

Chair's Report

It's hard to believe that it was 6 months ago, March 11, 2020 that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, eventually resulting in the physical closure of Contact Niagara's office, although never resulting in a break to service. The pandemic has necessitated new processes and procedures for delivering services and providing governance. In concordance with the many physical changes to the office, an extensive policy to mitigate risk from COVID-19 has been implemented. Our staff are safe and while new procedures in some instances are more tedious and time consuming; high quality service, demonstrated by our continuous client feedback, continues unabated.

Consumer Satisfaction Comments...

Excellent service in so many ways. My intake call was full of respect, compassion and real listening.

Our Board of Directors is acutely aware of and celebrates the accomplishments of our staff and Executive Director. Some of these accomplishments include:

- Leading implementation of new collaborative programs in Niagara, including the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Worker Program and Co-ordinated Service Planning;
- Continuing our involvement with and the development of Niagara's Youth Wellness Hub, including supporting a very active Youth Advisory Committee;
- Implementing a new data sharing agreement with our children's mental health partners;
- Providing opportunities for Indigenous cultural safety training for our staff;
- Participating and partnering on our successful Niagara Ontario Health Team- Équipe Santé Ontario Niagara application

Although we are involved in new programming, our community has also lost some funded autism services. As a Board we continue to support our Executive Director and our service partners in their efforts to re-establish lost funding and support for families and clients with autism spectrum disorder.

This past year, the Board of Directors and staff of Contact Niagara, with input from our stakeholders, embarked on a

strategic planning process to establish direction for the organization over the next three years. Data collected to date from the community has revealed overwhelming support for Contact Niagara and our staff, and for being a knowledgeable leader in community collaboration. We were unable to complete our full planning process due to COVID-19 challenges, and planning will continue into the upcoming year. Our key objective for next year will be to finalize, implement and monitor the operationalization of our plan.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Zainab Awad for her participation on our Board, and wish her the best as she continues to support children, youth and families in Niagara through her work and other activities.

I value the participation of our Board of Directors. I miss the informal parts of our Board meetings that help to cement relationships and establish a team dedicated to democratic and informed decision-making. Zoom meetings are a second choice to in-person meetings. Nevertheless, we will continue to maintain our fiduciary duties for our ministry funders, on behalf of children, youth, and families in Niagara.

George Kurzawa, Board Chair

Executive Director's Report

Although this report will focus on our work during 2019-2020, it is impossible for me not to acknowledge how all of our lives have changed over the past 6 months, as we started our new fiscal year, on April 1, 2020, which seems both yesterday and a lifetime ago.

Vision:

A community where everyone feels respected, valued and supported and every child and youth is able to reach their full potential.

Mission:

To make a positive difference for individuals, families and the communities we serve, by providing coordinated information and processes, participating in collaborative community planning, and facilitating access to services.

Values:

At Contact Niagara, to guide our decisions and actions, we have a belief in and a commitment to the following core values:

Client and Family Centred
Personal Development

Integrity, Accountability, Trust and Transparency
Respect

Words cannot do justice to the tremendous respect and admiration I, and we at Contact Niagara, have for the children, youth and families with whom we have the privilege of coming into contact. Your insight, strength, determination, courage, resiliency are awe inspiring, and no more has this been true than these past months. We recognize and value the privilege we have of hearing your stories and supporting your goals. We have as an agency committed to “seeing” the diversity in culture, language and individual experiences in our community, and to recognizing that those from the Francophone Community, those who identify as Indigenous, or those who are otherwise marginalized experience unique barriers to accessing services, that we must understand, so that we may remove them. Again, as events around the world remind us, peoples’ experiences are layered, trust is often broken and small things are only small if seen that way by the person experiencing them. How we deliver service, how we support people seeking service, are all done through a prism of gender, of culture, of language, of race, and so many other things that makes each experience unique. The more we can educate ourselves and each other, the more we can challenge ourselves and each other, the more likely we can ensure our services are informed, safe, and “accessible” to all. For 2020-2021, we recommit to implementing practices that are meaningfully co-developed with those who have lived experience, and to continue to educate ourselves about the communities we serve. In the words of Kalani Tonga,

“Be mindful of which voices are missing from the table. Seek out and amplify those voices.”

It is equally difficult to convey the honour I, personally, feel in working with the other staff here at Contact Niagara. Words like commitment, dedication, creativity, flexibility are not enough to do you justice. It is your spirit, both individually and collectively, which is the cornerstone of fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to us. We could not ask more of each other, and yet, at times when we do, you are each there, ready and willing to take on one more challenge. During this pandemic, we have been able to continue providing service, uninterrupted, because of you. You are inspirational in your own right and I am privileged to work with each of you.

