

Beendigen Anishinabe Women's Crisis
Home & Family Healing Agency



Annual Report

2022



Welcome to Beendigen

Beendigen has been providing support to women and children in Thunder Bay since 1978. The agency was established to provide temporary shelter for Indigenous women and their children who were dealing with abuse and were in need of food and shelter.

Since Beendigen was established in 1978, it has continued to evolve and broaden its range of services offered. From counselling, to numerous support groups, to pre-and-postnatal programs, to our Ontario-wide helpline Talk4Healing, to transitional housing support, the supports and resources offered by Beendigen continue to grow. We strive to help families heal through traditional teachings and cultural connection, as we believe culture is vital to the healing journeys of families who have experienced trauma.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide safety and shelter to Indigenous women and children experiencing violence, and to facilitate the cycle of healing through the delivery of culturally appropriate programs and services to individuals and families.

Our Vision

We believe every family deserves to live in a safe home free from violence. We believe that given the opportunity, women who have experienced abuse can move forward through healing. With influence from the Medicine Wheel Teachings and core social work values, we assist women to gain a strong foundation which can help them move ahead in a positive, healthy manner.

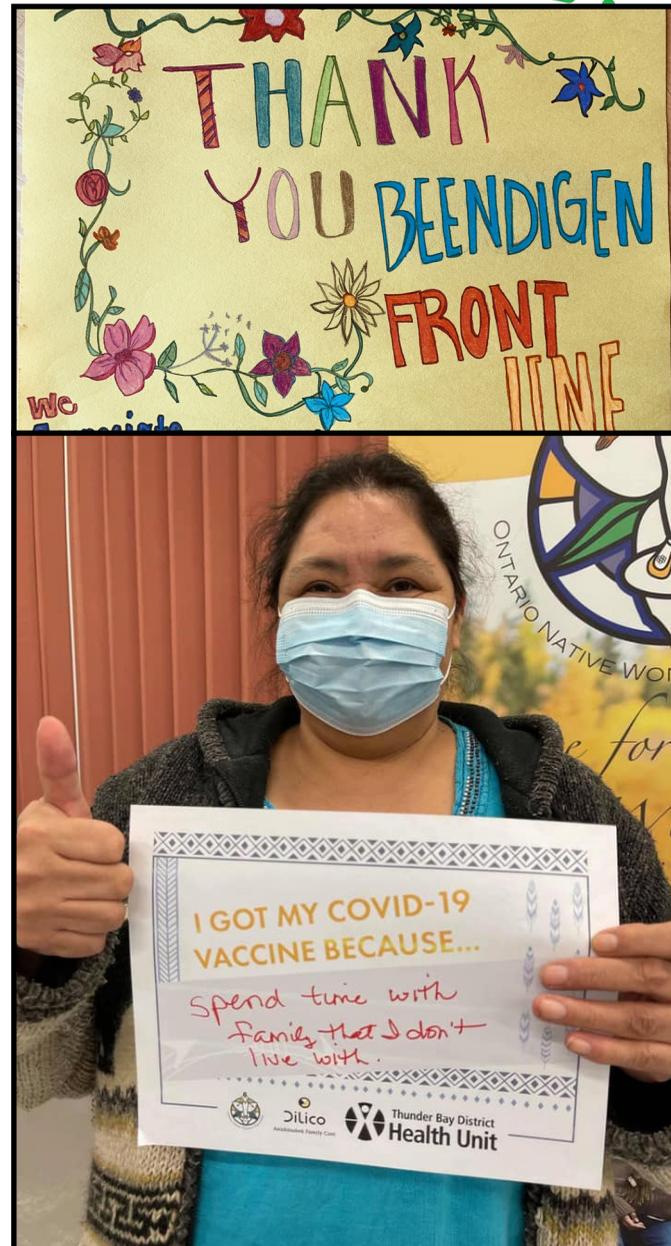


A Year of Transition

2021-2022 has been a year of transition for Beendigen. The agency is cautiously returning to some of our pre-pandemic practices. In March 2020, we rapidly acquainted ourselves with Zoom as we moved the bulk of our programming and services to an online format. It was not always a smooth process for staff or clients alike! From technological issues, to working from home, to social distancing, there was a lot to adjust to.

In the midst of all the unknowns, our front-line Crisis Home staff never wavered in their commitment to providing safety, shelter, and support to Indigenous women and children who sought our help during the height of the pandemic. The pandemic made it even more difficult for women who were experiencing violence and abuse to seek help as social isolation was encouraged as the number one safety protocol against COVID-19. It was vital that Beendigen's Crisis Home remained open 24/7. When social distancing was not possible within the shelter, we utilized hotels and motels with kitchenettes so that the greatest number of families could find support.

