



Beendigen

Annual Report

2023-2024





**You
deserve
a life
free from
violence.**

Table of Contents

President & Executive Director's Message	4-5
Mission, Vision, Values	6
Beendigen Sites	7
Beendigen Services	8-9
Year in Review	10
Honouring Indigenous Women's Day	12-13
1077 Golf Links Road	14-15
Testimonial	16
Ontario Helpline Forum	17
Crisis Home	18-19
Program Highlights	20-23
Human Resources, Communications, Finance	25-27
In The Community	28
Miigwetch & Funders	30-31

Board of Directors

President: April Head

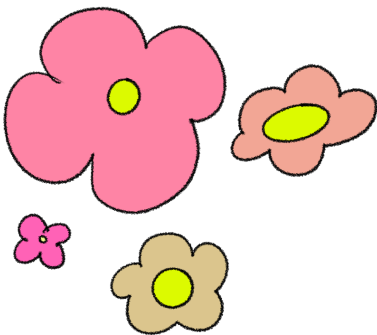
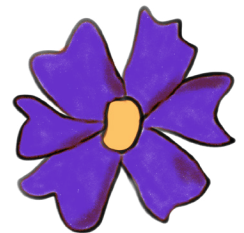
Vice President: Rosan Wesley

Treasurer: Kahla Campbell

Secretary: Lisa Bishop

Directors: Jamilee Wanakamik

Youth Representative: Madison Wigwas





President & Executive Director's Message

*A*s we look back on another busy year at Beendigen, we take pride in the work we have done to empower Indigenous women and to create opportunities for them to heal. All of our programs and services are driven by our mission to help Indigenous families who have faced hardship, abuse, and domestic violence.

This past spring, Beendigen's Healing Our Own Counselling Unit was the first of the Beendigen team to make the move to our new building at 1077 Golf Links Road. The new building is a milestone achievement in Beendigen's 45 years in operation. The new location will allow us more space, improve our services, and expand our overall capabilities as a healing agency. Eventually, all of our public programs will be housed in the new building, which will make accessing our services a lot easier for members of the community.

Our Crisis Home also continues to expand, with renovations ongoing and an addition to the building nearing completion. Three new rooms have been added to the home to create more privacy and comfort for our residents, both for single occupants and those with families. The kitchen has been entirely re-done and new eco-friendly windows were also installed at the Crisis Home. We want our shelter to feel welcoming, comfortable, and safe for those who stay there.

In February, Beendigen's management team attended a forum in Toronto which brought together all four of the major helplines that operate across the province. It was inspiring to see the ways in which the other helplines provide crucial support to those who reach out. Through the exchange of information, we returned with new ideas about how to work together to ensure our Talk4Healing helpline provides the best services possible to those in need.

Our Wakaigin Housing units and our Memengwaa Transition House are consistently full, and it's important that we continue to offer as many accessible housing spaces as our funding allows. Affordable housing is an ongoing crisis, and one of our top priorities is trying to fill some of the gaps caused by the crisis.

Beendigen has continued to provide valuable training opportunities for both front-line staff and management. Members of our team received both Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training as well as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training this past year. Our Human Resources Training Specialist is now able to train our staff in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention and soon all our staff will be equipped with this valuable knowledge.

We are looking forward to continued growth within Beendigen in 2024-25, and we are always seeking new and better ways to support Indigenous families through our programs and services. We would like to thank our stakeholders for their continued support and funding - it is through their help that we are able to continue to empower Indigenous women on their healing journeys.

Our passionate, committed team of employees are at the heart of Beendigen. They do hard work, and they do it with compassion and a desire to help those who need support the most. A heartfelt thank you to them for all they do. We would also like to say miigwetch to our Board of Directors for sharing their time and wisdom with us all year long. We appreciate all you do for the agency.

Chi-Miigwetch,

April Head
Board President

Colleen Maloney
Executive Director





mission

Our mission is to provide safety, shelter, and supports to Indigenous people and their families who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing violence, and to facilitate the cycle of healing through the delivery of culturally safe programs.



vision

To empower Indigenous women and their families to live mino-bimaadiziwin (a good life) through traditional teachings and ceremonies. Beendigen supports families and communities to live free from violence.

values

We honour the Medicine Wheel Teachings, the Thirteen Grandmother Moons, and we practice the Seven Grandfather Teachings to foster hope, meaning, belonging, and purpose to Indigenous peoples and community.



A shelter.. and a lot more

Beendigen currently operates out of five main locations. Many people recognize Beendigen through our women's shelter, but our services range far beyond that. From our Healing Our Own Counselling Unit, housed in both our new building, 1077 Golf Links Road, and 235 South Syndicate Ave to our administration office on Fort William First Nation, each site offers different vital services to the community and functions as a key component of the agency as a whole.

