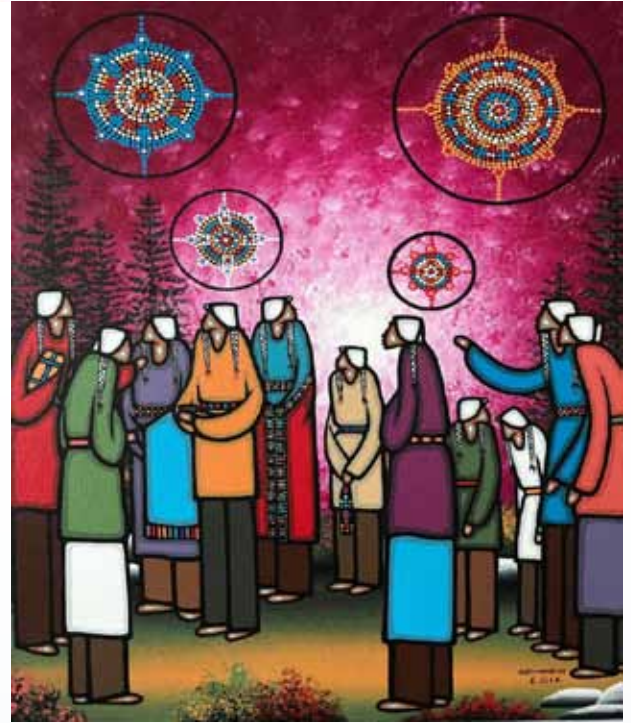
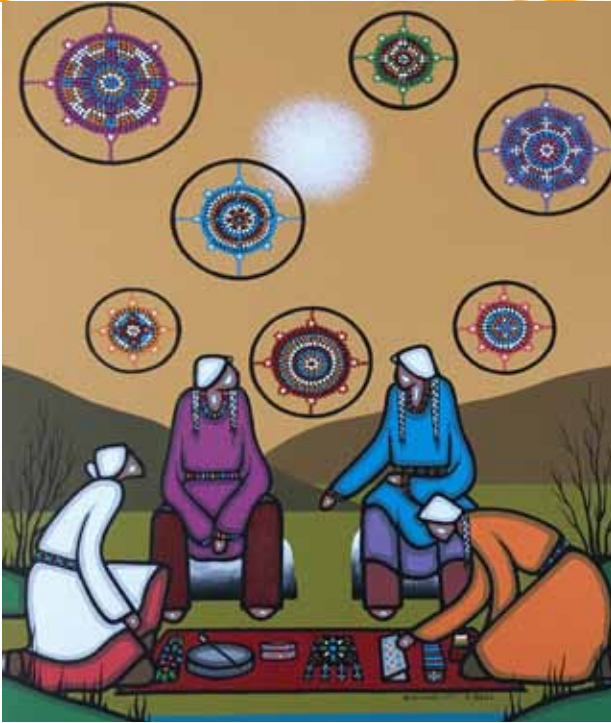
OAHAS

2017/2018 Annual Report

Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy

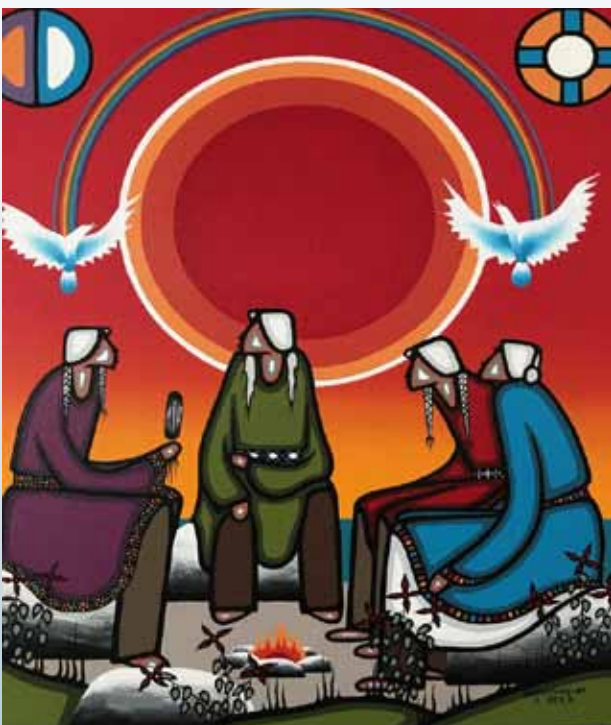


Our Mission



Oahas mission is to provide culturally respectful and sensitive programs and strategies to respond to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic among Aboriginal people in Ontario through promotion, prevention, long-term care, treatment and support initiatives consistent with harm reduction.

