

Beendigen

# Annual Report

## 2024-2025



**Anishinabe Women's  
Crisis Home & Family  
Healing Agency**



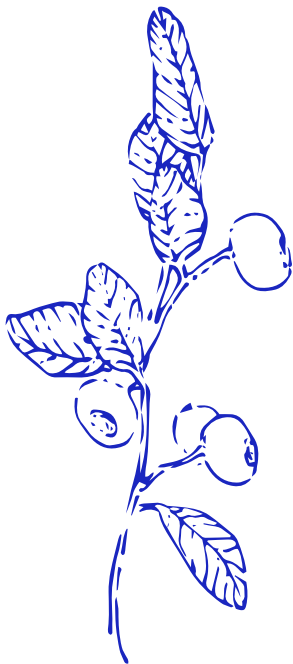






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# Board of Directors

*President:* April McKinnon

*Vice President:* Rosan Wesley

*Treasurer:* Kahla Campbell

*Secretary:* Lisa Bishop

*Directors:* Jamilee Wanakamik, Merry Francis, Melissa Hanlon

*Youth Representative:* Madison Wigwas

## *Strawberry Teachings*

"The strawberry teaches forgiveness and peace. The strawberry is shaped like a heart, and strawberries are known to our people as heart berries." Elder Lillian Pitawanakwat

Many cultures consider the strawberry plant to be a woman's medicine. It is used to teach young women about creation, community, and love. As Elder Liza Mosher teaches, a young woman fasts from strawberries and other berries for a full year when she gets her first menstrual cycle. During this year, she spends time with grandmothers who teach her about womanhood and how to bring life into the world. She also gathers berries, which she will present to her community when she completes her fast. Hence, she learns how to care for and sustain her people.



Lisa

Jamilee

Kahla



**Anishinabe Women's  
Crisis Home & Family  
Healing Agency**

There is life beyond violence

[www.beendigen.com](http://www.beendigen.com)  
Programs & Services: (807) 622-1121  
Crisis Line: (807) 346-HELP







## President & Executive Director's Message

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We are pleased to share with you Beendigen's 2024-2025 Annual Report and to reflect on another busy, rewarding year of empowering Indigenous women and their families. Our staff, from frontline workers, to counsellors, to program leads, to administration, all approach Beendigen's mission and vision with passion and a strong commitment to combat violence against women. We find deep fulfilment in seeing women who have faced hardship reconnect with their inner-strength and their culture as they heal.

We acquired our new building at 1077 Golf Links Road in the spring of 2024, and since then, we have hosted many celebrations, events, groups, programs, and meetings with the community. Our group room, which we named Giwiidabindimin (We Sit Together), was completed in the fall of 2024 and it has allowed for greater accessibility, cultural connection, and opportunities for gathering.

Last summer, our staff had the opportunity to gather to raise a tipi at the new building. Staff were guided by Elder Audrey Deroy and her partner George through the teachings that go along with this sacred cultural act. The tipi will be raised annually at Golf Links, where it stands as a symbol for shelter, warmth, connectedness, and the identity of Indigenous peoples.

Our renovations at the Crisis Home also progressed greatly, with 3 new resident rooms being opened, all with private 4-piece bathrooms. We are also happy to say that one of the new rooms is entirely accessible. We opened a new staff room with a kitchen for our frontline staff who work so hard to make everyone who enters the shelter feel a sense of safety and welcome. Along with a new accessible resident room, we added a brand new elevator to the crisis home. This was an important step towards increased accessibility and inclusivity for all who stay with us.



Another highlight of the year took place in March, when we held our Wi Na Wenjikaazo Anti-Human Trafficking Conference in partnership with Nokiiwin Tribal Council. We heard three amazing, passionate women speak at this event who shared their journeys from being trafficked at young ages to coming out the other side and now being able to help others with their lived experience. Beendigen does extensive work in anti-human trafficking and this annual event goes a long way to create awareness, offer a space for learning and sharing, and help with trafficking prevention.