Beendigen Sites



Crisis Home

Anti-Human Trafficking Program

• • • • •

1077 Golf Links Road



Healing Our Own Counselling Unit

• • • • •

Breaking Free From Violence Program, CAPC, PAL, & Pre/Postnatal Programs



235 S. Syndicate Ave, Unit 3

• • • • •

103-100 Anemki Drive



Administration Office

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Communications
- Wakaigin Housing

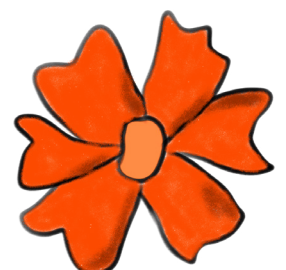
• • • • •

Transitional Housing Support Program, Family Court Support Program



Memengwaa Transition House

• • • • •



Who We Are & How We Help

At Beendigen, we provide safety and shelter to Indigenous women and children who have experienced violence or are in crisis. We provide opportunities for healing by offering a wide-spectrum of culturally-grounded and harm reduction-based supports, services, and programs.

Crisis Home

Beendigen's Anishinabe Crisis Home provides free emergency shelter and basic needs for women and children who require safe accommodations and are seeking refuge from abuse or crisis.

The Crisis Home is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Staff provide crisis and supportive counselling in addition to safety planning to help you and your children live a life free from violence.

Transitional Housing Support Program (THSP)

Our Transitional Housing & Support Workers help women to secure and maintain housing, develop an individual safety and transitional plan, and provide them with helpful community resources.

Program workers also help survivors on the path to regaining their independence through safety planning and connection to wrap-around supports.

National Native Drug & Alcohol Addiction Program (NNADAP)

NNADAP offers support for those living with addiction and the families of those living with addiction. Our NNADAP worker collaborates with those who use substances to safety plan and reduce harm. Topics explored include stigma and feelings around stigma, overdose and relapse prevention, safety and resiliency, and more. Harm reduction is at the core of how we support those who use substances.

Healing Our Own Counselling Unit (HOO)

Beendigen provides a wide-range of holistic healing services to women and their children. Some Healing Our Own Counselling Unit programs include: Individual and Group Counselling, Sacred Circle, Anger Management, Sewing Group, Drumming, Grief Counselling, Sexual Abuse/Sexual Assault Healing, Breaking Free from Violence, Anti-Human Trafficking, and more.



Family Court Support Program

The Family Court Support Program can help make the family court process less overwhelming and easier to understand. Our workers help clients prepare for family court proceedings, refer clients to other specialized services, help with safety planning, and accompany clients to court proceedings, where appropriate.

Community Action Plan for Children (CAPC), Pre/Postnatal (CPNP), Parenting Across the Life Cycle (PAL)

Beendigen offers a variety of programs designed to support mothers or soon-to-be mothers. Our CAPC program plans weekly activities to help children learn and grow, like crafts, storytime, cooking, and recreation. The Pre/Postnatal Program provides support both before and after mothers give birth, focusing on topics like breastfeeding, labour and birth, nutrition, and more. Our newest program for mothers is the PAL program, which supports families as children grow and helps caregivers develop parenting skills.

Talk4Healing Helpline

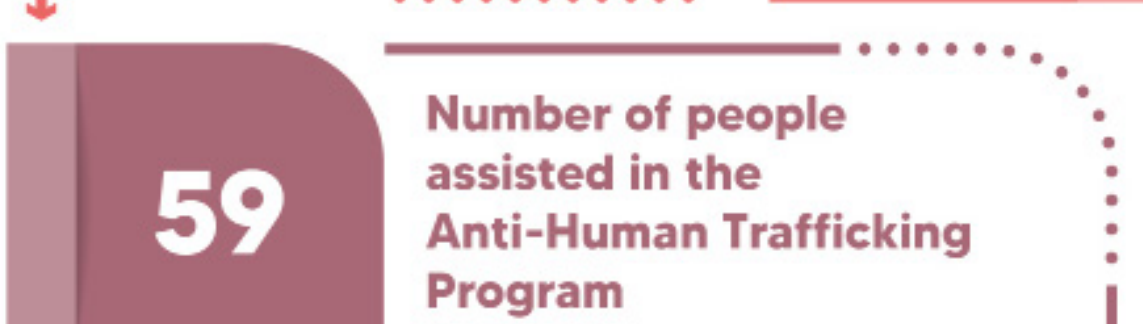
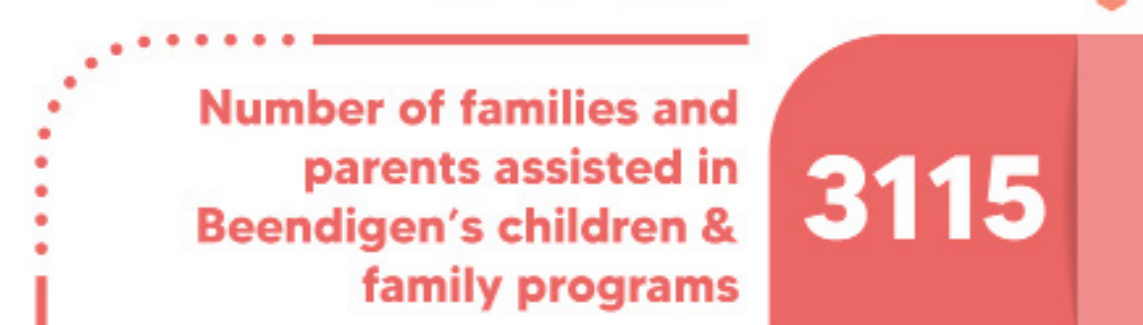
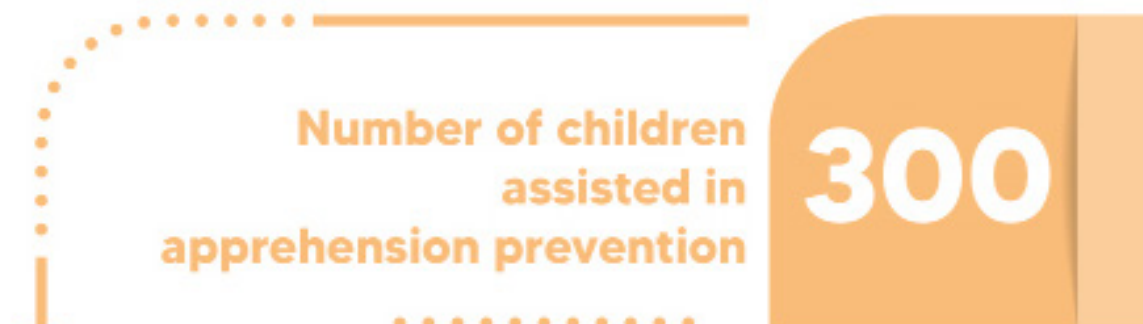
We offer 24/7 help and support for women all across the country. Started in 2012, Talk4Healing helpline has provided over 20,000 Indigenous women and their families with real-world solutions, without judgment, in a safe and accepting environment. Talk4Healing is able to provide support via talk, text, and chat. Our helpline services are fully grounded in Indigenous culture, wisdom, and tradition.

