



De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT





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Who We Are

Vision

Vibrant, healthy
Indigenous communities

Mission

Improving the health and well-being of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities through holistic Indigenous, Traditional, and Western health care

Values

De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre embodies the concept of “Taking care of each other amongst ourselves”

Message from the Elder



Teachings from the River

As I sit beside the Grand River, listening to the birds, feeling the heat of the summer and remembering childhood friendships fostered along the shores, I recognize the many teachings the river gives us. If we listen, the water will show us how to live in balance, how to slow down and pay attention. The river holds messages for us, just like our frontline health workers who walk beside us every day. They carry gifts and medicines, ready to support us if we want to receive them.

When I look at the Grand River, I see a teaching in two-eyed seeing. One side is groomed and shaped by human hands, and the other grows wild and free, just as the Creator made it. This brings together traditional ways and Western ways to care for our health and well-being.

By the river, you can feel your breath come easier. The land knows how to hold us when we let go of fear. Fear takes away our power to care for ourselves. This reminds me of the teaching my grandma gave me as a child, “When you swim in the river, you’ll feel the long grasses on your legs. If you panic, you can get tangled and they’ll pull you under. But if you stay calm, you can keep swimming.” When we feel unwell, fear starts talking louder. But we are strong people. We must remember our strength, speak gently to ourselves, and walk through the worry. If we stay grounded and calm, our bodies will tell us what they need. We must learn to listen – not just to quiet the symptoms, but to understand what they are saying.

Everything we need to be well has already been given to us. Creator placed it all on Mother Earth: our medicines, our teachings, our ways. We’ve always had our own solutions to wellness. But we must continue to share our stories, especially stories about our medicines, so we can teach each other and remind one another where wellness comes from.

The river sustains so much life. With every season, it teaches us something new. We are never standing still – we are always learning.

GRANDMOTHER RENÉE THOMAS-HILL

Messages: Board Chair and CEO



She:kon, hello!

What a year we had for 2024-25! It is hard to believe how much can be accomplished in that time, but with the fantastic teams at De dwa da dehs nye>s it comes as no surprise.

At the beginning of this fiscal year, the Board was thrilled to announce our new CEO, Janet Gasparelli. Janet joined us and brought with her a background of work with Indigenous communities from both the urban areas and on-reserve to move the organization in an exciting direction. It has been a special year as De dwa da dehs nye>s has been looking forward to the future, while also honouring our past work over the last 26 years.

The development of a new three-year strategic plan was in the works toward the end of this fiscal year, and the new plan will be unveiled during the 2025-26 fiscal year. It was an important step to take, as planning is well underway for the development of the Biindigen Well-Being Centre. Not only are we grateful for the partnerships of those in the design phase, but with the broader community to ensure that we are responsive to the needs of those who will continue to access our services.

With each passing year, our vision grows stronger, and we are committed to ensuring that every person in our care is empowered to achieve wellness and balance in their lives, families, and communities. Your ongoing support, trust, and commitment to our shared journey is recognized and appreciated.

Together, we will continue to grow, heal, and strengthen the foundation of our community for generations to come.

Nya:weh, thank you, and here's to an exciting next year!

BRYANNE SMART
BOARD CHAIR



Sgeno/anniin/hello

On behalf of the team at De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre (DAHC), I am pleased to share the 2024-25 Annual Report with our community. As I reflect on my first year with the organization, I'm filled with love and hope for the resilience and strength demonstrated by our community members, staff, and partners.

The team has continued to work toward strengthening our services, embracing cultural traditions, and creating new opportunities for holistic well-being. We have witnessed the power of collaboration and working together, as our community has supported one another and prioritized health and healing. Each milestone we celebrate is proof of the strength of our people and the values that guide us.

We are excited about the future as we continue to build a healthier, more connected community.

Nya:weh/Miigwetch/Thank You,

JANET GASPARELLI
CEO

A portrait of Michelle Hill, a woman with short grey hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and large, ornate red and orange beaded earrings. She is resting her chin on her hand, which has a small tattoo. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top. The background is dark.