Every year, we look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of our clients, which is why we host a day in honour of them on October 5th. We call this day “Honouring Indigenous Women’s Day” and 2024 marked our 16th celebration. It was even more special as this was the first official event we held in our event space at the new building on Golf Links. It is a day on which we recognize all of the hard work of Indigenous women who have made tremendous strides and effort in their own healing journeys - for their friends, their family, but importantly, for themselves.

Beendigen Board and staff are headed into our new fiscal year with a passion and commitment to combat violence against women and to provide a place of safety and cultural connection for all those who engage with us and our services. We are always working to grow the ways in which we can support Indigenous women and their families, and we have some upcoming programs that will expand our services even further which we are very excited about.

We would like to thank our committed, dynamic group of staff for all they do for Beendigen. We would also like to say miigwetch to our Board of Directors for their wisdom and guidance throughout the past year. We deeply appreciate your commitment to Beendigen.

Chi-Miigwetch,

*Colleen Maloney*  
Executive Director

*April McKinnon*  
Board President





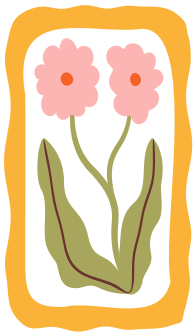
# Mission



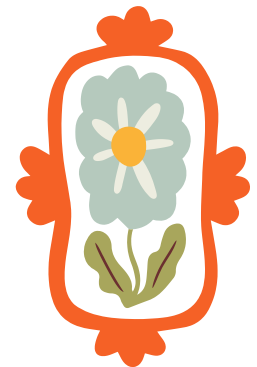
# Vision

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.

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.





# Beendigen Sites

Beendigen currently operates out of five main locations. Our women's shelter is just one of our locations and one of the vital services we offer to the community.



## Program Highlights 24-25

### *Community Action Plan for Children (CAPC)*

CAPC had another busy year supporting families. Some examples of the program's activities include making baby moccasins, beading red dress pins and earrings, gardening, making liquid smudge and learning liquid smudge teachings, strawberry moon teachings, ribbon skirt and shawl making, and much more.

CAPC hosts a bingo every month, and participants really look forward to socializing with the added bonus of possibly winning some prizes that can help with the cost of various things like Christmas and birthday gifts.

The program also often hosts crafting days, and these are very popular as clients enjoy being social while also getting to be creative. There is a great sense of pride in the finished projects and crafting along with cultural connection has helped build many skills and build self-esteem.



### *Family Court Support Program*

This past year, Becky, our Family Court Support Worker, supported 48 individuals who were working through the legal system. Becky attended lawyer's meetings and court dates. She helped her clients to understand court documents, next steps, and the judge's court parlance. Becky's role is to help her clients feel more comfortable and more supported throughout the entire court process.

One highlight that stands out for her is that she and her client were able to get the crown to drop retaliatory charges that were brought against her client by an abusive ex-partner. Becky and her client discussed with her lawyer an extensive history of domestic abuse that her client had faced at the hands of this ex-partner, and this information was key to getting the crown to drop the charges.





## National Native Drug Addiction Program (NNADAP)

NNADAP Counsellor Julie worked with many clients to safety plan, provide resources and referrals, and support those living with addiction.

The Mamokawok Youth Conference which took place in November was one of Julie's highlights this past year. She was able to be present with a group of 140 youth and work to get the word out to them about the impact of drugs and alcohol, and what we can do if we think someone is struggling with substance use.

Julie found being in the room with the youth very powerful.

## Breaking Free from Violence Program (BFFV)

Arlene, the BFFV worker, co-facilitated the Maamawi Parenting Program (Two-Eyed Seeing Parenting). Throughout the program, many cultural teachings were shared that had been passed down through the families of the group participants.

Arlene also completed Duty to Support training, which is training that recognizes the inherent need for children to remain connected with their families.