Oahas will continue to operate distinctly and in parallel with the vision, goals and objectives of the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS and the Ontario HIV/AIDS Strategy.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-2018



Duane Morrisseau-Beck, President
Meghan Young, Vice-President
Jessica Tabak, Secretary
Jasmine Cotham, Treasurer
William Reynolds, Board member
David Drakeford, Board member
Donald Turner, Board Member
Ma-nee Chacaby, Elder/Knowledge Keeper



Cover Art: "Circle of Life"

Picture of a hand represents my 'Tree of Life' that I have and many branches that also come with me. In the middle of my hand is my heart. In it I hold the AIDS Ribbon which represents the 'Warriors' in my life. This represents my Indigenous Brothers and Sisters Living with HIV/AIDS, they are my Teachers, my Friends and my Colleagues. I honor these strong, beautiful Warriors'. In the tree are leaves which represent all the people in my life and the leaves falling are the people who have gone into the Spirit World. As the leaves fall they go to the ground, they like our tears; also go back into our roots, and back into our 'Tree of Life', our Circle of Life. Our Warriors are Never Forgotten!

*My Heart to Yours
Lana Parenteau*



Message from the Board President and Chair

Duane Morriseau-Beck

I am pleased to be the 2018 Board President and Chair and to be able to continue serving our members to provide the best services the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (Oahas) has to offer. Oahas's provincial programs are aimed to meet the demand of those that walk through our doors every day.

I would like to begin this message by offering, on behalf of the Oahas' Board of Directors, a sincere thank you to our newly minted Executive Director, Mark Atanasoff, who replaced Lindsay Kretschmer in mid-July of this year. I would like to offer additional thanks to central office staffers Nancy Debassige, Carol Buenafe and Amber Gooden, Tracy Campbell (HR Consultant) and Kenda Hoffer (Finance Consultant) who provide a level of professional service to our members and staff. I would also like to thank each of the program staff, Alison Bray (Toronto), Maria Ledoux (Toronto), Allen Woodhouse (Toronto), Denise Baldwin (Toronto), Julia Kimmaliardjuk (Ottawa), Lana Parenteau (Sudbury), Steven Loranger (Sudbury), Christina Doxtator (London) Melissa Deschamps (Thunder Bay). Your work and dedication to the HIV/AIDS community exemplifies true meaning of hope to those lives that are in need of our services. We are blessed to have you on the Oahas team!

This year saw many strategic changes with respect to where we offer our services, shifts in programs and services, staff and board of directors. Over the past year, we closed offices in Chatham, Cochrane, Kingston and Hamilton and opened offices in London, and Sault Ste. Marie. We also opened our flagship program site in Toronto located on Parliament St. In addition to these changes, we have also moved our central office to Eglinton Ave. These changes occurred to meet our operational needs. We continue to monitor these changes and will adjust if additional changes are warranted. Oahas will work with community and staff to ensure these changes are a continued benefit in order to provide optimal levels of services to our members.

Oahas has also expanded programs and services to meet the needs of a provincial HIV/AIDS strategy. Along with our Education, Wellness, Harm Reduction workers and the Women's HIV/AIDS Initiative, we have brought in house a research position that is generously funded by the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) as part of their reconciliation strategy with Indigenous communities of Ontario. We would like to extend gratitude to Jean Bacon for her leadership on devolving services back to the hands of Indigenous communities and championing true Indigenous self-determination and self-governance.