Client Experience: Michelle Hill

I have been attending different programs off and on for the past few years. The cultural teachings, learning to make different things – hats, earrings, moccasins, messenger bags – having a hand-poke tattoo, ribbon skirts, and cooking. Also, the social part of it as well. Meeting new people in the Indigenous community and all coming together to help complete projects, chat, and laugh. I have found with not only the facilitators of the programs but the people who attend, and you see regularly attending, you feel a sense of belonging and connection. All good for the mind, body, and soul. The teachings that come along with it are something that you will remember and hopefully pass on to future generations.

History

2015 - 2016 Introduction of the Inaugural October Moon Gala. Launched Building on our Roots Capital Projects. Introduction of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge 3-year project. Introduction of the Homeward Bound Program.

2014 - 2015 Introduction of Indigenous Patient Navigator Program (Brantford, Hamilton, and Niagara). Introduction of 2 Capital Planning Projects.

2012 - 2013 Introduction of Child and Youth Mental Health Services.

2013 - 2014 De dwa da dehs nye>s celebrates 15th Anniversary.

2011 - 2012 Release of the Our Health Counts Hamilton Final Research Report. Introduction of Mental Health Case Management and Health Promotions (Koogaadawin).

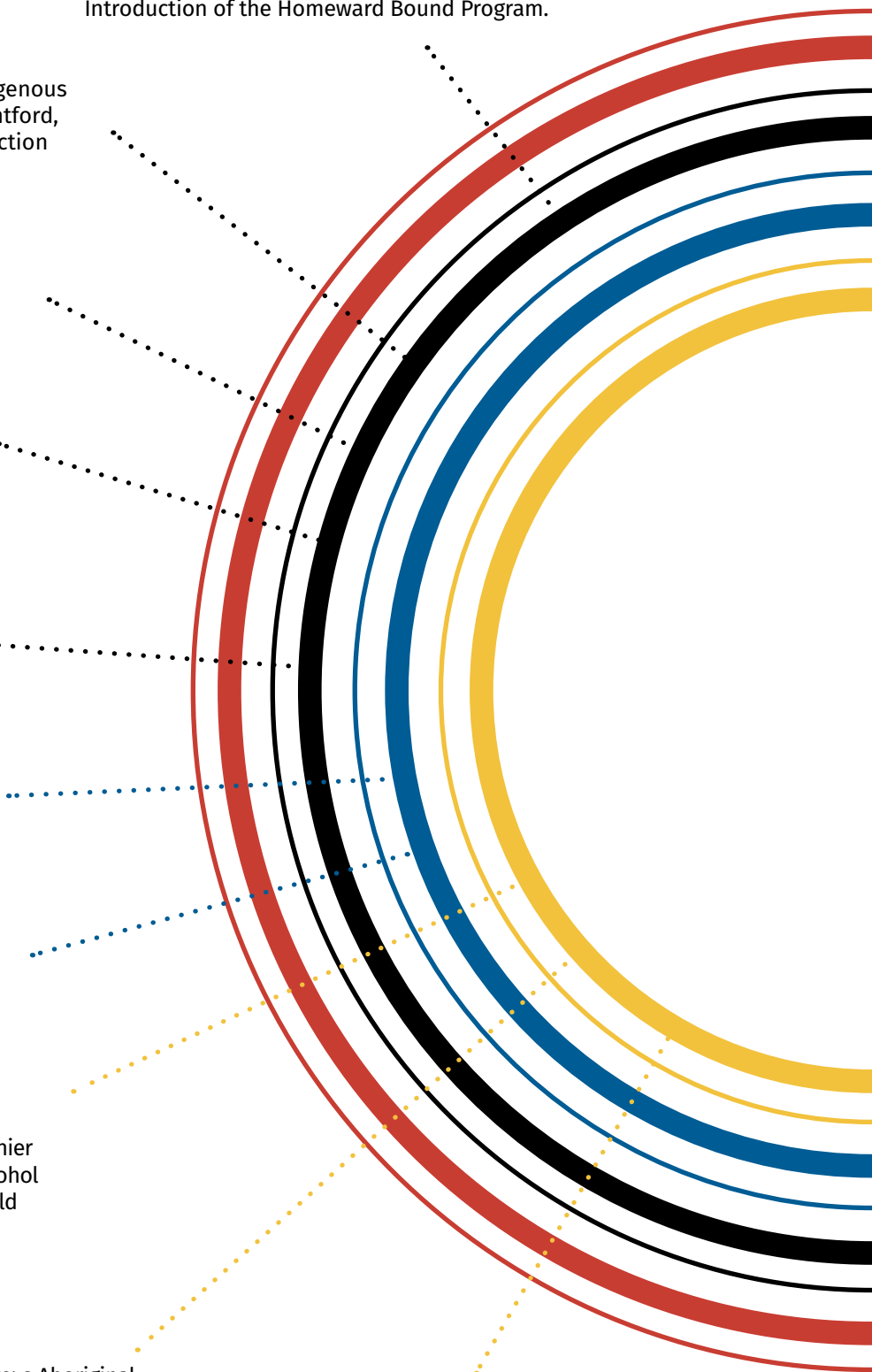
2009 - 2010 Introduction of the Diabetes Education Program (Brantford and Hamilton). Introduction of the Wheels for Seniors (Transportation).