As I reflect on our work together in Niagara, I am constantly reminded of our community’s commitment to partnerships. Through honest and respectful dialogues with each other we are always trying to do better. As an agency, we are very lucky to be given opportunities to both provide direct service and partner on new initiatives. 2019-2020 was no different. As our systems of services continue to change, we continue to commit to always being the “right phone call”. We recognize we do not have all the answers, but our roles as a single point of co-ordinated access and service co-ordination agency mean we are well placed to support individuals as they move through their journey, as well as

system and community planning. We have highlighted below some of our work this past year.

In closing, a final note of thanks. To everyone who generously volunteers their time and expertise, to our direct service partners, and to the many partners we work with in our community, thank you for your never ending dedication and energy to supporting the citizens of Niagara. To the members of our Board of Directors, thank you. It is your commitment to all of us, even during very challenging times, that allows us to continue to strengthen and improve. It is as true today as it has been in the past, everyday, we are reminded of the power we have individually and collectively to make change.

Sincerely,
Nadine Wallace, Executive Director

... Everyone at Contact Niagara has been amazing with both myself and my child. I am grateful to have these professionals available to help and support myself and my child.

2019-2020 Highlights:

Like our partners, we are always looking for opportunities to improve services and processes. As our systems of service as a whole look to how to improve services and enhance programming, we understand that change is often our constant. Engaging those with lived experience is critical as we embrace opportunities and sometimes challenges of a constantly evolving system of services. 2019-2020 saw us move forward in Niagara with beginning to develop a shared a vision for health care transformation. This work is in its infancy and Contact Niagara is excited to be part of this process. As led by Pathstone Mental Health, our child and youth mental health lead agency, we continue to move forward as part of the provincial strategy on transforming the child and youth mental health system. This work is now linked with the transformation occurring in the adult mental health and the addictions system, and the opportunities to collaborate on lifespan transformation are very exciting; and we continue to support our Transitional Age Youth Process for those youth transitioning into adulthood who may be eligible for adult developmental services. The ultimate goal of any change is always to make services more responsive to individual needs, and we will need to continue to ensure children, youth and families are included in these processes if we want to ensure better, more responsive services. Other highlights include:

- ✚ Working with our child and youth mental health partners on a Family Engagement Charter
- ✚ Embedding cultural safety training opportunities for our staff
- ✚ Our work with our community partners on the implementation of co-ordinated service planning and increasing FASD supports

- ✦ Continuing our collaboration with our local Youth Wellness Hub initiative (more below)
- ✦ Responding to the evolving needs created by the pandemic
- ✦ Continuing participation in various research projects
- ✦ Developing our next strategic plan

Statistics on Intakes:

4,721 intakes on behalf of 4,107 children and youth:

	# of Intakes Created	# Unique Children/ Youth	Case notes Completed
2019/20	4,721	4,107	27,363
2018/19	4,949	3,944	28,729
2017/18	5,011	3,293	27,699
2016/17	4,054	3,450	19,021
2015/16	3,471	2,947	17,553
2014/15	2,671	2,307	12,274

Stats: Who Called to make a referral:

2019/20	Caller / Requestor	
Parent/Family/Friend	1,459	32%
Doctors	2,253	50%
Other professionals	311	7%
School	107	2%
Police	67	1%
FACS	103	2%
Other/Anonymous	231	5%
Total	4,531	~100%

The support and understanding was tremendous. The empathy and compassion towards my child and my child's situation was reassuring.

Integrated Youth Service Sites- (AKA YWHN)

The 2019/2020 fiscal year was the second of three years in the pilot project between the provincial government, the Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health in their partnership with ten communities across the province housing integrated youth service sites: "Youth Wellness Hubs" Ontario (YWHO). Youth Wellness Hub Niagara (YWHN), comprised of partnerships between the 3 core sites: Centre de santé communautaire (Welland), the John Howard Society (Welland) and the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre; officially launched on June 24th, 2019. Much of 2019/2020 was dedicated to building the YWHN's brand (including a collaborative joint logo development process), and cultivating relationships with community services providers to expand the YWHN's complement of bi-

lingual mental health, addictions, and primary care related core services. Efforts were concentrated on community outreach and growth of our social media platforms to increase awareness throughout Niagara as the YWHN was accessed by more youth ages 12-25 as a drop in service option in South Niagara. Most excitingly perhaps, was the completion of renovations on the new YWHN drop-in space housed in the John Howard Society building at 225 E. Main St. in Welland.