This past summer saw a change with the Executive Director position. Lindsay Kretschmer, moved on to take shop with another agency that required her skills and energies. Lindsay worked hard to position Oahas to advance on the strategic direction Oahas is moving towards to ensure we continue to lead the work on HIV/AIDS front for Indigenous peoples in the province of Ontario. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express our heartfelt appreciation to Lindsay and we wish her well on her next assignment.

There have been some significant changes to the Oahas Board of Directors. In early 2018, we welcomed David (Deva) Drakeford and Don Turner to the board. In September 2018, we welcomed Trish Longboat, Christian Wells, Sarah Tilley, and Jason Taylor-Mercredi. While we welcome our new board members, I would like to offer thanks to two board members who went on to pursue personal aspirations needing their full energies; Meghan Young and Jessica Tabak. These two amazing individuals' presence on the board will be missed but we know that their contributions to Oahas has helped us become a strong organization. We wish them both well on their future endeavours.

Over the course of the year, we began to work to raise Oahas's social media presence. In doing so, we revamped our website that now hosts information and resources about our programs and services and serves as a clearinghouse for information on a variety of topics. We have also begun to raise our profile on Facebook and will continue to advance this work to meet the many information needs of our members. We were also happy to assist 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations to complete their transition as an organization servicing 2-spirited people in the Toronto area.

Stemming from our last AGM in 2016-2017, Oahas hosted an Indigenous Person Living with HIV/AIDS (IPHA) Retreat. The purpose of this is to not only meet our GIPA (the Greater Involvement of People living with HIV/AIDS) and MIPA (Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV) obligations but also hear directly from IPHA's on what their experiences and needs are when accessing Oahas services. We continue with these practices at this year's AGM and will continue to expand this work through our Speaker's Bureau initiative that is currently in the formation stage.

Over 2019, Oahas will be developing its organizational five (5) year Strategic Plan. This is important as it sets the direction of the organization. The collective engagement approach for developing the plan involves IPHAs, our partners, Board, and staff that will analyze our current work and where we want to go. We anticipate that as an organization, we will continue to provide leadership and services to all IPHA's as well as deliver leadership and services to those that live with other Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections. This will involve creating a cascade of care and services that meet the collective and individual needs of those at risk or currently living with an infection.

Oahas is working on advancing its working relationships at the national level by working with key HIV/AIDS organizations such as the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN). We were happy to assist CAAN in supporting their 2018 annual general meeting in Toronto. On the international level, I was part of CAAN's Indigenous delegation at the 2018 AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, I had the pleasure of meeting Indigenous peoples from several countries and joined in solidarity with other nations to advance the important human rights work related to HIV/AIDS. One thing that struck me was the need to raise the profile of IPHAs and to ensure their full participation at the 2020 International Conference in San Francisco. Stay tuned for more on that as more information becomes available.

In closing, I want to thank everyone who has attended the 2018 AGM and look forward to reporting to you next year on our collective accomplishments.

Marsee,

**Duane Morrisseau-Beck
Board President and Chair**

Marsee 



Message from the Executive Director

Mark Atanasoff

Dear friends,

When I joined Oahas on July 16, 2018 the organization was (and still is) going through a critical restructuring. Oahas has entered new geographies within the province and at full compliment will have a total of 24 staff. During my limited tenure as Executive Director, the organization has onboarded 18 staff, opened programming offices in Sault Ste. Marie and London and moved our central office to Yonge and Eglinton in the heart of midtown Toronto.....WOW! Oahas is very proud of achieving these critical operational milestones on our road to organizational wellbeing. I personally am very humbled by the support received from our Board of Directors, staff and funder during this critical period. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Duane Morrisseau-Beck, Jasmine Cotnam, Nancy Debassige, Carol Buenafe, Amber Gooden, Kenda Hoffer, Tracy Campbell, Maria Hatzipantelis and Joanne Lush for your compassion, dedication and hard work supporting Oahas – thank you! Your leadership on restructuring and acknowledging mistakes will be made along our journey was honest and refreshing and makes it possible to infuse humanity, kindness and love into the revitalization of Oahas. Finally, I would like to acknowledge all our frontline staff who serve community directly. A restructuring of this magnitude is not easy and at times management is distracted by one-time bureaucratic endeavours. While at times you may have felt unconnected and under-resourced, your dedication and perseverance supporting community, while minimizing service disruption, is a tremendous accomplishment and one our members, community and management are indebted and humbly appreciative of – thank you with honesty and sincerity. I am honoured and privileged to be leading a team with the dedication and integrity to achieve the many positive outcomes contained in this year’s Annual Report.