In the summer of 2021, work from home slowly started to come to an end as staff re-entered the Beendigen offices and reunited in-person with coworkers. Programs and groups have only recently started to be once again offered in-person, but our staff are excited to be able to connect face-to-face with clients. As we transition back to in-person work, our top priorities remain the same: the safety, well-being, and healing of Indigenous women and children.



Welcome to Beendigen's New Executive Director, Colleen Maloney

Born and raised in Whitehorse, Yukon, Colleen Maloney is a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Growing up, Colleen learned the value of community and developed a deep connection to her Indigenous roots. For the past 38 years, Colleen has been residing in Thunder Bay. She has 3 children and 9 grandchildren.

Over several decades, Colleen built a career dedicated to advocating for Indigenous women with the Ontario Native Women's Association. She has held a number of positions at ONWA, including Manager of the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children and Community Wellness Programs, Program Director, Director of Community Services, Director of Operations, and Interim Finance Director.



Colleen is an active leader, community builder, and advocate. She brings a wealth of experience and a passion for ensuring Indigenous women have access to supports, services, and programs rooted in Indigenous culture to her new role as Executive Director of Beendigen. Welcome Colleen!

Happy Retirement Debra Vermette

Debra Vermette, of the Wahpeton Dakota Nation, has been supporting women at Beendigen since 2005, holding various different roles within the agency, culminating as Executive Director in 2015.

Under Debra's steady, forward-thinking leadership, Beendigen has grown and evolved to keep pace with the needs of Indigenous women within the community. She has capably guided the agency as it has continued to grow into a vital space of safety, shelter, healing, and empowerment for those who seek its services. We thank Debra for her years of wisdom and leadership with Beendigen and wish her happiness in her retirement!



Beendigen Board of Directors 2021-2022

President: Vacant

Interim President & Vice President: April Head

Treasurer: Norma Necan

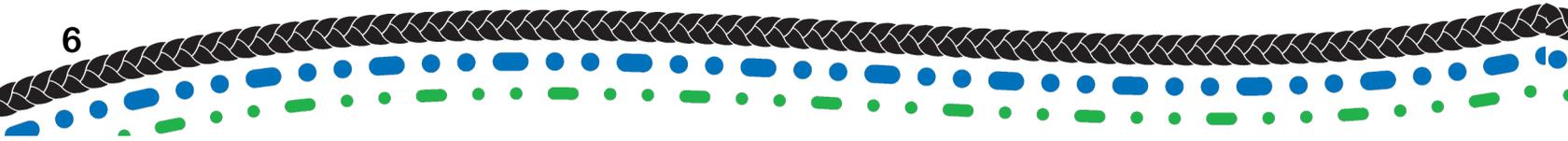
Secretary: Lisa Bishop

Youth Board Representative: Madison Wigwas

Member(s): Rosan Wesley,
Akeesha Footman

Funding Agencies





President & Executive Director's Message

Booshoo!

We would like to begin by acknowledging all children whose unmarked graves were found on the grounds of Residential Schools across Canada. They have found over 10,000 children with many more grounds to check across Canada. Gimikwenimigo (We Remember You).

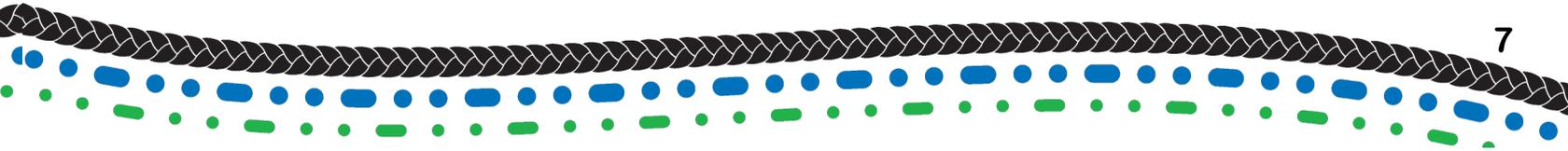
When looking back on this past year we realize there is much to be thankful for. We were able to continue to offer programs and services to our clients and community members during this challenging year. Beendigen's team came together to participate and help pivot the way we do our work, to socially distance, and to help keep the community and employees safe. We have started in-person programming again, and are returning to somewhat of a normal atmosphere. Staff and management are always thinking of ways to keep the community we work with safe while accessing services.