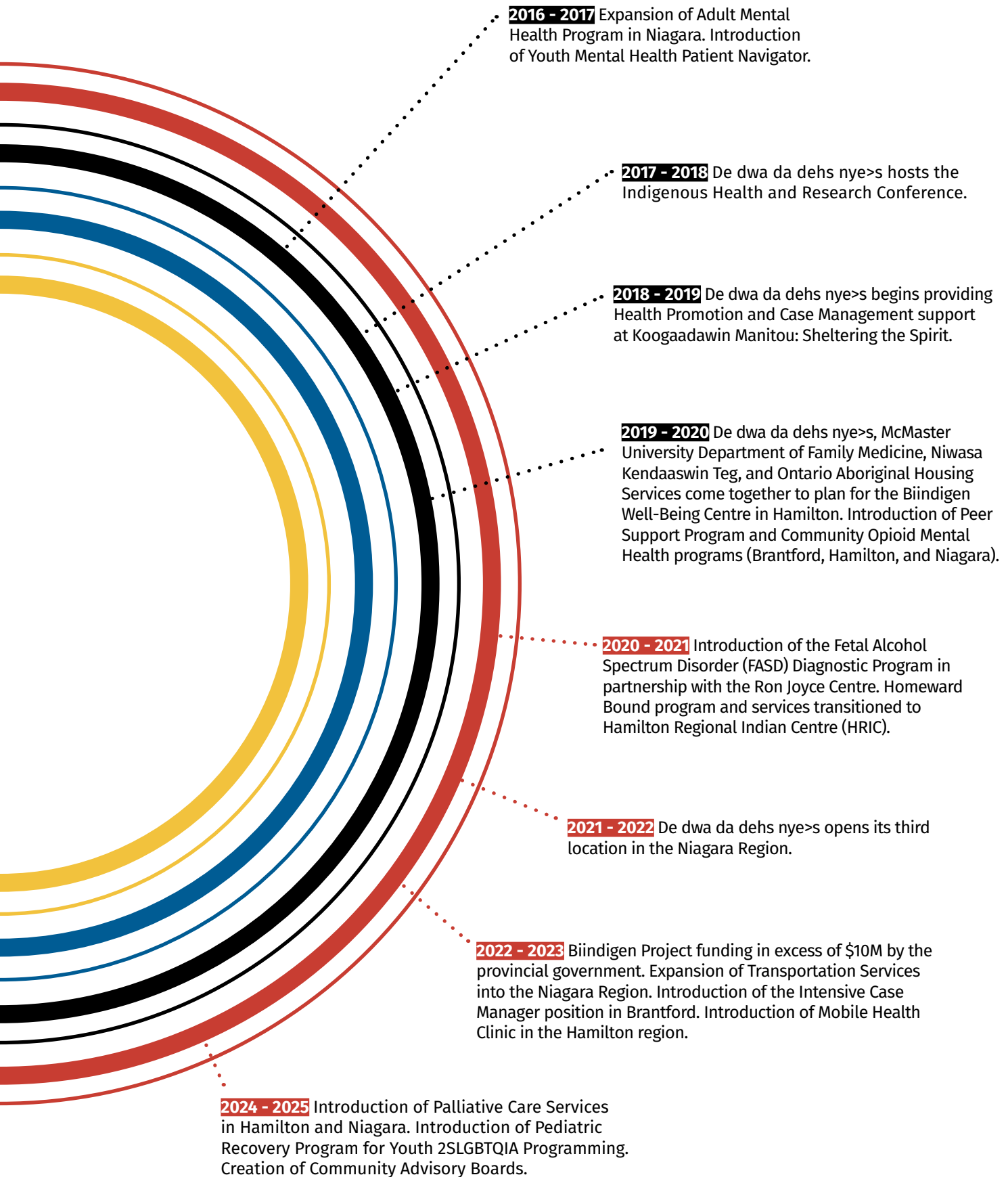
2008 - 2009 De dwa da dehs nye>s kicks off Our Health Counts Research project.