BFFV saw 28 families enrolled in the program. 6 mothers were reunified with their children, and 9 children were reunified with their mother. A family in the program learned tools to prevent intimate partner violence, gave birth to a healthy baby, and purchased their first home. Another family continues to receive supportive counselling services while pursuing post-secondary education and employment while mitigating the child welfare system and the legal system. The mother in this family continues to utilize and grow in her cultural connection for her own well-being and balance.







## Anti-Human Trafficking Program (AHT)

One of the highlights for Cindy, AHT and Family Counsellor, has been an increase in drummers attending our weekly drum group. Cindy has also started facilitating our Sewing Circle that went on a small hiatus after Family Counsellor Diane Davis retired in the fall. Sewing Circle brings people together to work on projects such as ribbon skirts, drum bags, or their own sewing projects, along with learning the teachings that accompany each cultural activity.

We partnered with Nokiiwin Tribal Council to hold Wi Na Wenjikaazo, a conference that aims to educate and prevent human trafficking. There were three amazing guest speakers in attendance who shared about their lived experiences and how they have been able to overcome much hardship. Cindy has also been presenting and speaking both here and in surrounding communities about the signs of human trafficking and about how to safety plan.

## Transitional Housing & Support Program (THSP)

Royleen, TSHP worker, has been co-running a support program called Gii-zhaa-b-win (Breaking Through) around the topic of intimate partner violence with Beendigen Family Counsellor Maya. This group takes place in our crisis home, so we are able to work directly with those who are in urgent need of support and resources. This group is greatly helpful to participants, with one writing to Royleen that she "helps others perfectly."

Royleen also facilitates a weekly Sharing Circle with Becky and helps to lead drum group with Cindy.

At our Memengwaa Transition Home, one of our residents has completed schooling, secured employment with her community as a youth worker, and has recently secured her very first home.





## Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)

Our Pre/Postnatal Program ran weekly drop-ins for both pregnant women and new mothers. Other activities included community kitchens, crafting nights, visits to the EarlyON to socialize and spend time with other babies, drum-making, and cultural programming.



## Parenting Across the Life Cycle Program (PAL)

The PAL Program co-ran the Maamawi Parenting Program, which includes teachings about caregiver wellness, skill building techniques, and child development. The Maamawi Parenting Program offered 8 sessions focused on Indigenous teachings each time it ran throughout the year.

PAL also ran sewing groups, mom self-care events, visits to EarlyON, cultural crafting activities, and more.



## Harm Reduction Program

The Harm Reduction Program ran on a temporary basis due to short-term funding. The program was able to offer vital supports and emergency supplies to those living with addiction or who are unhoused. Harm reduction and frontline outreach services are very much needed in the community, and we are actively seeking opportunities to continue to expand our services in these areas.





"I'm feeling so grateful today especially because I was able to birth my hand drum today! My papa and I made the drum together and he was the one who cut the umbilical cord. I am now ever more connected with my sacred item. Chi-Miigwetch to Beendigen for the spring feast today to honour and celebrate our next chapter (season) of spring. I love you and now am loving myself one day at a time."

- Comment received on Facebook





## Letter from past Beendigen client



*"I hope this message finds you well and thriving. It's hard to believe it's been just over two years since I left Beendigen and began my new life in the UK. I apologize for not writing sooner, but my gratitude for each of you has only grown stronger with time.*

*I am so grateful—SO grateful—for everyone who helped me during that crucial part of my healing. You provided a safe space for me, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. In those days, I didn't have to worry about rent, bills, or the weight of daily survival. For the first time in so long, I was able to truly feel again. It wasn't until I was there that I realized how shut down I had become.*

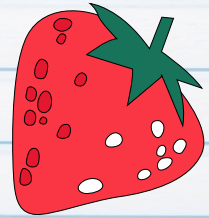
*You gave me the room to break down, to cry, and to process everything, knowing I had a compassionate, steady support network around me to help me pick up the pieces and rebuild. I cherished the classes, therapy, drum circles, and all those unforgettable conversations with the staff and residents. Each experience was a step forward on my healing journey, and I carry the wisdom and warmth of those moments with me every day.*

*Thank you, truly, from the bottom of my heart. I would never have made it this far without Beendigen and the kindness, patience, and love I found there.*

*Today, I am so happy to be living life fully again.*

*Life has been a whirlwind, and I'm loving every bit of it.*

*With all my love and gratitude"*





## **Beendigen's Crisis Home Expansion**

For the past year and a half, we have been renovating and expanding the crisis home to make it a more inclusive, accessible, and comfortable space for all who stay with us.