2019 is looking to be an exciting year for Oahas! We look forward to continuing our work and vision of ensuring all members of the community are treated with dignity, have the opportunity to achieve a high-degree of wellbeing and have the right to self-determination. We look forward to enhancing our programing with the belief that connection to community and culture create the natural networks of support that make it possible for the Indigenous ways of knowing and healing to take place.

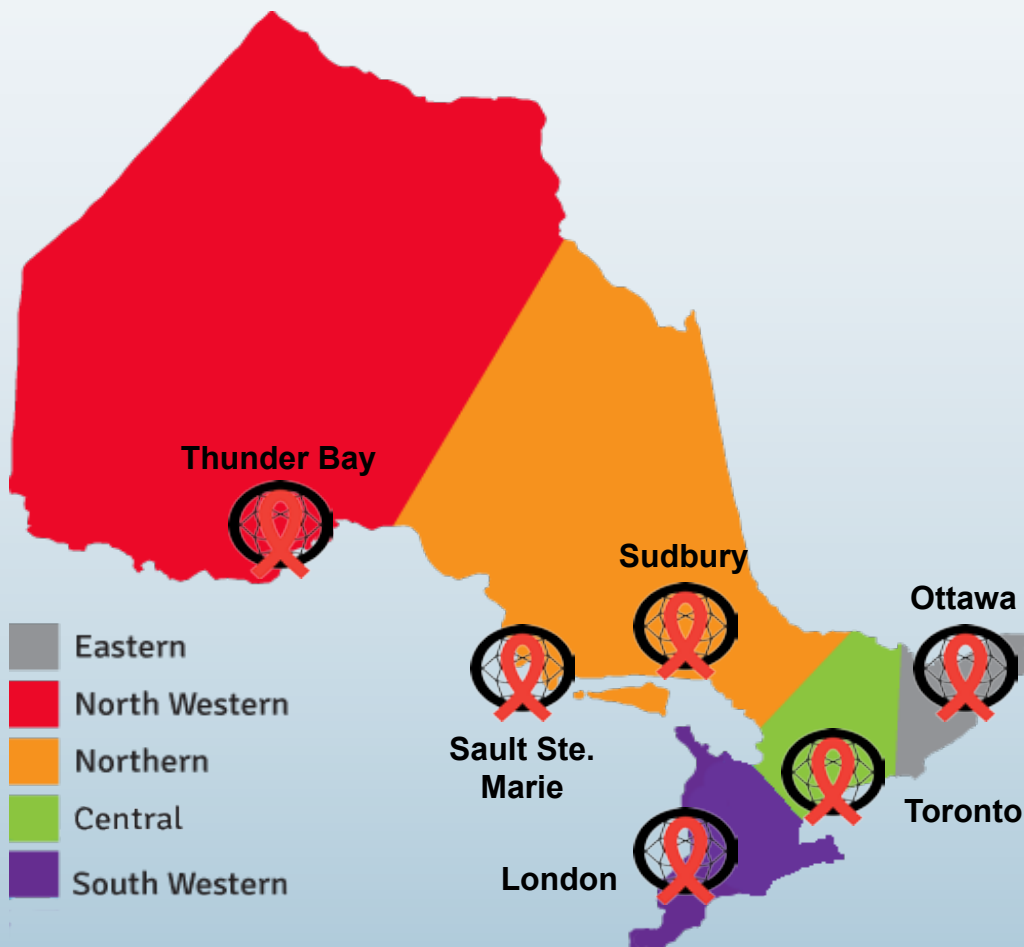


Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not introduce myself to our communities and partners. I am a new face to Oahas and the sector and I look forward to meeting all with humility, respect, and compassion. I am from Sagamok First Nation and I am a second-generation Indian Residential School survivor. My mother, Laura, attended the Shingwauk Indian Residential School in Sault Ste. Marie where her language, culture and connection to community were forcibly removed. I have spent most of my adult life reclaiming my cultural identity and reconnecting with community. Over the past 12 years I have been dedicated to working for the Indigenous communities of Ontario shaping policy and program development. I am currently a member of the Board of Directors of Anishnawbe Health Toronto where I represent the community and provide governance over programs that impact health, healing and well-being. I hold diverse training from the Institute for Culturally Restorative Practices and an MBA from the Rotman School of Management where I earned the MBA Fellowship Award for Non-Profit Managers for a strong record of achievement. I am Ojibwe grounded in traditional values that enable an ability to bridge contemporary mainstream ideals and traditional knowledge and teachings. I look forward too many great years serving our people and communities – Miigwech!

Mark Atanasoff
Executive Director



Oahas Programs



Program Highlights

Kwe-to-Kwe Women's Program

This special 24-week women's program began in 2014 and runs twice a year in Toronto, in partnership with The Works (Toronto Public Health). It is essentially a support group for Indigenous women who are living with or are at risk of HIV/AIDS, HepC and STBBIs. The women participate in sharing circles and various medical, cultural, artistic and physical activities that enhance their health and well-being in a holistic way. The program is guided by the needs of the women and aims to be grounded in tradition and culture. Kwe-to-Kwe is an unqualified success. It empowers Indigenous women and gives them a voice in their own healing journey to reclaim their Indigenous identity, culture and tradition that have been lost to years of oppression and colonialism.

Bendigen Kitchen with POC Testing