In March 2020, as Ontario began to lockdown in response to COVID-19, the YWHN paused its in-person services and rapidly transitioned to offering services and activities virtually. In collaboration with members of the Core Sites, service pathways were quickly established to connect youth with clinical and non-clinical supports, and the YWHN's Youth Navigators began to offer virtual recreational activities, including yoga and cooking classes, via Zoom and Instagram Live. The YWHN provided additional support to youth in the Niagara Region who were particularly impacted by the pandemic. For example, 30 pre-paid mobile phones were donated to the YWHN by Bell Canada and Rogers Communications and were distributed to youth in the Region without a phone, as a means of connecting these youth with virtual supports. Moving forward, the YWHN will continue to build on these virtual care offerings and focus on increasing awareness across the Niagara Region of virtual and other supports and services YWHN continues to offer.

Youth engagement is a key component of the YWHO model. In Niagara, a group of approximately 10 youth ages 12-25 have come together to create our local Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). The YAC has met regularly since June 2019 and has helped co-create the YWHN. The YAC works to ensure that hubs are youth-friendly, and responsive to the evolving needs of young people. They have provided insight into hours of operation, staff identification, policy development, advertisement and promotion, logo design, website content, event planning and more. YAC members have participated



Teambuilding with a purpose: YAC Members creating staff clothing

in interview panels when hiring YWHN staff, represented Niagara provincially through the provincial youth advisory committee and provincial Indigenous advisory committee, and have attended conferences, such as the new programming FRAYME conference alongside YWHN staff in February of 2020. Since the pandemic, the YAC has met virtually on a bi-weekly basis. They have focused their efforts on social media content development, raising awareness and understanding of the hub and the virtual services that it offers, and have run a highly successful Trivia night. The YAC is excited to continue to support the YWHN to ensure that their new model of service is able to meet the needs of young people amongst the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.



2019-2020 continued to see significant changes to the structure and delivery of autism services in Ontario. The Ministry received a tremendous amount of feedback from children, youth and families, and others who support children and youth with autism, and committed to continuing to refine and implement programming based on this feedback. Details of programming continued to be finalized during the 4th quarter of the fiscal year. Through the course of these changes, Contact Niagara continued to ensure that the Independent Clinical Review (ICR) Process for the OAP remained available to youth and families who requested a review. Throughout 2019-2020, the ICR offered families an opportunity to request a review of specific elements of their child's proposed OAP Behaviour Plan. The ICR team involved Psychologists, Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs), as well as family members of children with autism as Family Representatives to ensure the family's perspective was embedded throughout the process.

Although the Ministry has shared that the ICR process will not be part of the new programming moving forward, Contact Niagara continues to be available to provide support to those seeking information on autism services.

Financial Report:			
Fiscal Year End March 31		2020	2019
Revenue			
MCCSS / MOH		1,476,080	1,364,065
Flow Through Revenues		281,779	271,938
System Planning		104,856	109,924
Rental and Other		29,190	46,435
TOTAL:		1,891,905	\$1,792,362
Expenses			
Salaries & Benefits		1,257,983	1,202,784
Flow through Expenses		281,779	250,933
Other Expenses		352,503	224,688
TOTAL:		1,892,265	\$1,678,405
Ministry Subsidy Payable			
Children's Services		0	0
Flow Through		0	21,005
ICR Process		0	92,952
TOTAL:		0	\$113,957
Youth Wellness Hub			
Revenue		281,779	213,021
Expenses		(281,779)	(213,021)
TOTAL:		\$0	\$0
Other Revenues (Expenses)		\$(360)	\$(330)
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue over Expenses		\$(360)	\$(330)

* Please note: The above Revenue (Expenses) were attributed to non-Ministry assets.

Board of Directors
(2019-2020)

Chair: George Kurzawa
Treasurer: Kristy Andersen
Secretary: Todd Bright

Board Members:

Zainab Awad
Nick Baxter
Jordan Clark
Justin Creamer
Marcel Jacques
JoAnn Theobald

Contact Niagara Staff
(2019 - 2020)

Organizational Supports:

Anita Engelage (Reception/Admin Support)
Jackie Frans (IT/Admin Support)
Liliane Guertin (Bilingual Admin Support)
Zibya MacLeod (Bookkeeper)

Resource Coordinators:

Eva Berswick
Joanne Bovine (Bilingual)
Liana Danyliuk
Jenna Fiello
Beth Foster
Heather Fowler
Cathy Gales
Margaret Griffiths
Kristen Hendry
Susan Kowalski
Julie Nichols
Fred Steinhaus

YWHN:

Thomas Coyne (Project Manager)
Deane McGeen (Youth Navigator)
Shanen Smith (Youth Navigator)

ICR Process:

Ashley Hardman (Lead)
Angela Lynch (File Coordinator)
Katie McKay (and RC Support)

Executive Director: Nadine Wallace



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