



The Children's Aid Society
OF HAMILTON
La Société d'aide à l'enfance
DE HAMILTON

2019-2020

COMMUNITY REPORT

hamiltoncas.com

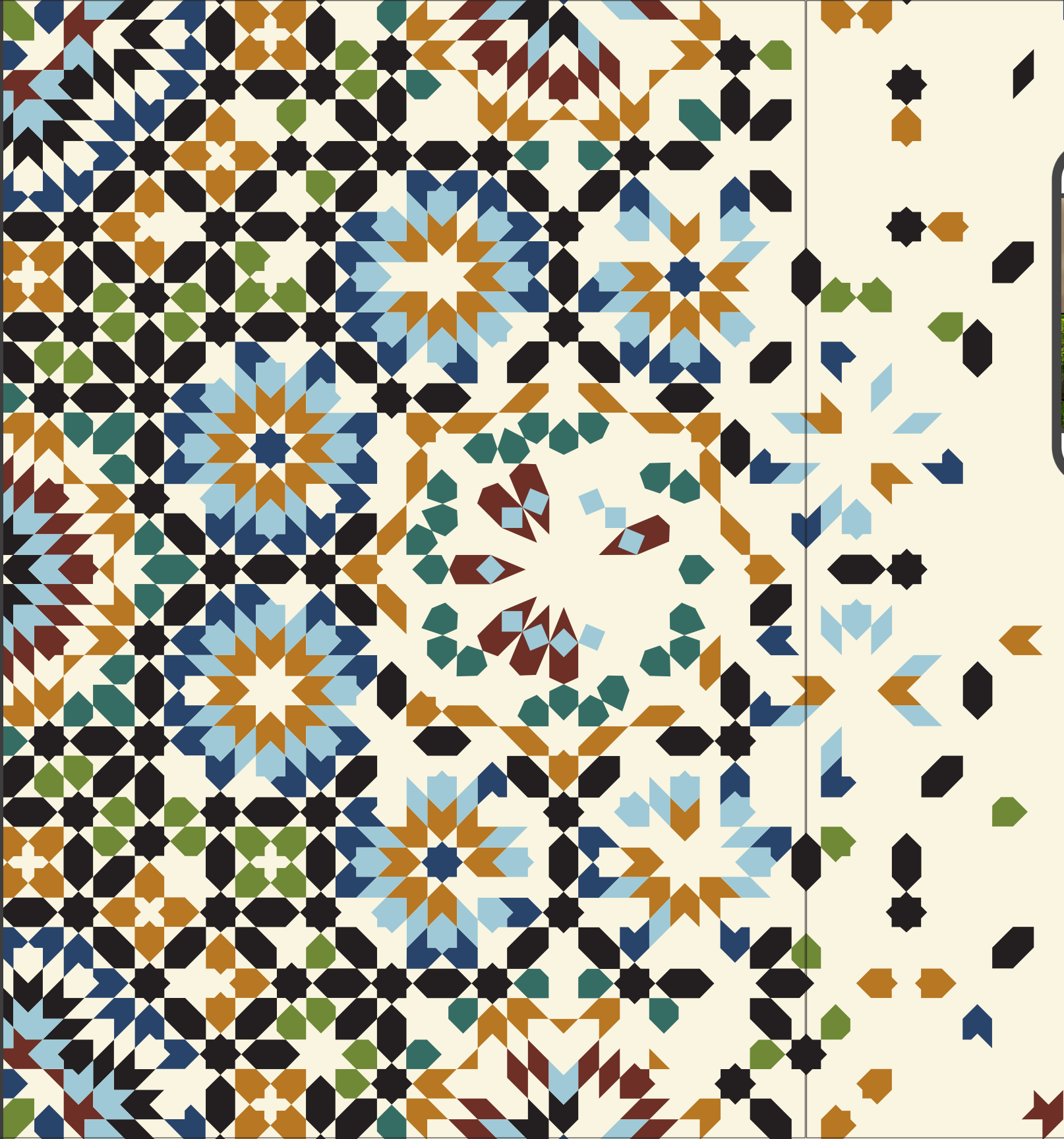
hamiltoncas.com

Land and Treaty Acknowledgement

The Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton acknowledges our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty. The intent of this wampum treaty is for all nations sharing this territory to do so responsibly, respectfully and sustainably in perpetuity. We respect the long-standing relationships with the local Indigenous communities, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River.