This monthly event in London and Sudbury encourages community members and street-involved people to come in for a lunch of Indian Tacos prepared lovingly by Oahas staff. The lunch fosters camaraderie among the participants and the staff – and conversations are peppered with nuggets of prevention education and encouragement for testing by the local health unit nurse seconded to Oahas specifically for POC testing. Supplies such as condoms, harm reduction kits and hygiene items are readily available to all participants. The Bendigen Kitchen allows participants to enjoy a meal and the opportunity to share with each other, no matter where they are at in their life journey. It is a judgment-free space where everyone can be themselves in a nurturing environment.



Inuit Street Outreach

Since 2016, Oahas has been consistent in conducting daily street outreach in and nearby the Ottawa city centre where the highest concentration of Inuit reside, outside of Inuit Nunagat. The service model is simple – it is a program of kindness. Its aim is to reach the underserved Inuit community and offer time for a chat, a warm hug or a cup of coffee. Along with regular supplies of condoms and harm reduction items, Oahas offers bannock when available, other food items or the opportunity to sit in a warm coffee shop. We also offer gear such as socks, underwear and hygiene supplies. We take the time to chat, inquire about their general well-being and seize the opportunity to educate about HIV/AIDS, HepC and STBBIs. These acts of kindness have resulted in community members asking for rapid HIV testing, a situation unheard of prior to the street outreach program. More and more people have approached Oahas for rapid testing, which indicates that simple acts of kindness, consistently given over time, can make a world of difference.

Peers



Peer Stories

In Our Own Words...

“Other community members stand up for us and protect us in this sub culture.”

Where I came from and how I got here! My name is Marie L, I come from Saskatchewan. My mother's reserve is at Muskeg Lake. We are Cree (Plains). I moved to Toronto 30 years ago. I have one daughter and one son (who I am sad to say, has passed at a young age).

Years ago, I found myself homeless and no knowledge of life on the street. I was so humiliated and I took great effort and energy to hide my lack of residence from everyone. I felt so alone. Trying to find a place to sleep at night so as not to be seen by the general public.

Eventually addictions of various drugs took precedence over my desire to get off the street. My addiction resulted in me going to the penitentiary for a few years. Since then I have found a place that I consider a place of family and true caring. This place is Oahas. It has saved me on so many levels. Thank God for people that truly care, that truly have a heart for our people.

“I have found a place that I consider a place of family and true caring.”

