EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

The past year marked the first year of the OACAS Re-imagine Child Welfare 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. This plan lays out a strategic vision for a better system, one that focuses on the child and youth voice, paired with principles of equity, belonging, respect and empowerment, commitment to Reconciliation, and the delivery of consistent and excellent services.

Transforming the child welfare system requires strategic planning and thoughtful dialogue with sector leadership, committees, councils, and each member agency. It also requires engaging with the lived experience of the children, youth, and families that child welfare serves.

This annual report reflects the beginning of our journey towards a reimagined system. It gives us an opportunity to show how we have made a difference in the past year to the lives of those we serve and to demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement, building towards an effective and responsive child welfare system.

Many positive system changes took place in 2018-19, such as the proclamation of the new Child, Youth and Family Services Act, and the onboarding of 90% of non-Indigenous Children’s Aid Societies onto a provincial information system. These are significant steps forward that will support child welfare to better respond to the needs of each family while working as a more unified system. The appointment of Nicole Bonnie as the new CEO of OACAS in January of 2019 also marks a turning point for child welfare in Ontario. Ms. Bonnie is the first African Canadian CEO in the history of OACAS and Children’s Aid Societies and brings with her a strong background in equity-centered leadership that will be vital to the success of the new five-year strategic plan.

A critical piece to becoming a better system is using evidence to inform and drive sector improvements. Current child welfare data tells us that many families involved in child welfare are the most marginalized, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised members of society, with serious over-representation and disparity of outcomes for Indigenous and African Canadian families. In response to this data, the child welfare sector has undertaken significant work to identify how various forms of social inequity, including anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, poverty, and lack of access to safe and affordable housing have contributed to these poor outcomes. Thanks to the work of One Vision-One Voice: Changing the Child Welfare System for African Canadians, and our Reconciliation commitment with Indigenous communities, the child welfare sector has taken steps to address these systemic issues. This work included organizing the first ever provincial gathering of African Canadian youth in care, a first ever symposium for Ontario Black child welfare staff, and a follow-up Acknowledgement and Reconciliation Gathering where the child welfare sector reported back to Indigenous partners and communities on its progress on 9 Indigenous commitments. These events were historic, emotional, and impactful – because we engaged communities directly to initiate system change and heard their voices.

All the achievements highlighted in this annual report could not have happened without the expertise and hard work of our member OACAS Board leadership, member Children’s Aid Societies, OACAS staff, Strategic Councils, Project Steering Committees, Working and Network Groups, agency staff, communities of practice, and stakeholders. As we navigate transformative change, we must acknowledge the incredible work of agencies who continue to provide responsive, skilled, and caring work in an environment of increasing financial constraints.

It has been an honour to be part of a provincial team working to effectively lead the child welfare sector, embrace innovation, and support change in uncertain times. This work has been approached with courage and conviction, so that all children, youth, and families can thrive. We look forward to our continued collaboration on a reimagined child welfare system.

Bonnie Nicole
Chief Executive Officer, OACAS

Margaret Bowman
OACAS Board Chair
IMAGINE CHILD WELFARE

OACAS Annual Report
Member Support Highlights 2018-2019

To view the full OACAS annual report, please visit www.oacas.org/annual-report-2018-2019

GOAL – Building a Better System Together

1. Shared Services Program
   - 8 agencies piloting 1 After Hours Call Answering and Screening Service
   - 51 child welfare data assets centralized in 1 Child Welfare Data Service to enhance service through standardized consistent reporting and analysis, as well as new possibilities for research
   - 1 Part X Provincial Tool Kit
     - to support child welfare readiness for new privacy regime

2. Residential Services Critical Issues Work Group identified 6 theme areas
   - 32 RECOMMENDATIONS for immediate change to children’s residential services across Ontario

3. Government Relations
   - 1 Provincial Election User Guide
     - 50,239 number of #childwelfarevotes impressions on twitter;
     - 3,261 views of child welfare election video during election period

   - 21 meetings with government officials and politicians on behalf of the child welfare sector

4. Youth at Centre
   - 1,896 youth
   - 323 dependent children
   - 1,0672 participants

5. Unified Voice
   - 1 media relations strategy including 255 issues of “In the News”
     - 31 provincial media requests, 55 backstory conversations with journalists,
     - 4 media issue notes, 10 press releases, 1 Toronto Star editorial,
     - 365 days crisis communications

6. Social Justice
   - Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities
     - 38 non-Indigenous agencies using 7 provincial tracking tools to monitor progress on 9 child welfare Indigenous commitments

7. Education and Training
   - 3,500 visits to 18 Library Guides providing curated child welfare information

   - 38 member Children’s Aid Societies
   - 10 member Indigenous Child Well-Being Agencies

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   - 10 member Indigenous Child Well-Being Agencies

8. Supporting System Change
   - 1 ALL IN! Symposium for African Canadian youth in care attended Power Up! Symposium
   - 320 African Canadian staff representing 30 agencies
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