Wakaigin Housing & Memengwaa Transition House

Wakaigin has 31 housing units throughout the city of Thunder Bay. Memengwaa Transition House was opened in 2020 and operates as a bridge for residents between emergency shelter and permanent housing. Supportive services are provided to families in our transitional units by our outreach workers, and tenants are also able to access programming and services offered by Beendigen.

Eligibility for Beendigen's units is limited to women and children, with priority given to women leaving Beendigen's crisis home.

Our Impact in 2023-24







15th Anniversary of

Honouring Indigenous Women's Day

2023 marked the 15th anniversary of our annual event, Honouring Indigenous Women's Day. Inspired by Saskatchewan First Nation's Women's Commission, Beendigen has adopted October 5th as an annual day of celebration of the accomplishments, achievements, and strengths of Indigenous women in the community. We are so inspired by the strong women that we cross paths with through our work, and on this day every year we want to recognize and acknowledge their tremendous spirits and efforts.



During the evening, Beendigen staff awarded eight women who have made great strides on their healing journeys with a certificate and a gift to recognize the hard work they do every day for themselves and for their families. Some of the achievements we heard about included securing housing, working on sobriety, childbirth and child care, obtaining high school diplomas and starting college, attending and committing to Beendigen programs, reconnecting with culture, writing poetry, and more. It is always one of the most moving nights of the year within the agency. Those we work with continue to bring us joy and pride and we love to root for them as they find successes and overcome significant hardships.



Welcome to our new
**building: 1077 Golf
Links Road!**



Since our Executive Director Colleen Maloney started in 2022, she, along with our Board of Directors, has continued working toward previous ED Debra Vermette's strategic goal of seeking a new, more diverse and accessible building for the majority of Beendigen's programs to migrate to. As Beendigen continues to expand in the services and programs we offer, it was time for a new home outside of Victoriaville Centre that could better meet our needs.


This past spring, the dream of the new building became a reality when we acquired the former community clinic located at 1077 Golf Links Road. Beendigen's Healing Our Own Counselling Unit has been the first to make the move to the new space.

The new building allows for more space for programming, increased accessibility, and more ease of access for our clients as gradually, the building will come to house all programming and public-facing services. We continue to operate our crisis home, our transition home, and our administration office at different locations within the city (see page 6 for a breakdown of our locations).

Renovations are still underway, and we are focused on making the space comfortable, inclusive, and culturally-safe for all our clients and visitors. There are a lot of exciting things to come, and we are thrilled to have a new space to make our own.

Currently, until more renovations are completed in the new building, we still operate our children's programs (Community Action Program for Children, Parenting Across the Life Cycle) and our pre/postnatal programs out of one of our existing locations - 235 South Syndicate Avenue.

We are looking forward to relocating fully to our new space and continuing to grow in the ways in which we can help support Indigenous families as they heal. Stop by and say hi to us at our new space!



Dear Crisis Home Staff,

I was in a bad state mentally and spiritually. Continuously harassed, threatened, by desperate and demanding people. I thought they were my friends. The place I was living was infested with mice. I can say without a doubt that Beendigen Women's Crisis Home and staff allowed me the opportunity to get my life back as I know. Proud to say I feel healthy. By applying myself to accept the Grandfather Teachings and eating healthy, I have gained the knowledge to live a clean and sober life. I do have short and long-term goals. I can't do it without having continuous contact with my Creator and maintaining realistic respectful approaches. I need to be reminded of the immediate family members who will always be close to my heart. Their lives were taken by individuals who have no respect for life - so called "gangs."