“Weekly outings help set my pace for the week. It helps me put my life into perspective for the week. It helps let the old crap go, to send it away. I like the smudge, it helps you to get back to your roots. it helps me to take the bad stuff for the week and throw it away, it helps to keep the good stuff, it keeps me centered.”

“The one on ones helps me vent, without someone judging me. It was a big help trying to navigate computers to achieve housing.”

Peer Spotlight

In Our Own Words....

Bonnie



Annee, I am a proud two spirited harm reduction worker. I have been here since the beginning, helped to map the route that we now take and the people that need supplies are impressed with the presentation of our kits. We are proud to expand with new locations. I often hear people say “grab a kit those are the good ones.” I remember someone saying another organization just came down George Street and we still handed out 30 kits at beginning of shift. I have seen this service grow, we now have crystal meth pipes and foil kits for heroin. We have never encountered any violence while on shift even if someone starts to cause trouble. Other community members stand up for us and protect us in this subculture. The IDU program is running close to 10 years. I’m happy to be of service to my community and I will be here to see the program grow. “Real communities do exclude”.

Alana



Greetings, my name is Alana. I am a peer with Oahas since April 17, 2018. I started volunteering in February 2018. I became aware of this particular outreach program through a now fellow peer. I started having health problems since 2004 and I was unable to continue working. I became overweight and very depressed. I’ve since made drastic changes in my life and lost a great amount of weight and I’ve become active. I felt I could go back to work on a part time basis. I wanted to do something for my native brothers and sisters. I feel very good about what we do and extremely pleased to be a part of what we do. I enjoy the company of my peers and the time we spend together making kits. I always walk away feeling happy. We’ve developed a bond of love and respect. They really are kind-hearted and loving people.

John



I come from Six Nations Reservation and am very proud of my heritage. I currently work full time at Anishnawbe Health Toronto and as a peer at OAHAS. I have had many different addictions throughout my time on earth -- Alcohol, Crack Cocaine and Heroin. Throughout my time in these heavy addictions I contracted Hep C through sharing needles. My passion now with being part of this amazing team at OAHAS is being able to get the supplies that are needed so people have less of a risk of contracting any kind of disease.



Alexandra

Let's start at the beginning of Oahas in 2015 and what working and volunteering meant to me. It meant I could finally talk about my past and experiences without remorse or judgement. I've already known half the peers that I work with. I meet them mostly being on the streets myself and having lived experience made no bounds with them. I was surrounded by like minds and feelings. Going through the same struggles as then and as of today. My life has lead me here and at 40 I'm going to say it's not close to being over and so is my choice in career in harm reduction with peers and outreach workers. I've had to save a life with Naloxone this past month on my best friend. I believe if it wasn't for my background and experiences I would have lost him to an overdose. My heart and soul are into this program and cause. Working with Oahas and PARC will keep me busy, and help the future by saving lives.



Michele

My name is Michele and my native ancestry is Mohawk from Six Nations. Presently I am a Harm Reduction Outreach Worker for OAHAS. I feel very privileged to have this position as it uses my history of addiction to understand and to help others going through the same type of struggles. I began using cocaine intravenously and contracted HCV from sharing needles. Later in life, I became addicted to crack cocaine and became homeless and a street level addict. I feel the work OAHAS is doing is a vital strategy that assists to use safely and prevent disease but also enables our agency to build relationships through compassion and consistency. These relationships are built on trust and can give addicts a place to turn to should they choose to begin their healing journey. I strongly believe in this work that's being done and never miss a shift and where someone expresses deep gratitude for our outreach mission. I am proud to be part of the OAHAS team and look forward to ongoing opportunities and training that are presented to me. I feel supported and encouraged on a personal level by management and my peer colleagues and for all of this I am very grateful.



Louise



Life Story

In Our Own Words....

For some reason from a very young age I've been attracted to the seedy side of life. As a young teenager I was very curious about downtown maybe because I grew up in North York. At a young age I was drinking and doing drugs the lifestyle captivated me and has held me in its grips for close to 37 years. I grew up in a very strict Christian family went to a private girls' school.