On this land we are mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile our history in child welfare and relations with Indigenous peoples. We are especially mindful of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action to redress the Legacy of Child Welfare on Indigenous families and communities.

We acknowledge that today Hamilton is the home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in this community, on their territory.



MESSAGE FROM BRYAN AND NEIL



The year 2020 has provided the agency with many amazing opportunities as well as challenges. The COVID-19 global pandemic brought many changes, too many to list here. However, when it came time to reflect on the organization’s annual report, there was one thing we realized did not change. The agency’s vision to work together with families, and partners in the community, to provide support to keep children and youth safe and well.

Hamilton CAS launched a new strategic vision in November of 2019. This five-year plan, which included a re-allocation of service staff to support agency goals, will not only continue the good work of the agency, but also mark a new beginning.

Together, we developed a series of six areas of focus to guide the agency’s work. These guiding principles include a commitment to keeping children safe with their family and in their community, providing service and centering decisions on the needs and voice of children, youth and families, achieving permanency for children and youth involved with the agency and supporting children and youth to reach their full potential.

Other key areas of focus for Hamilton CAS include centering equity and inclusion in the agency’s guiding principles, creating a healthy workplace and enhancing relationships and partnerships with identified communities. We are fortunate and thankful to have partners such as Empowerment Squared and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre who were willing to share their stories of how we are working together to keep children, youth and families in the Hamilton community safe and well.

The stories you will read in the coming pages are examples of the agency’s vision in action. We are excited to share insight directly from youth, partners and staff. We are hopeful that through these stories, you will get a glimpse into the work that is happening every day at Hamilton CAS and the agency’s commitment to those we serve.

We know that families face many different types of struggles. Some challenges include childcare issues, food security, housing pressures, mental health or addiction issues, and even violence in the home. All of these, if left without the necessary support, can potentially lead to issues where a child or youth is not safe. We learned that during times of extreme pressure like COVID-19, these challenges can be amplified. And for some families, depending on barriers, and availability of resources and supports, the struggles may be even greater.

We want to make sure that all children, youth and families in our community know Hamilton Children’s Aid is here to help those who may be in crisis. Many times, CAS can provide early support to families in ways to reduce risk to children. If you are a family in need, please know that you can reach out to us. Or, if you know of a family, child or youth who may need help, please reach out to us so we can engage with them and offer support.

Everyone plays a role in keeping children, youth and families safe and well. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at Hamilton CAS for their tireless commitment. You, along with foster and kin families, volunteers, donors and community partners are making a difference every day. And now, more than ever, it is important that we all continue to work together.

Bryan Shone, Executive Director
Neil McMahon, Board President

Board of Directors

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- Karen Turkstra

HAMILTON CAS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 01.** Safety and Well-Being
- 02.** Permanency and Potential
- 03.** Engaged and Inspired
- 04.** Strategic Partnerships
- 05.** Continuous Improvement
- 06.** Resources and Sustainability

CHAPTER 01

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIPS AND EQUITY AT HAMILTON CAS

An ongoing journey

Together we can identify challenges and risks and find solutions.

Developing and maintaining strategic partnerships within our community, and across the province, that will assist to support vulnerable children and families is one of Hamilton Children's Aid Society's guiding principles. We continue our work to centre equity in our service to families in the Hamilton community. Throughout this past year we have had the opportunity to broaden the conversation and deepen our commitment towards equity through our work internally as an agency and externally with community partners.

We know that racism continues to impact the day to day lives of racialized and Indigenous families in profound and damaging ways. We must all ask ourselves what changes we are willing to make as individuals, and collectively, to truly change the direction. Discussion about the issues is no longer enough and we must have courage and leadership to really make the changes that we need to see as a Society. We acknowledge this needs to be both an individual and organizational commitment.