We have added three new resident/family rooms, all with their own private, 4-piece bathrooms. The rooms have also been equipped with new triple bunks, a crib, 40-inch televisions, compact refrigerators, heating and air-conditioning units, and a detached family bedroom for the moms or guardians. This was important to us as it provides a bit of space for the caregiver to rest and have some time alone to connect with themselves.

We also added a staff room, which is a first for the crisis home. It has a full kitchen for staff to take breaks and make their meals. Our front-line workers are at the heart of Beendigen, and we want to ensure that when they are at work, they feel respected and comfortable.

There is a new fully accessible room (our second) with an accessible bathroom. We also have a brand new elevator, which we are very excited about. It is crucial that we offer an accessible, barrier-free space for women and children who are trying to rebuild after crisis and trauma. One of our top priorities is to be inclusive in all facets, and adding this new accessible room and elevator go a long way to helping us with this goal.

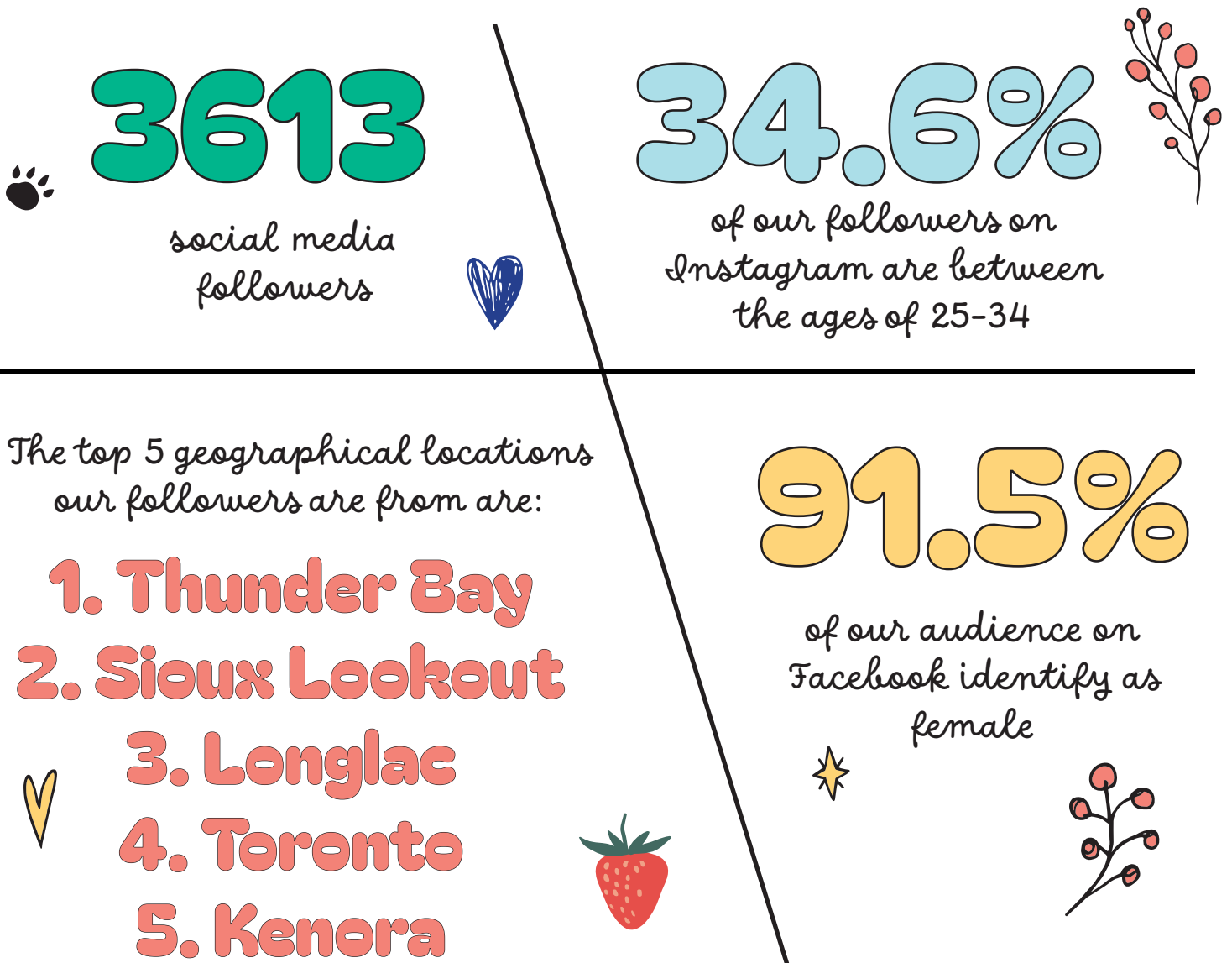
This expansion has been a labour of love for our Executive Director, our Program Supervisor, and our Operations Manager. It has involved many hours of work, but it has all come together to create a more safe, inclusive, and welcoming space for those who use Beendigen services.