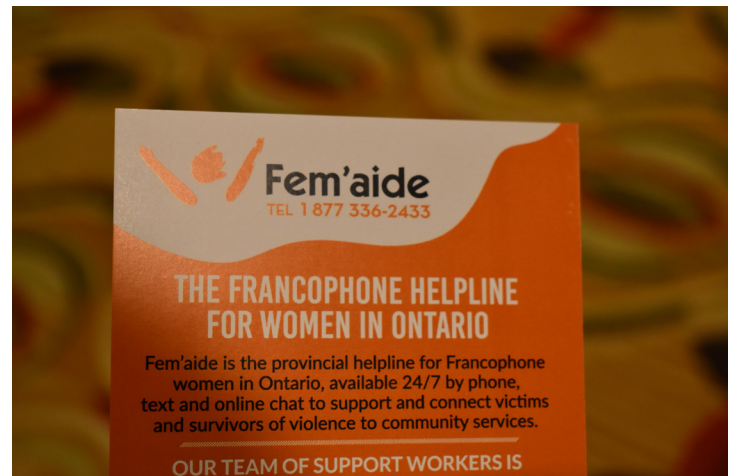
Being here at Beendigen, I acknowledge the RCs are considerate, nurturing, and clearly practice professionalism. With the tools gained here, I will carry on. Once very soon, I can move and locate a suitable unit apartment. I am a grateful, proud, Anishinabe Woman, Sister, Daughter, Grandma, and Momma.

Thanks so much

Also the upgrades and flooring, etc, look great



Ontario Helpline Forum



At the end of February, members of Beendigen's (and Talk4Healing's) management team travelled to Toronto to join three other helplines that operate across Ontario - Assaulted Women's Helpline, Fem'aide, and Ontario 211 - to share ideas and experiences about the operations of our separate helplines. The forum was hosted by the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services. Dr. Lori Haskell, a clinical psychologist who specializes in trauma and has spent her career dedicated to the prevention of violence against women, was our facilitator.

The forum was a moving and inspiring experience which provided us with clarity and new ideas on how our Talk4Healing helpline can better operate as a vital tool for early intervention for those who are struggling and need someone to talk to in a safe, non-judgemental, and culturally-grounded environment.

Talk4Healing has grown significantly since its launch in 2012, but the helpline continues to adapt to meet the growing need for mental health support across the province. We are constantly seeking new ways to raise awareness and ensure that the helpline is accessible to all who need it. Everyone deserves access to mental health support, whether they are in an urban setting or a remote reserve.

Beendigen's Crisis Home



The kitchen in our crisis home has all new cupboards, table and chair sets, and new appliances. The new kitchen island has been a space of gathering for those in the home.



Christmas in the crisis home.

As the cost of living skyrockets, systemic issues like homelessness, intimate partner violence, and inaccessible mental health supports lead many women to seek out the services of women's shelters across the country. Our crisis home is constantly at full capacity - as soon as a bed becomes available, it is taken again by someone else in need.

Our top priorities are that the families in our crisis home feel safe, welcome, and have the opportunity to recuperate after experiencing violence and trauma. We want to create an environment that encourages healing. For special occasions and holidays, we celebrate together as a house by sharing traditions and feasting together. At Christmas, we opened presents together under the tree and shared Christmas dinner. At Easter, the children in the house searched for easter eggs in an easter egg hunt, decorated eggs, and received gifts and chocolate from the Easter Bunny!

There are always recreational activities going on for families to participate in. This includes activities like board game nights, movie nights, puzzles, and creative outlets (colouring, crafts, etc). An Elder visits the shelter weekly to spend time



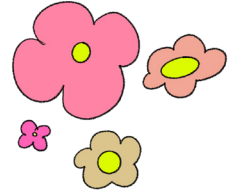
with the residents and lead cultural activities such as beading, ribbon-skirt making, and moccasin making. Having an Elder visit weekly has been really meaningful for the residents, as her wisdom, knowledge, and calming presence is vital for those who are dealing with deep trauma. She also nourishes a connection to cultural wisdom, which is crucial for healing.

Along with renovating the kitchen with funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, extensive renovations have also been ongoing to construct multiple new family rooms. This has resulted in an addition to the back of the crisis home building. Once completed, it will allow more space, privacy, and accessibility for both families and single women who are coming into the home. The funding to construct the addition came from Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services. We also had all new eco-friendly windows installed this past year thanks to funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We are very appreciative of all of our funders as they allow us to continue to improve our space for the families and individuals we serve.



One of our spaces to rest, relax, and access medicines in the crisis home.