We still have lots of work still to do, but our journey of providing equitable services to all families is ongoing. We are committed to providing early help and being helpful and not hurtful in our work with families, children and youth. We are committed to the priority of ensuring that those who are involved with the Society receive equitable services and are affirmed in their identity and lived experiences with all areas of oppression.

One way we are moving this work forward is through building relationships and becoming better informed by equity-seeking groups in our community. Two important partners, Empowerment Squared and Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, are sharing their voices and helping to inform our work and understanding of one another.

**Leo Johnson, Executive Director,
Empowerment Squared**

The partnership between Hamilton Children's Aid Society and Empowerment Squared is something we are very excited about, especially because it is an intentional step to work together to support families in our community.

I am a newcomer myself, and the child welfare system is a very important one in



our community. If child welfare is not a part of the conversation with newcomers when they arrive, then they are being set up to fail as parents. Typically, CAS shows up at your door when there is a problem. And if this is your only interaction, then of course it will become what you know or believe about an organization. Instead, we are working hard with CAS to be a source of empowerment and support for newcomer parents.

Many newcomers are looking for support as they navigate new parenting tools. The agency's commitment to early help reinforces and empowers parents by giving them tools to be stronger parents. Rather than questioning a parent's ability, the agency is providing the support for them to do it well. Not only will this work help to avoid a potential crisis before it happens, but as families experience CAS in a different way, their knowledge, and perspective of the system will also change.



Audrey Davis, Executive Director and Vicky Miller, Family Support Group Lead, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

Hamilton CAS is willing to understand what colonialism has done to Indigenous people and has picked up the call to Truth and Reconciliation. Building relationships with members of the Indigenous serving community, as well as a commitment to building awareness, sharing knowledge and training CAS staff across the organization, will help move this work forward.

Communication between child welfare agencies and Indigenous service providers, such as Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, is important. So too, is acknowledging the historic trauma and impacts of child welfare policies and practices that have led to disproportionate numbers of Indigenous peoples involvement with this system. We have a foundational service agreement but there is the need for commitment from both sides to continue relationship building. In Hamilton, relationship building happens primarily through the Indigenous Child Welfare Collaborative (ICWC). All of Hamilton Indigenous agencies participate in the ICWC, along with both child welfare agencies in the community. Through our consistent meetings and knowledge sharing, we have been able to further communication and accountability. More importantly, child welfare agencies have begun to understand that the Indigenous service providers, being Indigenous themselves, have the unique skills, understanding, and empathy to successfully divert and exit Indigenous families out of the child welfare system. The earlier we work in partnership with families, the quicker families are supported in a culturally safe and informed manner.

Friendship Centres are hubs that service families and individuals from cradle to grave, across all social service sectors. At HRIC we work with families every day and embrace a wholistic, culturally appropriate and safe

approach. Building a relationship with Hamilton CAS means we can work together to support families in a collaborative way. One of Hamilton Regional Indian Centre's goals is to connect the Indigenous people and families to the Indigenous community. HRIC does not just provide social services and supports, we are very community oriented and offer cultural and social activities that are open to all. Reconnection to cultural is necessary to overcome the historic traumas and colonization that has negatively impacted the Indigenous people of North America. Working collaboratively with children, youth and families who are involved with CAS means we can support them in building healthier, more balanced lifestyles leading to improved overall outcomes.

Steps on the journey

- Working with Indigenous Consultant Tammy Hill to conduct an environmental scan and implement recommendations into our operational plan and service model, including a new Indigenous specialization team with a focus on building relationships and accountability as well as advising colleagues in our work with Indigenous families
- Creating a racialized and newcomer specialization team that advises colleagues and provides specialized support to families in need of service. Empowerment Squared, a vital support for newcomer youth and families in Hamilton, has been a key advisor to building the key principles of this team
- Ongoing Town Hall meetings with the newcomer community to better understand the needs of the community, gaps in service and to build relationships with one another
- Staff led affinity groups to engage staff and the community in our efforts to provide more equitable and inclusive service

CHAPTER 02

PERMANENCY
& POTENTIAL

KEEPING FAMILIES CONNECTED THROUGH KIN

At Hamilton CAS, our focus is on providing support so that families can stay together. However, there are times that this is not possible. The number one option in these cases is to have children and youth stay together and with kin.