They say people turn to drugs and alcohol addiction because of a traumatic event in their life. Well I found out I was adopted at the age of ten. I didn't even understand what it meant. My father tried to make it sound like I was special and had been picked out specially from a large room of children, as years passed I started to understand that I had been given away, that I wasn't wanted by my birth mother. It has a different effect on me, it hurt me deeply and if people don't believe that was a traumatic event they are very wrong. Even as a baby that child would feel the loss. I knew her voice, her smell, her touch and then it was gone all of a sudden and it affected me. I believe that loss had a huge part to play with becoming an addict. I don't mean to complain because I was adopted by wonderful parents who did their best to give me a good upbringing. But the bond was forever broken with the person who carried me for 9 months and kept me for 8 months after birth. I always wondered about what would have been, what she (my mother) looked like, if I had any siblings, if my mother missed me, so on, and so on.

Life went on...when I was in my early teens I became quite rebellious and started acting out, my mother & I would fight things were pretty bad at home, I was a real bitch I left home when I was 14 and over that summer I became a live in babysitter I was making \$100.00 a week which was great money, out of my friends I had the most money, I had no rules, there was a swimming pool in the backyard the kids I babysat were 9 & 11 years old I was grooving. After the summer I went to a group home in Parkdale, big difference from Bayview & Steeles. I lost my friends & boyfriend but made



new ones. There were a little more rules than I was babysitting but in comparison to living at home it was like camp. I started skipping school, doing drugs and going to bars. 14 years old & living the life as if I were 19. Had a lot of fun. Hanging around downtown selling drugs using drugs moved out of the group home and was living on my own at 16 working 2 jobs, paying rent, then met my son's father. Still held my jobs got pregnant at 19 gave birth at 20. Started smoking crack & fell in love with the drug. But I loved my son more. Left his father cuz he was getting more & more into the drug life. I broke away moved from downtown to Scarborough got a good job and was a functioning addict for a while always had good jobs and raised my son by myself (with the help of my parents and my son's other grandparents) but his father was not in the picture he was diagnosed HIV+ when he was 20 in 1988 – because of his intravenous drug use. He was pretty much out of our lives he'd come around rarely to see his young son.

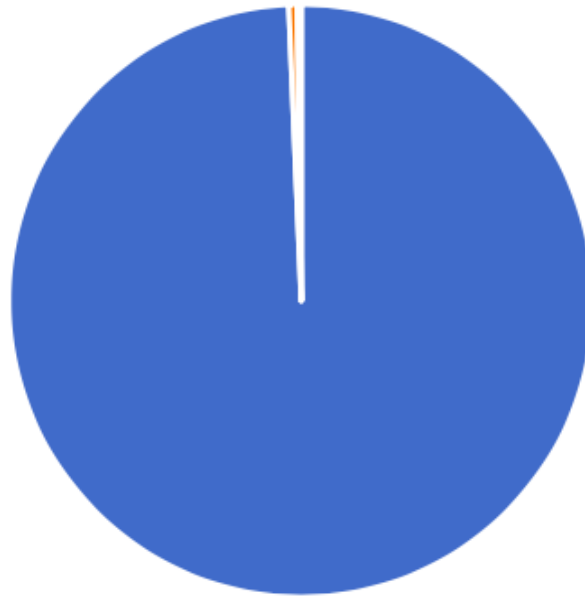
I functioned somehow some way working raising my son alone, doing the best I could for 17 years. And when my son was 17 he was very busy, school, football, he had a job didn't need me to make dinner anymore it was kind of like the empty nest syndrome. I wasn't needed as much anymore I had a lot of time on my hands and just split from an 8 year relationship and I ended up meeting up with a whole new crowd of people who lived every day for drugs they were homeless and I would go to work and ride my bike home through Bleeker Street and instead of riding by I would stop and end up buying some crack I became totally lost, at first it was fun, then I started calling in sick from my job and I had an amazing job with the Provincial Government, then I stopped going home and even though I had a beautiful apartment I didn't go home. I didn't go home for 3 weeks left my son to fend for himself that is where my addiction took me (I'm not proud of this at all).