1999 - 2000 Introduction of the Healthier You Program. Introduction of Fetal Alcohol and Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Child Nutrition Program.

1998 De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre opened in Brantford in June and Hamilton later in 1998.

1994 Aboriginal Health Access Centres were established.





Capital Project

Meaning of Biindigen

Biindigen has multiple meanings. For the Anishinaabe people, it can mean to welcome someone and invite them to come in. It also means “to welcome someone,” but you are preparing them. You are also prepared to welcome those people where they are.

In other words, you would not just invite someone and say “Biindigen, welcome to my home,” and not have lunch for them or anything they might need. You are being

prepared to welcome that person; maybe you will not have everything they need but you will be able to take care of them.

A third part of the word Biindigen means not only to welcome and be prepared to host them; it also means that when the person or group leaves, they are also taking something good with them.

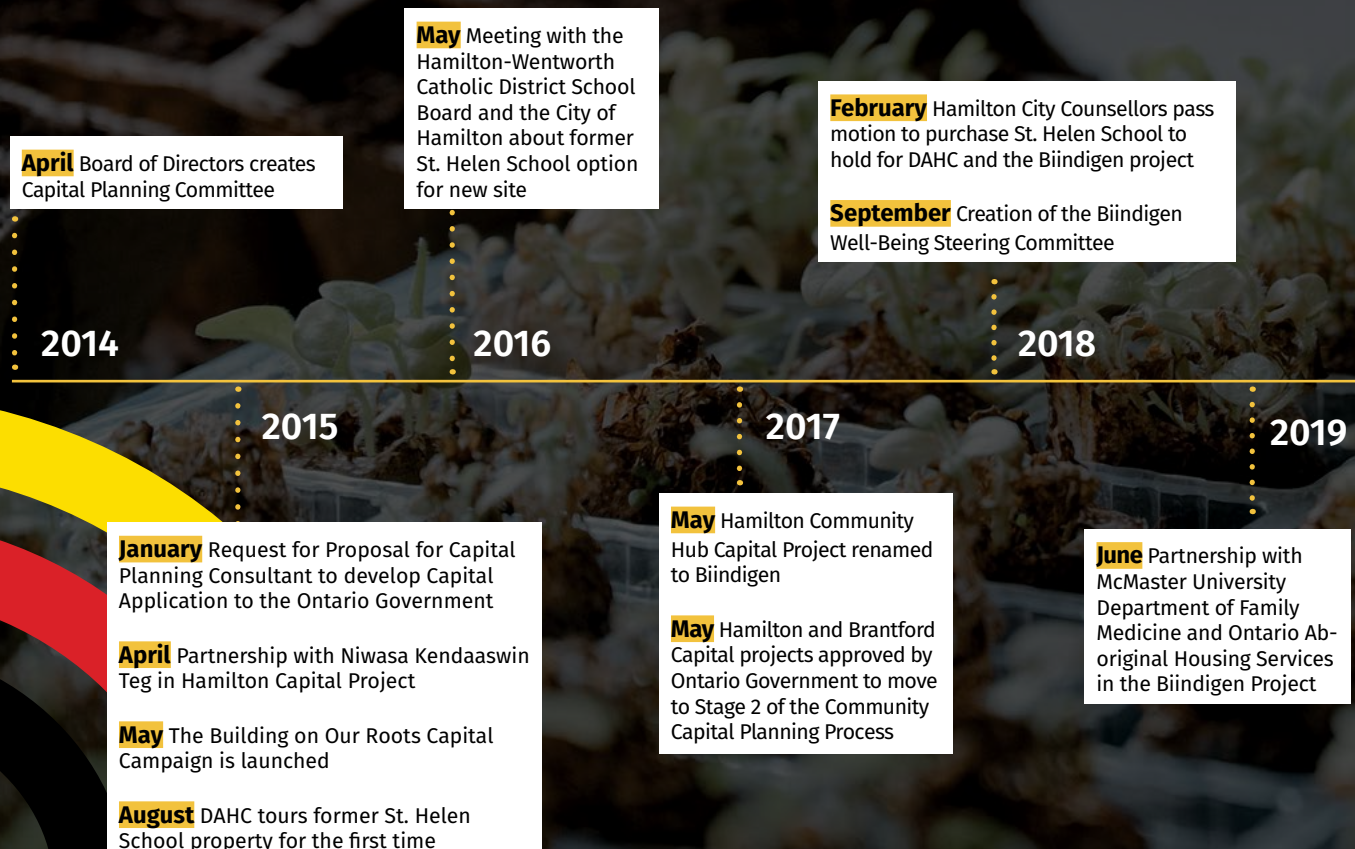
The fourth meaning becomes clear when we look on a deeper/spiritual side. When you