When children and youth stay with kin, they maintain important connections such as those with family, community, their culture, band and religion and have a greater sense of belonging.

Two staff – Johnson and Kim – are guiding the agency’s journey to implementing a kin connection program at Hamilton CAS. “We are fortunate to have been able to do a lot of research and learn from other agencies which already have kin connection or family finding programs in place,” says Johnson, kin connection worker. “We have also been engaging with staff across the agency who are doing amazing work,” adds Kim. This philosophy is all about teamwork. Our role will be to create awareness, generate enthusiasm, provide education and mentoring to our colleagues and supervisors across the agency to make kin connection a central part of our day to day work.”

Teamwork in action

Heather, a child protection worker at the agency, is passionate about using genograms to outline and build a comprehensive picture of all the people involved with the families she is working with. “I feel that having a good picture of those connected to a family helps me to identify those who may be able to provide the family with support,” says Heather.

Heather and Johnson had an opportunity to collaborate, along with other staff at the agency, to provide a plan to keep children together with a member of their extended family. “We were able to facilitate emails and virtual group conferences with parents, extended family, foster families and workers, says Heather. It took some time, but together, we identified a village that cares for, and surrounds, these children. While the plan has not yet been finalized, it is one that keeps these children together, with their kin.”

Megan, another worker who has been supporting the family also agrees. “Regardless of the outcome, the work to connect with extended family means that these children will have more support and people who will care for them throughout their lives.”

Annette, a foster parent for Hamilton CAS has always seen her role as caring for any child in her care to the best of her ability. After being part of the collaborative process for this family, she also sees the benefit of the kin connection philosophy. “Being a part of the planning, that focused on a shared goal of doing what is best for these children, has been a really great experience. I am excited for what the future holds for this family.”

Did you know?

Hamilton CAS will be using an integrated approach model for kin connection. In this approach, kin finding, engagement and connection work is embedded in the day to day work of everyone across the agency along with Equity & Signs of Safety work. From the beginning of our work with families, we will pursue connections for children and youth, making it a central pillar of everyday practice. Kin connection workers will be mentors, coaches and facilitators that will help build capacity for staff and offer support as needed.