The Anishinabe Women's Crisis Home continues to provide emergency shelter both at the home and in motel/hotels. To date, Beendigen has not had a breakout of COVID-19, which is a testament to the staff, protocols, and the community members that we work with. The Talk4Healing Indigenous women's provincial help line saw an increase in calls during this period and continue to do so. The programs and services are adapting to the community requests for workshops and have started in-person programming once again. Some programs will maintain a hybrid model to accommodate the needs of clients. Community Supports funding allowed for the purchase of much needed tablets, cell phones, and internet access to allow those clients who otherwise would have not been able to utilize our services to find support. Wakaigin Housing has also been transitioning back to in-person communication and our Housing Coordinator has been able to go into the units to do the recommended updates and inspections. The Memengwaa Transition House for single women is now full. The 5-bedroom home assists women in housing while they wait for a permanent home. Memengwaa means "butterfly" in Ojibway, which is fitting as tenants are transitioning into a life free from violence.

Last July, Beendigen launched a new website that showcases updated information, program descriptions, and photos. During the design process, Beendigen prioritized user-friendliness and accessibility. The new website is a much-improved experience for those seeking information about the agency or looking to use our services.

In October, Beendigen held our 13th annual Honouring Indigenous Women's Day event at the Prince Arthur Hotel. We look forward to this event every year, as it is a day of celebration, of laughter, of stories, and of coming together to recognize the strength, bravery, and incredible spirits of Indigenous women. This past year, we honoured eight women from the community who have taken great strides in their own lives and in the lives of others.





The fall of 2021 also saw another successful Wrapped in Courage Campaign, with Beendigen partnering with the Ontario Native Women's Association to perform a flag raising ceremony on December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The Wrapped in Courage Flag symbolizes our commitment to never stop working to end gender-based violence.

In this past year, we have also had to increase our COVID-19 protocols. We received funding for a screener that checks community members as they come into the shelter and screens participants before they attend workshops. This added funding has been beneficial in keeping the community safe and healthy.

As we reflect on the past year, we know the pandemic has changed many things in our lives. It's changed how we work and how we communicate, and Beendigen is honoured to assist women during this time and going forward as we continue to navigate the unknowns of the pandemic.

2022 also brought with it the retirement of Debra Vermette, Beendigen's Executive Director who has been with the organization for 17 years. We wish Debra well on her new path of relaxation and travel. We thank her for all the hard work she has done and wish her the very best. The new Executive Director Colleen Maloney looks forward to continuing the great work she has done.

We would like to thank all our stakeholders for their continued support and funding and for working with us during the pandemic. We are now maneuvering the transition into post-COVID activities and welcoming the community back into Beendigen's sites. Through shared vision and partnership, we have been able to continue helping those whose lives are affected by violence.

In closing, we want to say a big thank you to our front-line workers. Without them, we would not have been able to provide safe shelter for women and families leaving violence. We are so grateful for the resiliency and the creativity of staff in continuing to find new ways to deliver services and programs to our clients and community members. Last but not least, we would like to thank the Board of Directors who have spent many hours giving their time, expertise, attention, and resources this year.

Chi Miigwetch

April Head
Interim President

Colleen Maloney
Executive Director



List of Beendigen Programs

Anishinabe Women's Crisis Home
 Wakaigin Housing
 Anti-Human Trafficking
 Breaking Free From Violence
 Healing Our Own Counselling
 Community Action Program for Children
 Pre/Postnatal Program
 National Native Alcohol & Drug
 Addiction Program
 Transitional Housing & Support Program
 Family Court Support Program
 Talk4Healing
 Memengwaa Transition House

List of Healing Our Own Groups

Pre/Postnatal (CPNP)
 Community Action Program for Children
 (CAPC)
 Sacred Circle
 Child Witness
 Survivors of Sexual Abuse
 Sisters of Grief
 Drumming Group
 Breaking Free from Violence
 Women Living Free From Violence
 Anger Management

Quick Facts

From April/21 to March/22

- 410 women were admitted to Beendigen's Crisis Home to receive services
- 235 referrals were made by Beendigen staff to other appropriate services
- Since the opening of our Memengwaa Transition House in late 2020, we have housed 11 women and helped 8 women find their forever homes
- The Talk4Healing Helpline had 8,082 phonecall interactions and received 517 texts



Program & Group Highlights

Memengwaa

One of Beendigen's newest programs, Memengwaa Transition House was opened in December of 2020 after we converted a 5 bedroom Wakaigin unit into a transition house. Memengwaa, which means "butterfly" in Ojibway, operates as a bridge for residents between emergency shelter and permanent housing. Clients leaving the Crisis Home can move into Memengwaa and work with Beendigen's Transitional Housing Support Workers to secure stable housing. Memengwaa is funded by the federal government's Reaching Home's Indigenous Homelessness stream, which aims to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by the 2027-2028 fiscal year. There is no time limit to how long residents can stay at Memengwaa.