# Communications



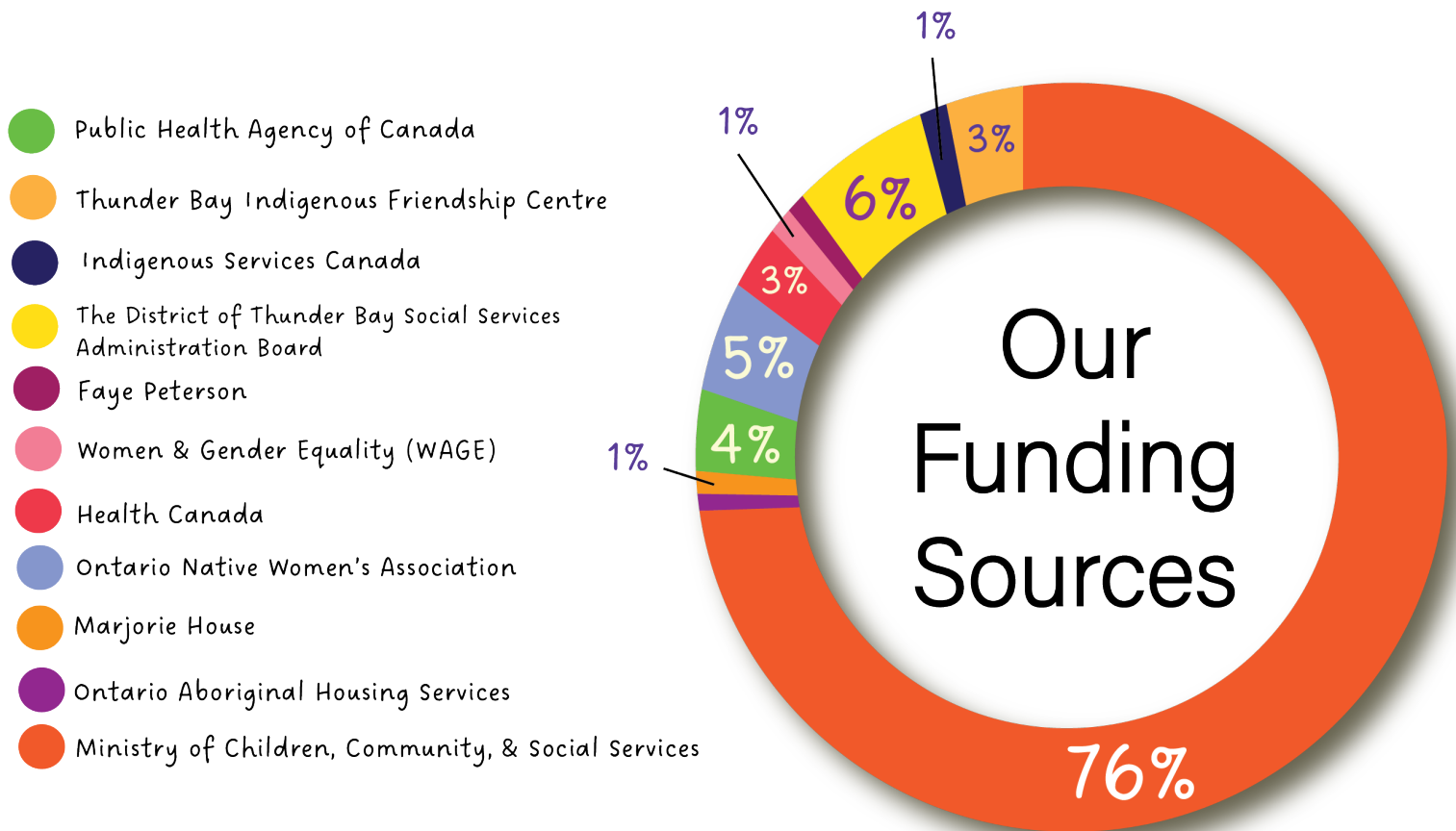
Beendigen's Communications Administrator acts as a liaison between the agency, the public, and the media to ensure that what we do and the services we offer are relayed to the public in a clear and concise way so that those who may need our support can reach us.