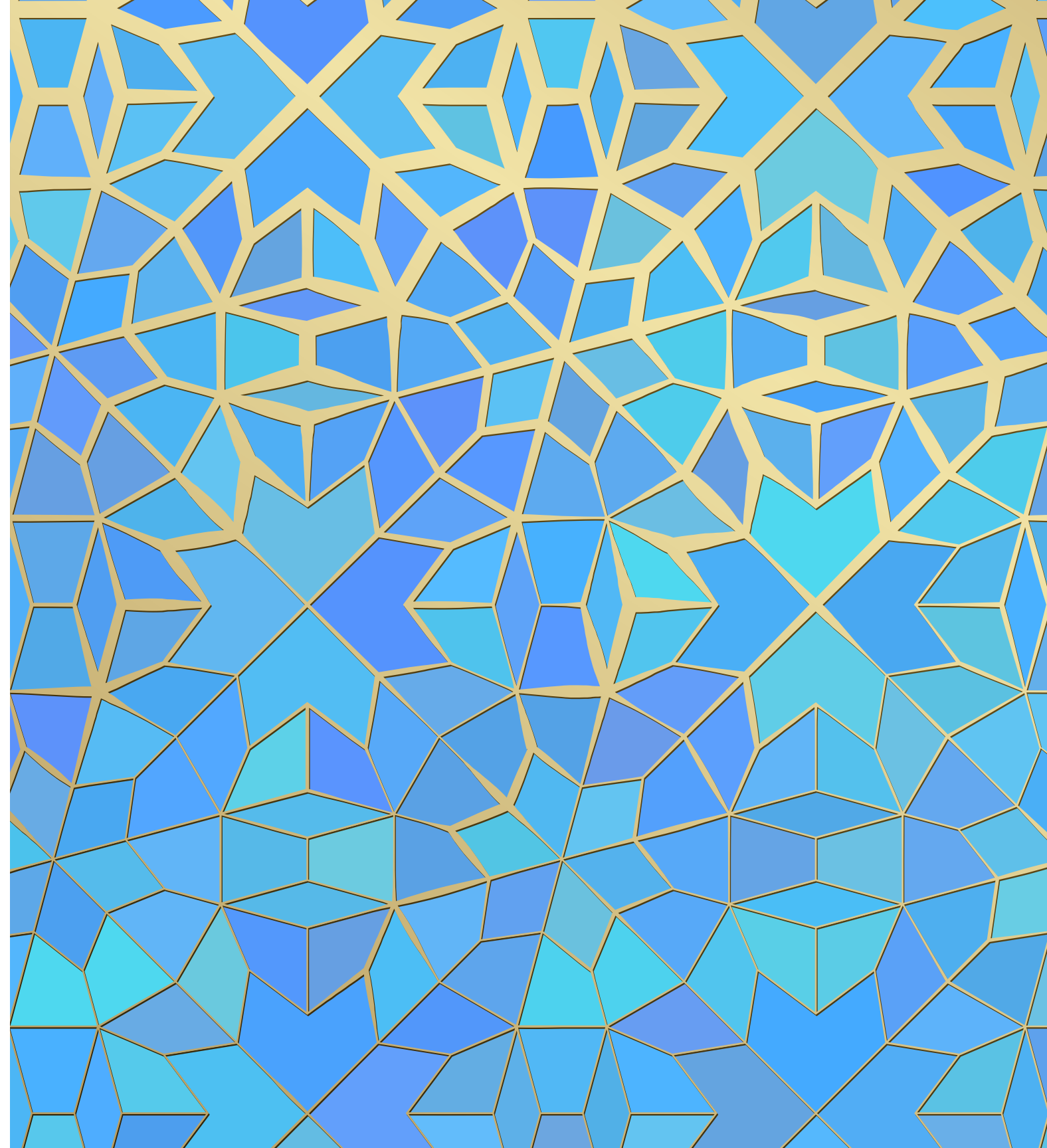
CHAPTER 03

ENGAGED
& INSPIRED

WHAT A HEALTHY WORKPLACE MEANS TO ME

Melissa's story

"My favourite part of being a unit assistant is being helpful. I enjoy helping the teams I work with and families we serve. Oh, and I like organizing things. Over the eighteen years that I've worked at the agency, I've been given many opportunities to grow and have always felt supported in my choices."



I actively pursued a career at Hamilton Children's Aid Society. It was important to me to work in child welfare. I became a mom when I was a teenager and needed assistance from the local children's aid society where I lived. I was able to get the help I needed and decided that I would like to work, and be an advocate for, an organization I believe in. While my work doesn't always have me dealing directly with families, I understand the pressures families may be facing and know that all the various roles within the agency contribute to supporting children, youth and families in our community.

I am engaged in the work of the agency in a number of different ways. As a union steward, a health and safety representative and a return to work specialist for those who have been on a leave, I feel that I can bring a positive voice to both the agency and the union. We have a Peer Support Team at the agency and I was given the opportunity and training needed to be the first coordinator from a non-direct service role.

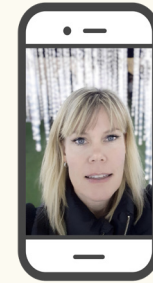
In 2012, at the age of 24, my son died of an accidental opioid overdose. The support I received from the agency was overwhelming. I experienced care and concern at every level and felt valued not only as an employee but as a person. After some time off, I returned to work more committed than ever to my work and to the families we serve.