say Biindigen to someone or something, the meaning is that there has been an exchange of thoughts and you are both leaving with a bit of the other in you.



Biindigen
Well-Being Centre

Capital Timeline





April Hamilton Project approved for over \$10M in provincial funding

May Hamilton City Council passes motion to negotiate transfer of former St. Helen School property to DAHC for the Biindigen Project

September Ceremonial signing of the Agreement of Purchase and Sale with the City of Hamilton and the Biindigen Partners

February Community Information Session is held to inform municipal planning process

March By-Law and Official Plan Amendment Applications are submitted to the City of Hamilton

2021

2023

2025

2022

July Biindigen Celebration at the site of the future home of the Biindigen Project

2024

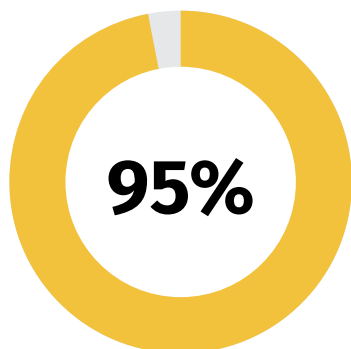
March Announcement of the \$13M federal grant under the Green and Inclusive Community Building program

May Sign contract with McCallum Sather and partners (David T. Fortin, Parkin Architects, Shrub Landscaping) to design the Biindigen Well-Being Centre. First design charrette with Architect and Biindigen Partners

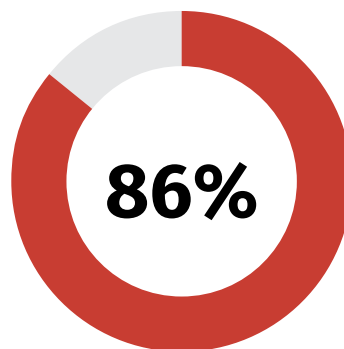
September First Community Information Session is held as part of the municipal planning process