Program Highlights



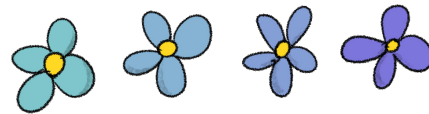
National Native Drug Addiction Program (NNADAP)

NNADAP Counsellor Julie facilitated two Anger Management groups at Crossroads Centre during the past year. Out of these sessions, 9 men and 5 women graduated. 15 participants also completed the "Living in Balance" addictions group that Julie ran.

Julie referred 24 women and 2 men to treatment for substance/alcohol use. Out of these referrals, 14 completed treatment. 3 of the individuals returned to work with Julie a few times before completing. The path to recovery is not linear and she was able to provide support and mentoring during tough times for clients.

NNADAP has further embraced cultural teachings into its structure - with clients beading and making both medicine bags and dream catchers during the past year.

Julie works with clients to safety plan, provide resources and referrals, and support those living with or recovering from addiction to heal.



Anti-Human Trafficking Program

This year, the AHT counsellor Cindy worked with community members who have experienced human trafficking to rebuild trust and safety plan. Cindy is Co-Chair of the Thunder Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking. Every year the coalition hosts 2 major events - one on July 30th for World Day Against Trafficking in Persons and one on February 22nd for National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. On March 7th, Cindy hosted an Anti-Human Trafficking Conference which featured Timea Nagy, a brilliant speaker and activist who has experienced her own trauma due to human trafficking.

Cindy is also the Chair of the Naadmaagewin Indigenous Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee. The committee held 2 conferences, one geared toward youth called "Mamokawok (Coming Together)," and one called "Trauma Informed Training for Frontline Workers." Both provided vital information and education to the community.



Transitional Housing & Support Program (THSP)

The Transitional Housing & Support Program provided support to approximately 247 individuals during the past year.

Our THSP workers Royleen and Becky work closely with women who are staying in our crisis home to support them as they work on securing long-term housing. There are many barriers to housing, including bias and discrimination, affordability, shortage of housing, addictions and mental health, lack of support systems, transportation, etc. THSP staff help clients navigate these issues and move toward stability.

"Beendigen is like family and has helped us out with food, community access to other programs, and a friendly ear to listen." -

Note from a client

Breaking Free From Violence Program (BFFV)

34 families were enrolled in the BFFV program during 2023-2024. Through the support of the BFFV worker Arlene, numerous families have seen successes. This has included increased support systems, closing court cases, securing funding for children with disabilities, navigating the child welfare system, maintaining sobriety, asserting healthy boundaries, and more.



Family Court Support Program

Our Family Court Support Worker, Becky, attended many consultations with lawyers alongside her clients. She attended appointments and acted as a support person by taking notes and sending the notes to the client afterwards. She also ensured that her clients are familiar with legal terminology and prepared them for next steps in the legal process. Becky regularly attends court and takes detailed notes for her clients. This year, she has supported clients with intake court, case conferences, trial management conferences, and settlement conferences.

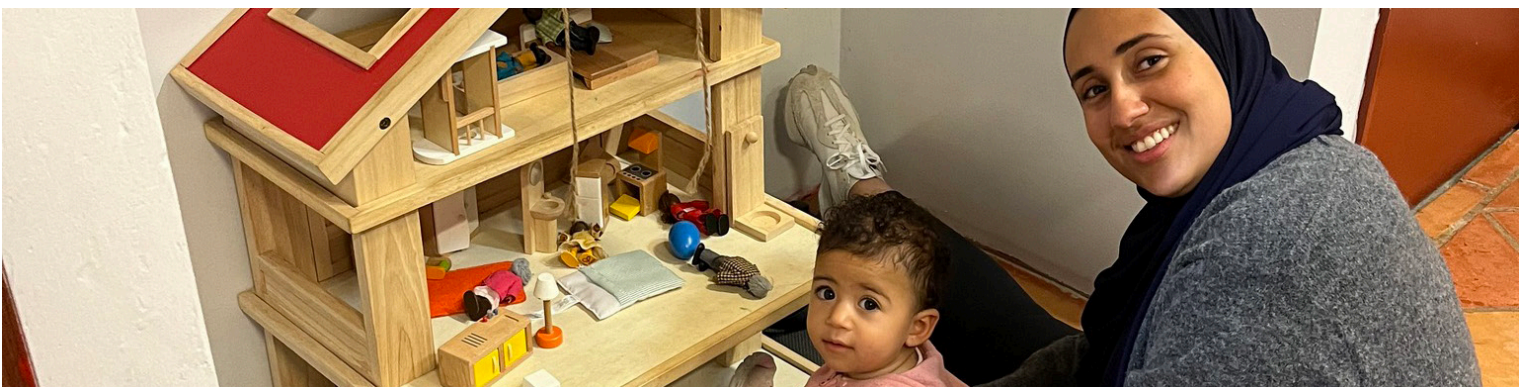
"You're basically like family now. Been with me for almost 3 years. And I appreciate you!" -

Court Support Client to Becky, Beendigen's Family Court Support Worker

Parenting Across the Life Cycle (PAL)

Beendigen's Parenting Across the Life Cycle Program held many successful, productive groups throughout the year. Some activities included making ribbon skirts, sewing circles, and making healing tie blankets. The PAL program also partners with the EarlyON Child & Family Centre to run a drop-in group for parents and children at Intercity Shopping Centre. This partnership has been a great way for new community members to learn about Beendigen services and to socialize with other families.