I am encouraged by the agency's new strategic vision, which clearly demonstrates a commitment to a healthy workplace at an organizational level. I've been here a long time and have experienced it at a personal level, but now feel that changes are happening across the organization. Staff ideas are not only welcomed, they are heard. I am proud to be part of this agency, and excited as we move forward together.

CHAPTER 04 YOUTH SUCCESS

PERMANENCY & POTENTIAL

Helping youth involved with Hamilton CAS to reach their full potential is a priority for the agency. In fact, this commitment is embedded in the agency's recently launched Strategic Vision which will guide the agency's work over the next five years. Some key elements of youth success include health, education, transition to independent living and a strong sense of self and belonging. Two positions at Hamilton CAS are helping to guide this work – a youth success coordinator and an educational liaison.



Lisa

I've worked at Hamilton CAS since 1998. I started out as a child and youth worker, then became a child protection worker. My passion for working with youth led me to apply for the position of youth success coordinator. Our agency's strategic vision and commitment to youth success means that we can help youth be prepared for

the world after CAS by making sure we provide the skills, support and resources that will help them to be successful.

In my role, I can bring youth together who may not otherwise get to know each other. This creates relationships and a support network with other youth. It also gives me the opportunity to listen. We have amazing youth advocates who provide valuable input into what we can do as an organization to support them.

Personally, I am honoured to work with youth who may have faced difficult situations but have the motivation and perseverance to accomplish great things. I believe that youth have the power to write the rest of their story. Their future is an open book that they can fill out. Youth are bright, insightful, resourceful leaders, who are champions for themselves and for others and they have the support of the agency, and the community, to help them on their journey.



John

I've spent the last 35 years working in Education. From teaching, to being an executive superintendent, to working with the Ministry, I've always believed in education and want to do whatever I can to help youth succeed.

Working as an educational liaison for Hamilton CAS means that I can be an advocate for the educational needs of youth involved with child welfare. I am also a resource to workers and foster parents. I hope to be able to bridge the gap between the society and education staff to better meet the needs of children and youth we work with. It also means I can help resolve issues that may be impacting their learning.

Recently, together with a co-chair in Ottawa, I have also been able to provide some support for this work on a provincial level. At the end of the day it I want children and youth involved with our agency to know that they have another person in their corner to help navigate any challenges they may be facing.



Noris

We all have hardships that we have to face. The question I asked myself was, what did I want my triumph to look like despite those hardships? What resonated with me? I chose to go to school and pursue a career in real estate. While excited, I was worried about being able to financially afford my program. I received a bursary from

Hamilton Children's Aid Society and that has made all the difference.

When I heard about the bursary program from my CAS worker, it helped to ease my stress of how I would be able to make my chosen path possible. Knowing there was someone out there who had my back, actually a community of people who are generous enough to give others the chance to pursue their dreams, was the greatest motivation and catalyst for me to work towards my vision. In fact, it empowered me to pursue a career as a realtor.

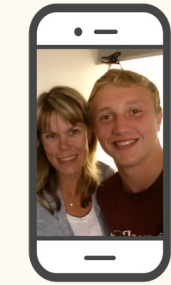
I've always dreamed of buying my own home and thought it would be great to be a part of that same process with others. I believe strongly in customer service and want to be part of making other people's dreams a reality when they buy their perfect home.

I also believe strongly that how much work you put in influences what you get in return, and that's very exciting. I am currently waiting to finish my exams which have been delayed a couple of times due to the current situation we are all facing. But I am staying focused and patient and I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given.

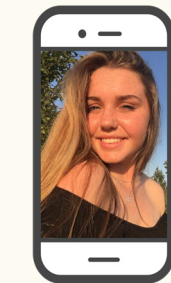
I have been able to do the program, and work towards achieving my goals because of the generosity of others. To those that donate to the Bursary Program at Hamilton CAS – thank you. Those two words don't really seem to do justice to how I feel. It is so beautiful that others care enough about youth they haven't even met to fund this type of program.