Communications maintains the agency's online presence on all social media platforms and on our website. They also design both print and web advertisements to increase public awareness about what Beendigen does. Communications ensures that the our online presence conveys consistent messaging so that our mission and our principles are clear.

Event-planning, marketing, and graphic design are also important components of communications.



# 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 Finance team works behind the scenes to keep the agency moving forward and ensures that financial and accounting policies are adhered to. Effective financial management is essential to providing our staff with the resources they need to pursue Beendigen's mission.

The Finance department is responsible for the organization's finances as a whole, including the administration and management of 33 projects funded by numerous funding sources. Our primary funder is the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, as well as other funding partners which are all essential to the operation of our services.

Beendigen has had another successful year. We continue to expand our programming, our crisis home, and continue to work toward our goal of housing all of Beendigen's programs under one roof, which we took a significant step toward when we acquired our building on Golf Links Road.



# Human Resources

The Human Resources Department at Beendigen is committed to building a workplace that is not only efficient and effective but also deeply rooted in the values and traditions of the Indigenous communities we represent. Our ongoing efforts are focused on nurturing talent, celebrating diversity, and advancing our collective mission.

## Key Initiatives

1

**Talent Acquisition**

We prioritize hiring practices that respect and promote Indigenous knowledge and skills, ensuring a workforce that is representative of our community.



2

**Employee Development**


Our programs focus on continuous learning and leadership development, with an emphasis on cultural competence and traditional knowledge sharing.



3

**Employee Relations**

Promoting a positive work environment through effective conflict resolution, open communication channels, and employee engagement initiatives.



4

**Cultural Integration**

We prioritize programs that incorporate Indigenous traditions and practices, ensuring that cultural connection is an integral part of our daily operations.



## Achievements

- 01

Launched new Streamlined Annual Performance Assessments
- 02

Successfully reduced employee turnover 15% over the past year through targeted retention strategies
- 03

Between 2022-24, the number of Indigenous employees increased by 37% and continues to grow
- 04

+24 eNPS Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey Score (this result suggests a relatively high level of employee loyalty and engagement)
- 05

DB CAAT Pension Plan - to be introduced in early Summer 2025
- 06

In Partnership with GroupHealth, announced a new “Wellness Concierge” called Sparrow as part of our Employee Assistance Program - the platform also includes an Indigenous Health and Wellness portal