Cassidy, the PAL worker, has seen many of those who regularly attend her group find successes in their personal and professional lives outside of Beendigen. Some have enrolled in school, gone to therapy, sought addictions counselling, and been reunified with their children after custody disputes.



Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)

After 26 years as Prenatal Coordinator, we celebrated the career of Sherry Pelletier as she retired in December. Olivia Pelky stepped into the position upon Sherry's retirement and she has been very busy since taking on the role.

Activities in CPNP included making breastfeeding pillows, rattle making, monthly workshops on various topics with NOSM's Compass North, Mommy & Me Support Group in our crisis home, the free vitamin program "It's Never Too Early," making baby fleece blankets, and more. 20 individuals attended the ongoing Preconception Program that runs regularly on Wednesdays.

Olivia worked with one woman who was a high-risk pregnancy as she was not able to keep food down. She has since been provided with food supports and has gained weight. Olivia was thrilled to see her taken off high-risk status.

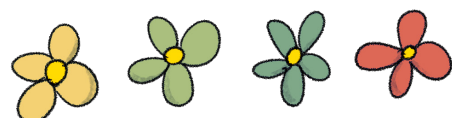
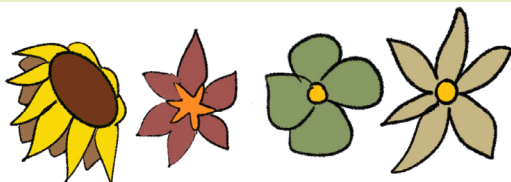
Community Action Plan for Children (CAPC)

CAPC is always one of Beendigen's busiest family programs. From beading red dress pins, to creating leather heart pouches, to ribbon-skirt making, to strawberry picking at Belluz, the CAPC Coordinator Brenda always has something fun, cultural, and creative planned for families to do together.

Brenda and Helaina, who facilitate the CAPC program, had a busy year working with families to provide opportunities for learning, growing, and playing in a healthy and fulfilling way.

"I always recommend the CAPC program to people I know that have children and I also talk about all the programs under the Beendigen umbrella. I highly recommend this program and I wish the program a long life" -

Letter from a CAPC Client



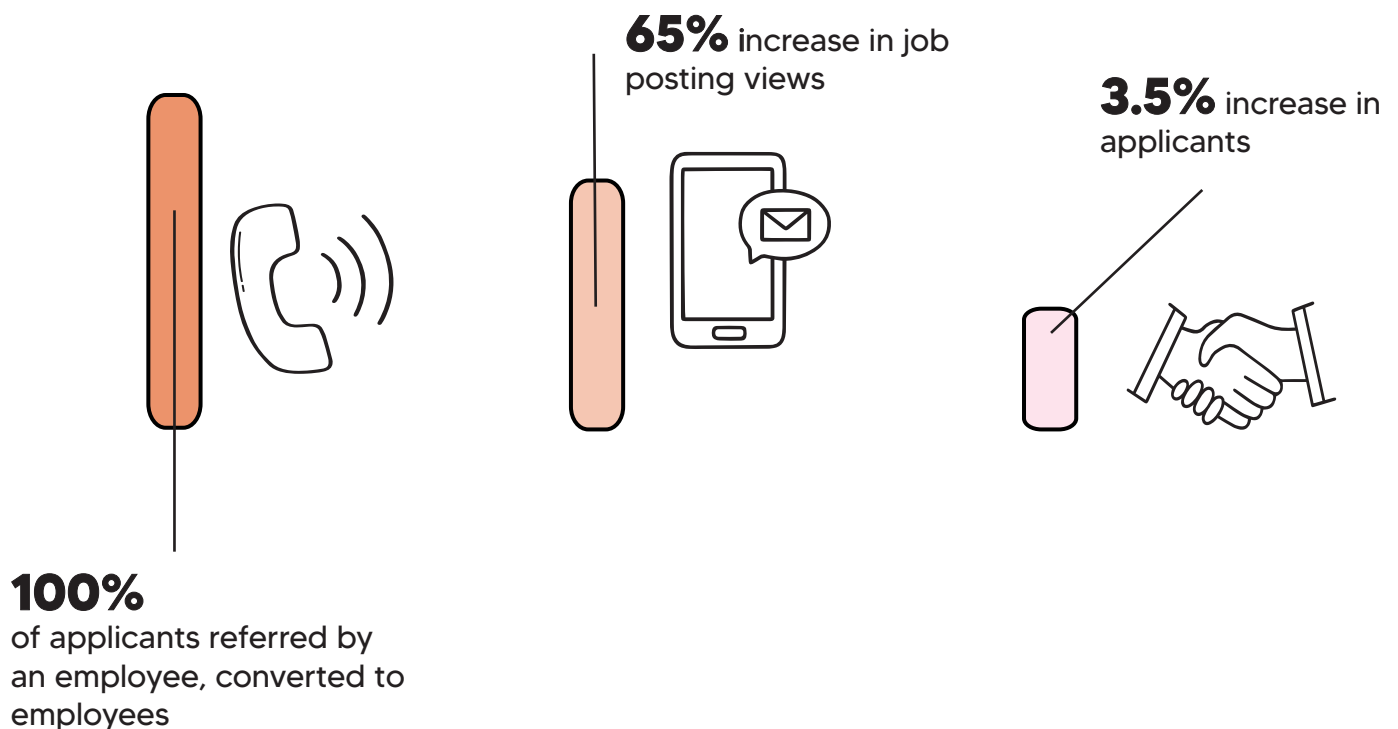


Human Resources

The Human Resources department is responsible for managing the employee life cycle from recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training staff.