The best way I can express my thanks is to work hard and be successful. One day I will get to a place in my own life that I can pay it forward and help empower another young person to pursue their dreams.

Words from our youth



"CAS has affected my life in many different ways. Don't get it twisted it's not all great but I have been given opportunities like going to camp and organized sports growing up that I'd otherwise not get to participate in. CAS has helped and motivated me to keep going with school which also has multiple programs to help with funding. I'd just like to thank all of CAS and two special people Rubina and most of all Lisa. We may not see eye to eye all the time, but I know she cares and has been there for a lot, takes a lot of pride in her work. I like to think she loves me like one of her kids. Kind of the only family I have." – Justin



"CAS has helped me in many ways, it has showed me that no matter how many times life knocks you down there is always someone to help pick you up again and walk with you. I'm very thankful for all the staff I have met along the years. I wouldn't be where I am today without them. I have learned social skills through programs that the CAS has run, and never felt alone because someone was always there to listen. Thanks a million. – Aliyah



"Although the stereotypes around being a youth in care are mostly negative, CAS has shaped me into a young adult with a very bright future. I have been given endless amounts of opportunities which have allowed me to serve my community, finish my degrees and become a certified paramedic within the region. I am proud of myself for staying dedicated, but I am thankful to have had exceptional workers who have pushed me to get to where I am today." – Kayla

CHAPTER 05 COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE BRINGS PARTNERS TOGETHER TO PREVENT CHILD AND YOUTH SUICIDE

SAFETY & WELL-BEING

Part of our new strategic vision at Hamilton Children's Aid Society involves a commitment to early help – working with children, youth and families, together with our partners, to prevent a crisis before it happens.

One great example of this is the agency's participation in the creation of a protocol for "Youth with Complex Needs Suicide (YCSN)." This protocol was developed through the work of the Hamilton Committee for the Collaborative Management of Youth Suicide, which has representatives from multiple sectors and agencies across Hamilton to identify and create a coordinated approach to support high-risk suicidal youth in the Hamilton community.

Representatives from agencies across the community meet regularly to discuss high-risk youth who need additional support. Agencies include the Canadian Mental Health Association, school boards, child protection services, family health teams, police, mobile crisis, and more. Each agency is trained to identify youth that meet the criteria, and to activate the YCSN protocol, when needed.

"Everyone needs to come together to prevent children and youth who are at high-risk of dying by suicide," says Fiona Koopal, Supervisor on the Adolescent Team, Hamilton CAS. "We have to work together to support youth and families through the challenges they may be facing. We recently had the opportunity to provide support to a youth and her family after the protocol was activated. We were able to come together quickly to develop a plan to support her and her family. The protocol enabled us to identify the various services that were available within the community and link the youth with the services that meet her needs."

"Suicide prevention is everyone's business," says Dr. Jennifer McTaggart, a clinical psychologist in McMaster Children's Hospital's Child and Youth Mental Health Program, and co-chair of the committee. "We have a shared responsibility to do our best to keep these youth safe. We have to ask ourselves what are the issues a child or youth is struggling with, and how can we get the right supports in place to address them. It creates accountability and an immediate plan of action."

"This protocol also allows us to quickly connect about a specific child or youth and ensure we are not working in silos," says Dr. Nicole Karki, Clinical Director at the Lynwood Charlton Centre, and the other co-chair of the committee. "It lets us think outside the box and look at creative ways of ensuring each of our organizations is doing everything we can to meet the needs of youth who are at risk of completing suicide."

Did you know?