I've held on to that regret ever since and trust me the regret doesn't help it actually keeps the addiction alive. I've been told to let go of the regret my son has forgiven me, but for some reason I can't maybe it's my excuse to stay stuck. Although I've come a long way from where I once was I haven't found my way out. Except now a days I live by the motto of harm reduction I don't do crime to support my habit anymore and I basically keep my appointments and responsibilities. I've stayed out of jail for 8 years and kept my apartment also. I have a couple jobs that I'm interested in and working with Oahas as an outreach worker is a passion of mine. I like to believe that I'm out there helping other fellow addicts. Whether it be just offering my ear to listen, or refer someone to a free hot meal program or giving them the clean tools they need to use their drugs so that they can stay healthy and safe. It's what I enjoy and they are very appreciative of what we offer them and that gives me a good feeling inside.

FINANCIALS

2017-2018 OAHAS REVENUE WITH MOH



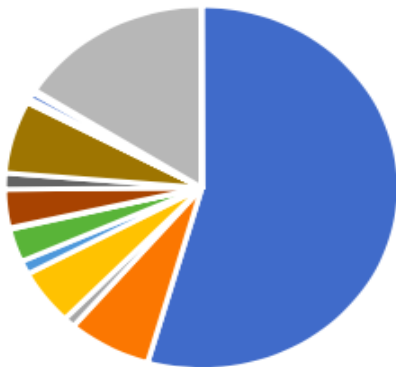
■ AIDS BUREAU ■ GENERAL RESERVE FUND ■ MIZIWE BIIK FUNDING

2017-2018 OAHAS REVENUE WITHOUT MOH



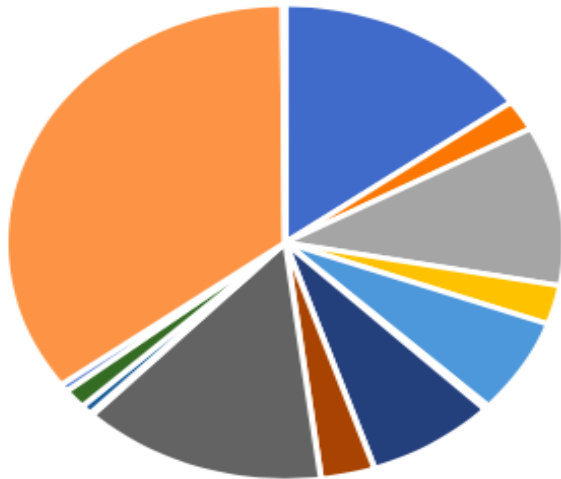
■ GENERAL RESERVE FUND ■ MIZIWE BIIK FUNDING

2017-2018 Expenses with Salaries & Benefits



- SALARIES & BENEFITS
- PROFESSIONAL FEES
- POSTAGE & COURIER
- TRAVEL
- AUDIT
- ONE TIME - APHA
- RENT
- PRINTING & STATIONARY
- RESOURCES
- ADVERTISING
- BANKING FEEDS
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- TELEPHONE & COMMUNICATIONS
- MEETING EXPENSES
- INSURANCE
- ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW

2017-2018 Expenses without Salaries & Benefits



- RENT
- PRINTING & STATIONARY
- RESOURCES
- ADVERTISING
- BANKING FEEDS
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- TELEPHONE & COMMUNICATIONS
- MEETING EXPENSES
- INSURANCE
- ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW
- PROFESSIONAL FEES
- POSTAGE & COURIER
- TRAVEL
- AUDIT
- ONE TIME - APHA

Thank You

The Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy acknowledges the continued support and commitment of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, AIDS and HepC Programs.

In addition, we thank the following community groups and private individuals for their generous support of our work throughout the year:

Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training
Wahnapiatae First Nations
Rotary Club Toronto
Rotary Club Toronto East
Rotary Club Whitby
Kenda Hoffer
Cate Creede
Emily Britt
United Way

We also extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated volunteers in each of our locations who have worked countless hours and contributed innumerable gifts to the success of Oahas this year.





Miigwetch Marsee Qujanamiik Nia:wen





Oahas

ONTARIO ABORIGINAL
HIV/AIDS STRATEGY

Toll Free: 1-800.743.8851

www.oahas.org