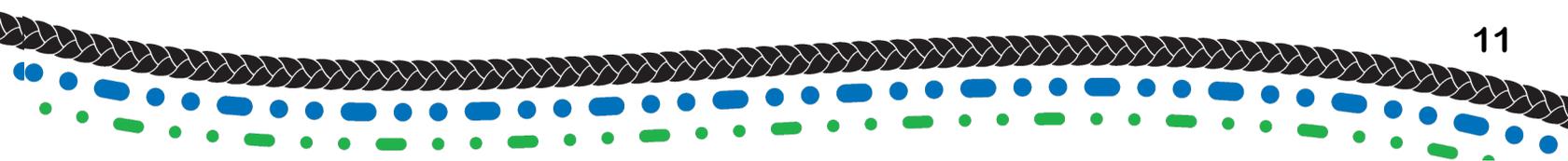
Anger Management

Beendigen has 4 certified anger management facilitators on staff who use an Indigenous lens to run a 12 week anger management group 3 to 4 times a year. It has quickly become one of Beendigen's most successful programs. Participants receive a certificate of completion that is child welfare and probation approved.

Sisters of Grief and Sacred Circle

These are two open and ongoing groups offered by Beendigen's Healing Our Own team at our Victoriaville location. Sisters of Grief offers a safe space for participants to work through some of the tough emotions that come along with grief. The group focuses on how cultural elements like the medicine wheel, ceremony, feasting, and ritual can help one find comfort through the grieving process.

In Sacred Circle, participants will experience the medicine wheel teachings, the seven grandfather teachings, and the 15 teepee teachings. Through the lens of a new teaching every week, participants are encouraged to explore life's hardships and tough emotions in a safe and supportive sharing circle.



National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program

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

Family Court Support Program

The Family Court Support Program helps make the family court process less overwhelming and easier to understand. The Family Court Support worker will provide information about the court process and help clients to prepare for court proceedings. The worker can also help with safety planning, including getting to and from court safely. Our worker can also accompany clients to court proceedings and lawyer's appointments, where appropriate. The program offers assistance with legal aid, divorce, separation, child support, spousal support, parenting time, and mediation.

Anti-Human Trafficking Program

Indigenous women and girls are at a higher risk of being targeted for human trafficking, and it is happening here in Thunder Bay. Our Anti-Human Trafficking Program provides services in the areas of individual support and safety planning, developing action plans, providing information on traditional healing methods, help with accessing basic necessities like personal care items, and providing education and awareness on human trafficking. Our Anti-Human Trafficking staff also run a monthly information session for the public or service workers which is designed to provide education, awareness, and prevention strategies.



Honouring Indigenous Women's Day

October 5, 2021

For the past 12 years, on October 5th, Beendigen has celebrated the accomplishments and achievements of Indigenous women within the community at our annual Honouring Indigenous Women's Day ceremony. We look forward to this event every year, as it is a day of celebration, of laughter, of stories, and of coming together to recognize the strength, bravery, and incredible spirits of Indigenous women.



The pandemic has been an exceedingly difficult time for everyone from all corners of the globe. COVID-19 and the havoc it has wrought has drastically increased stress levels, incidences of domestic violence and abuse, and mental health crises. Through all the hardships exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic, Indigenous women have been there for those in their lives, continuing onward in these uncertain times with courage, kindness, and resilience.

We were once again able to hold this event in person this past year (with a few nominees joining us virtually). Beendigen honoured eight incredible Indigenous women from the community who have taken great steps in their own lives and in the lives of others. The recipients were there for their families, their friends, and for themselves during a challenging time. We were honoured to share the night with these women and their guests, and we look forward to October 2022!



A new space for Community Action Program for Children & Pre/Postnatal Program

For the last several decades, Beendigen's Community Action Program for Children and Pre/Postnatal Programs have been operating out of 541 Luci Court. Beendigen has closed the doors to Luci Court, but is excited to announce that these two programs will now be held at our new location in Victoriaville Centre.

The new space is directly beside our Healing Our Own Counselling Unit, with Beendigen now occupying suites 35 and 37.

After many months of virtual programming, our staff has been hosting in-person groups in the new space, which includes a playroom, a kitchen, and group room. As Beendigen expands and adapts to better support those who are in need of our services, we encourage all those who may need help to reach out to the agency.