HR also provides other functions to support our staff to thrive by providing career growth, offering continuing education, training and supporting managers, and supporting health and wellness.

Increasing Indigenous employment within Beendigen continues to be our focus in 2024-25. Our goal is to build our applicant pool by participating in more culturally-focused networking and career fairs. We continue to make positive strides and have seen an increases to the following recruitment stats:



Other 2023-24 HR successes:

- New staff policies manual
- New annual performance appraisals
- Online time tracking (Bamboo HR)
- Online scheduling platform (ShiftLink)
- Employee satisfaction surveys (annually in April)
- Negotiated a new Collective Agreement with Union Local 229
- Over 875 staff trainings completed



Communications



Stats from April 2023 to April 2024

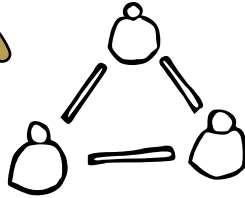
2.5K

Facebook followers



47.7K

Facebook reach



968

Instagram followers

31.2%

of our followers on IG are between ages 35-44

30.2%

of our followers on IG are between ages 25-34

Beendigen's Communications personnel acts as a liaison between the agency, the public, and the media to ensure that what we do and the services that we offer are relayed in a clear and concise way so that our message reaches those who may need our support.

Our Communications Administrator maintains the agency's online presence on all social media platforms and on our website. They are also responsible for designing both web and print advertisements to increase public awareness about what Beendigen does.

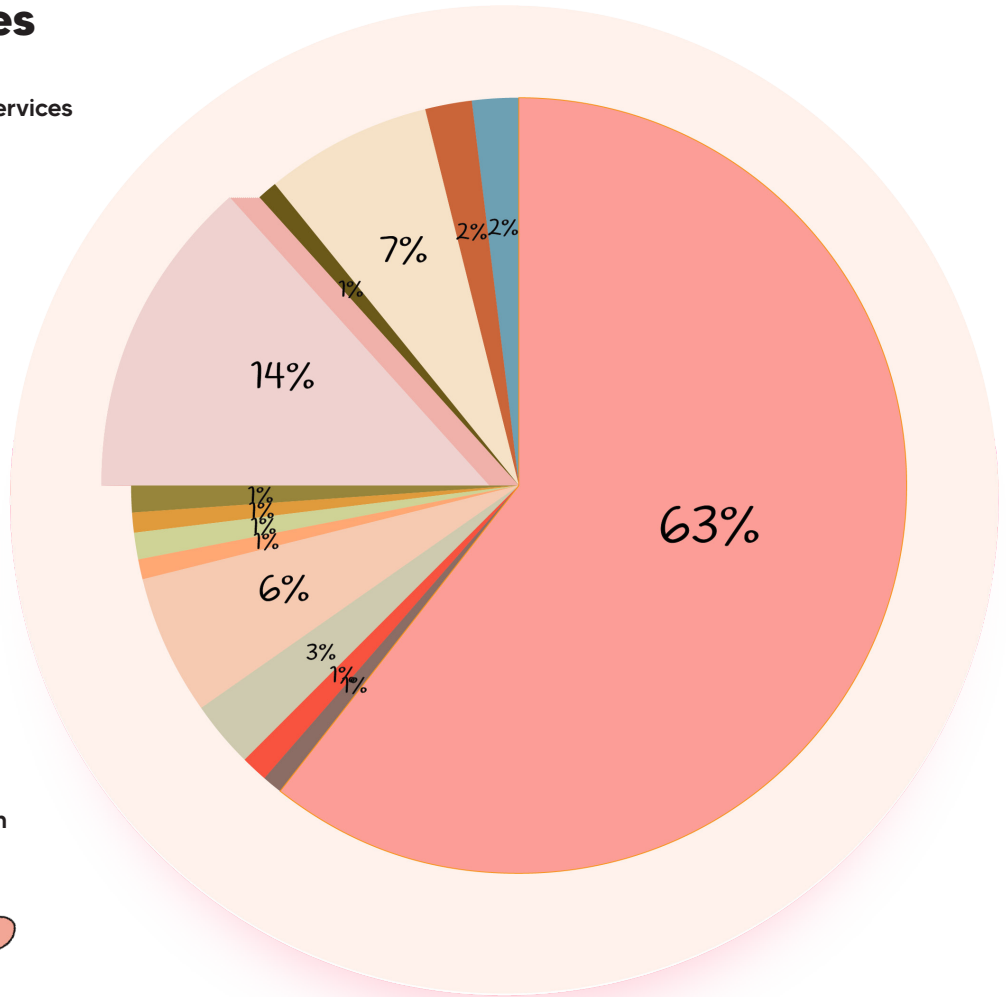
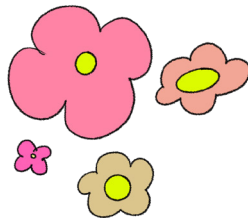
Communications also oversees the layout of important documents and reports such as the annual report and the strategic plan. It overlaps with graphic design, writing and editing, marketing, event planning, and website management.