Suicide is especially prevalent in vulnerable children and youth. In Canada, it is the second leading cause of death for youth (15 to 24 year olds)





CHAPTER 06

STATS & FINANCIALS

2019-2020 STATS AT A GLANCE

5429

CALLS ABOUT
THE SAFETY &
WELL-BEING OF
A CHILD

2698

INVESTIGATIONS
OPENED

1057

LINKS TO
COMMUNITY
SERVICES

TOP 3

REASONS FOR
WORKING WITH
FAMILIES

20%

PHYSICAL
HARM

19%

CAREGIVER WITH
ADDICTIONS/
MENTAL HEALTH
CHALLENGE

18%

CHILD EXPOSURE
TO DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

1120

FAMILIES
SUPPORTED ON
AN ONGOING
BASIS

81%

FAMILIES
WORKING
VOLUNTARILY
WITH US

98%

FAMILIES
SUPPORTED IN
THEIR HOME
OR IN THE
COMMUNITY

15%

DECREASE IN
NUMBER OF
CHILDREN IN
CARE

70

CHILDREN
IN CARE IN
PERMANENT
HOMES

169

CHILDREN/
YOUTH BEING
CARED FOR
BY KIN

406

CHILDREN IN
CARE (AS OF
MARCH 31, 2020)

139

FOSTER
FAMILIES

258

STAFF

112

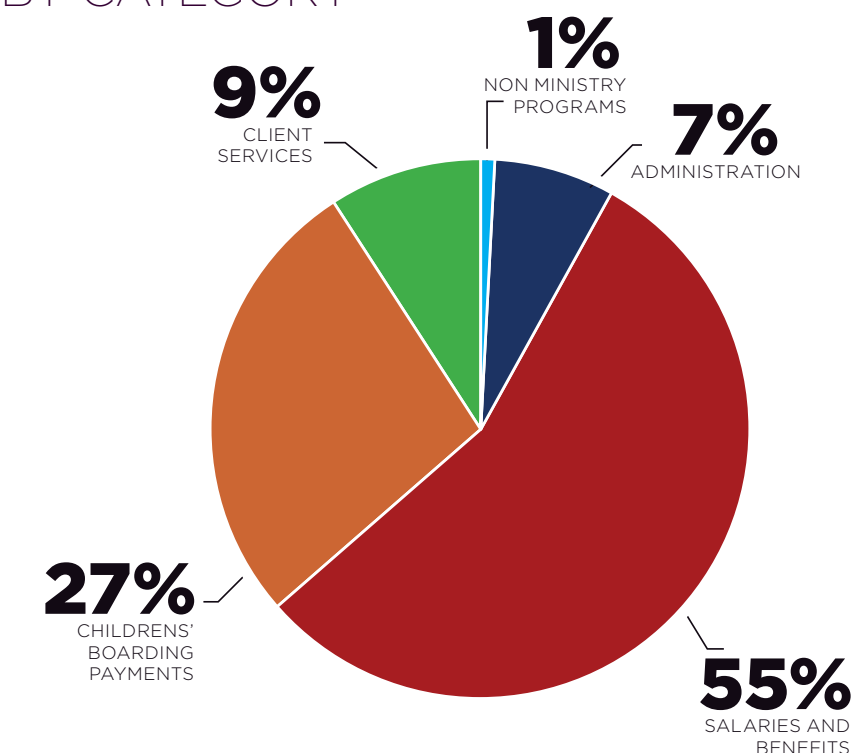
VOLUNTEERS

2019-2020 FINANCIALS

	2019-2020 (IN '000S)	2018-2019 (IN '000S)
TOTAL REVENUE	48,652	50,207
TOTAL EXPENSES	48,744	52,362
SURPLUS (DEFECIT) FOR THE YEAR	(92)	(2,155)

This is a summary of details in the 2019-2020 audited financial statements prepared under Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and audited by Deloitte LLP. A full audited financial statement is available at www.hamiltoncas.com

EXPENSES BREAKDOWN BY CATEGORY



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

While the Ontario government provides funding for core child protection services, many prevention and enrichment programs are not funded.

Thanks to the generosity of donors to Hamilton CAS, we can provide support and opportunities for children, youth and families in the Hamilton community.

Because of you:

\$206,715 total donations to Hamilton CAS

40 youth received educational bursaries

154 children and youth went to camp

287 children, youth and families received holiday sponsorship

We need your help! Visit www.hamiltoncas.com/donation-centre/ to learn more about how your support can make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families.



Charitable Business No. 11885 2136 RR0001