Our CAPC programs and services include:

Walking Club

Community Kitchen (cooking together from scratch, seasonal baking, tips on grocery budgeting, recipes, healthy eating tips, and more)

Bingo

Crafts for the whole family

Sewing Group

Parenting Program (sharing info, ideas, and support with other parents)

Recreational activities (swimming, movies, bowling, mini put, playgrounds, PA days, and more)

Education and Resource Opportunities (drop in visits and presentations from a Dental Hygienist, Addictions Counsellor, Housing & Support Program Workers, Family Support Workers, and others)

Pre/Postnatal topics include:

Prenatal care

Postnatal care

Your pregnancy

Nutrition

Healthy Lifestyles

Labour & Birth

Caring for your baby

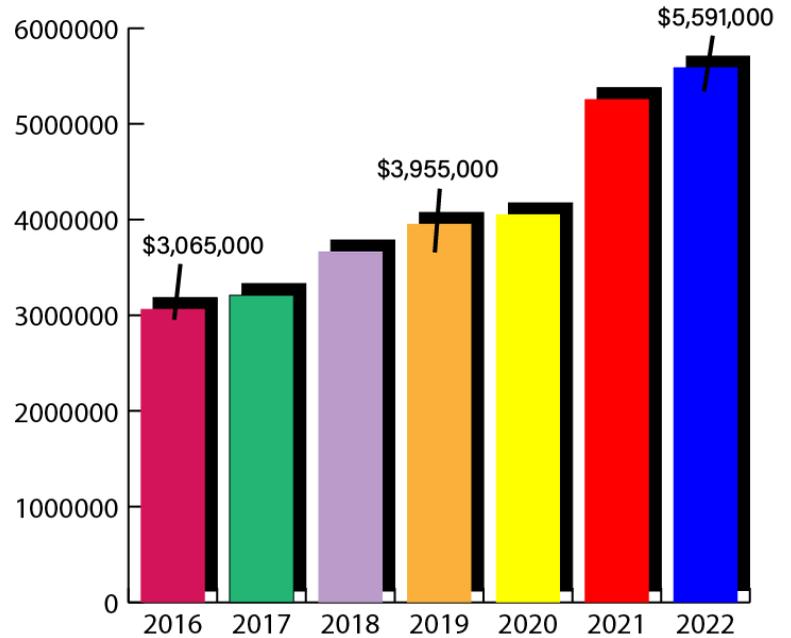
Breastfeeding



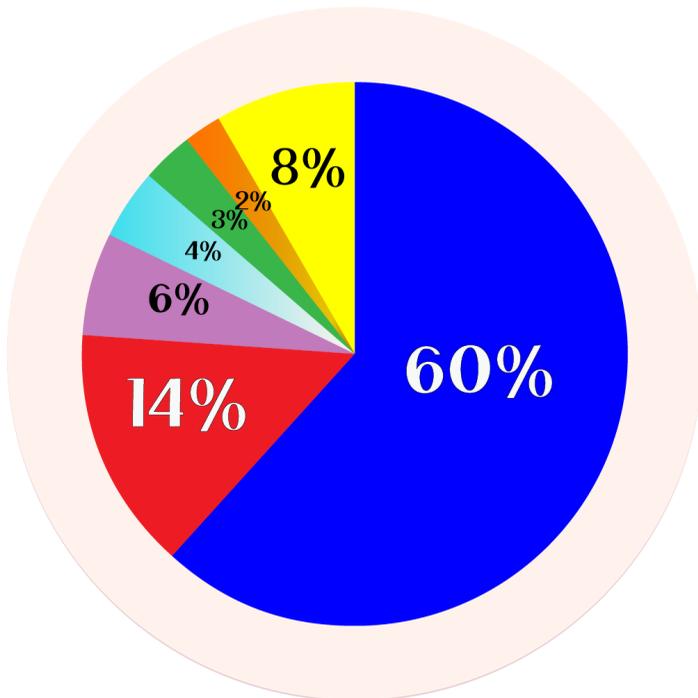
Finance

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 department works behind the scenes to keep the agency moving forward. Our finance staff develops a realistic budget that indicates what we will spend throughout the year. Information provided by the finance department allows Beendigen’s Board of Directors and management to make strategic, well-informed decisions for the agency. The department is responsible for Beendigen’s payroll, accounts payable, and financial reports for 31 projects. Our primary funder is the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, and we have strong partnerships with the funders mentioned here.

Total Revenue By Year



Beendigen Funding Sources



- Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services
- Ontario Native Women’s Association
- Women’s Shelters Canada
- Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
- First Nations and Inuit Health Branch & Other Sources



In The Community





Contact Beendigen:

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

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

**Programs & Services:
Ph: 807-344-9579**



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