Finance

Beendigen Funding Sources

- Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services
- Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
- District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
- Ontario Native Women's Association
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Donations
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Faye Peterson
- Ontario Health
- Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Women's Shelters Canada
- Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
- Marjorie House

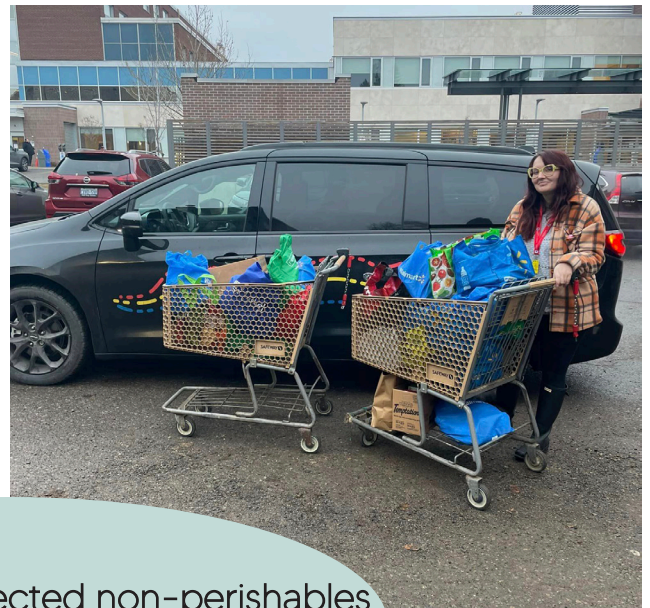


The Finance department is a source of vital support for Beendigen’s day-to-day operations as well as the agency’s long-term successes. The Finance team works behind the scenes to keep the agency moving forward and ensures that financial and accounting policies are adhered to.

The Finance department is responsible for all the organization’s finances, including the administration and management of 34 projects funded by 13 funding sources. Our primary funder is the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, as well as other funders/agencies that are all essential to operate our organization.

Beendigen has had another successful year. Our greatest accomplishment is that Beendigen acquired a new building. This purchase has put us one step closer to our goal of housing all of Beendigen's programs and services under one roof.

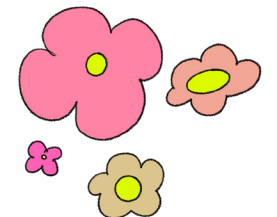
In the Community



Beendigen staff collected non-perishables to support the Dew Drop Inn at our annual Christmas party.



For Earth Day, staff and clients at every Beendigen site participated in a community clean-up.





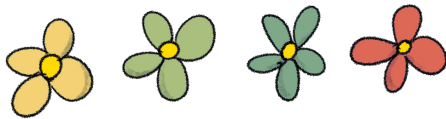
Chi-Miigwetch!



We can't do what we do without you!



Throughout the year, we were blown away by the support we received from the local community and beyond. From individual donors to organizations and initiatives like Royal LePage, the Jays Care Foundation, the Beer Store, Unifor, and Shopper's Drug Mart, we were better able to support our clients and to provide them with essential tools they can use on their paths to healing.



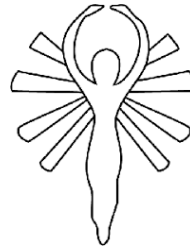
We have also received support from many local businesses and clubs within the city and we are very grateful to be located in such a caring and compassionate community that has a big heart.



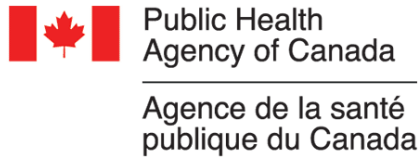
All the donation funds we receive go directly toward helping us better support Indigenous families as they rebuild after crisis and trauma. Funds go toward both our shelter and to the operation of our programs.

Chi-miigwetch to all of our donors, big and small. We appreciate it so much and we would not be able to do what we do without your help.

Funders



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD



An Agency of the Government of Ontario



Contact Beendigen:

Administration Office:
100 Anemki Drive, Suite 103
Fort William First Nation, ON
P7J 1J4
Ph: 807-622-1121

Programs: 807-622-1121

Crisis Line:


Ph: 807-346-HELP (4357)
Toll-Free: 1-888-200-9997



Talk4Healing Helpline:
1-855-554-HEAL
www.beendigen.com

Find us on social media:

   @beendigen

 @BeendigenTbay

 info@beendigen.com