# Staff Testimonials



Cindy Paypompee  
Family Counsellor/  
AHT



Boozhoo, I would like to say that I have been working for Beendigen since 2001. I have had different positions through the years, currently I am a Family Counsellor/Anti-Human Trafficking worker. When I started at Beendigen, I didn't participate in my culture. Beendigen has given me the opportunity to gain knowledge and participate with our Elders and other co-workers to learn different protocols in my earlier years. Now, I find myself teaching my co-workers different teachings like drumming, drum-making, sacred circles, etc., and protocols to keep our cultural practice in our work. In my job, I do public speaking and this job has given me the confidence to do that. I want to say thank you, Beendigen, for giving me this opportunity to say thanks.

Cindy - Ozaawaa Binesi Kwe (Yellow Thunder Bird Woman)



Gloria Boshkaykin  
Relief Helpline Crisis  
Worker



Working at Beendigen has been a good experience. The staff are all nice and friendly. I like the flexible scheduling, being able to work weekends. I always have enough hours to meet my goals. The work is rewarding in being able to support the Talk4Healing helpline. My work area is always clean and technology needs are always maintained. - Gloria Boshkaykin



Deanna Kakepetum  
Relief Resident Crisis  
Worker



My name is Deanna Kakepetum from Sandy Lake First Nation Band and I work as a Relief Resident Crisis Worker at Beendigen. I also work as a Helpline Crisis Worker for Talk4Healing. I started working at Beendigen in December. I enjoy working together with people and families that come into the crisis home and watching them leave to their new homes or the transition house. I went to college to become a helper, and that is what I am great at doing is helping others when I am needed.

My co-workers are very helpful, great teachers, very kind, patient, and adept at explaining the duties at the desk. They are also supportive, safe, and easy to settle in with. I enjoy coming to work everyday to see my co-workers and my manager. I am slowly developing my confidence, and I want to further my professional skills by going back to school. I applied for Mental Health and Addictions Worker and Honours Bachelor of Social Work at Oshki-Wenjack. I am appreciative of the relief workers talking about their classes and wanting to take other courses. This part-time job helps me want to learn more and further my skills as a helper in the field. - Deanna Kakepetum





## Our Impact in 2024-2025

5858

# of  
participants  
in Healing Our  
Own programs

# of calls/  
chats/  
texts to the  
Talk4Healing  
Helpline & the  
crisis home

22,467

# of minutes  
spent  
assisting/  
supporting  
individuals  
through T4H

187,179

# of individuals  
assisted by the  
Transitional  
Housing Support  
Program

194



# Chi-Miigwetch to our Funders



Ministry of Children,  
Community and  
Social Services



Thunder Bay Indigenous  
Friendship Centre



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY  
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD



An Agency of the Government of Ontario



Ontario  
Health



Indigenous  
Services Canada



WOMEN'S  
SHELTERS  
CANADA

Shelters and  
Transition Houses  
United to End Violence  
Against Women

Ontario  
Trillium Foundation



Public Health  
Agency of Canada



Ontario  
Aboriginal  
Housing Services





# Contact Beendigen:

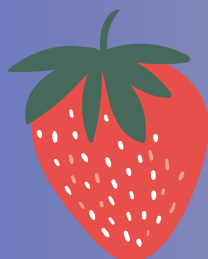
## Administration Office

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

## Crisis Line

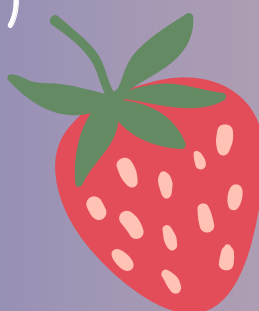
Ph: 807-346-HELP (4357)  
Toll-Free: 1-888-200-9997

**Programs:** 807-622-1121



1 855 554 HEAL  
**Talk4Healing**  
TALK • TEXT • CHAT  
BEENDIGEN.COM

1-855-554-HEAL  
Short Code: 825544 (TALK4H)  
[www.beendigen.com](http://www.beendigen.com)



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