Community Impact

Staff Satisfaction Survey



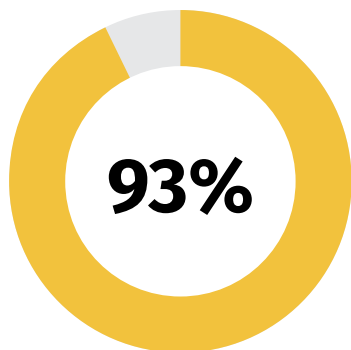
had a positive response to the comment "DAHC makes a positive impact in the community"



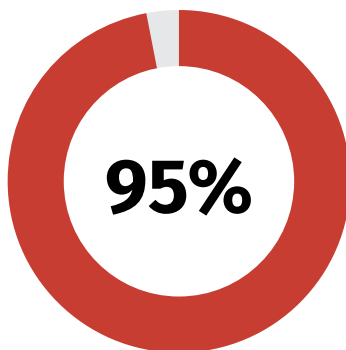
had a positive response to the comment "Would you recommend a friend or family member to work here?"

Patient Experience

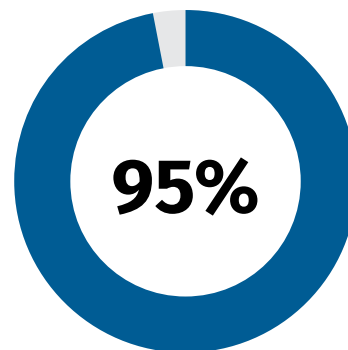
123 patient engagement surveys were completed



answered very good or excellent to the question "How would you rate your trust in (the team) providing care of service?"



answered very good or excellent to the questions about their overall experience at DAHC.

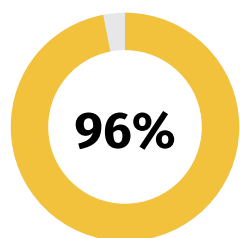


answered often or always to the question "Does your care provider spend enough time with you?"

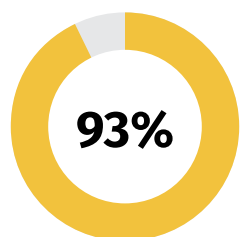
678



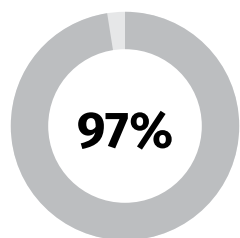
Annual Patient Experience Survey



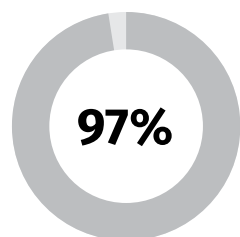
of patients reported feeling physically safe in our facilities



of patients reported feeling culturally safe

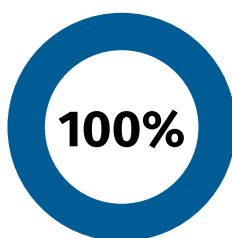
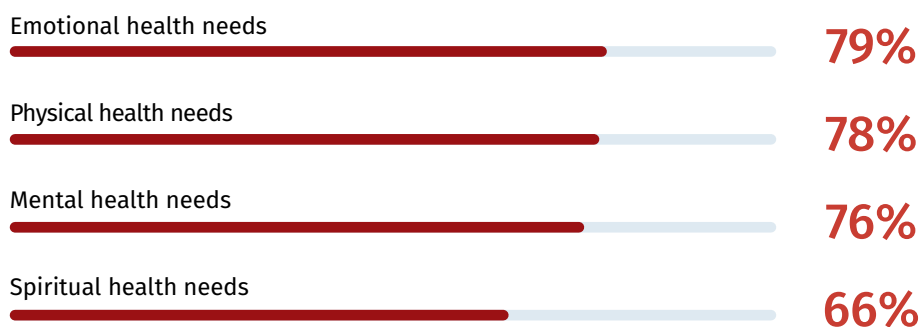


said they felt their overall experience with their provider was positive

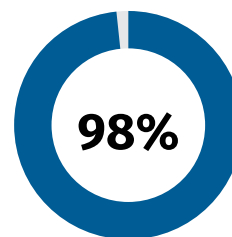


of respondents reported that they would recommend DAHC to family and friends

Patients were asked how DAHC is meeting their care needs:

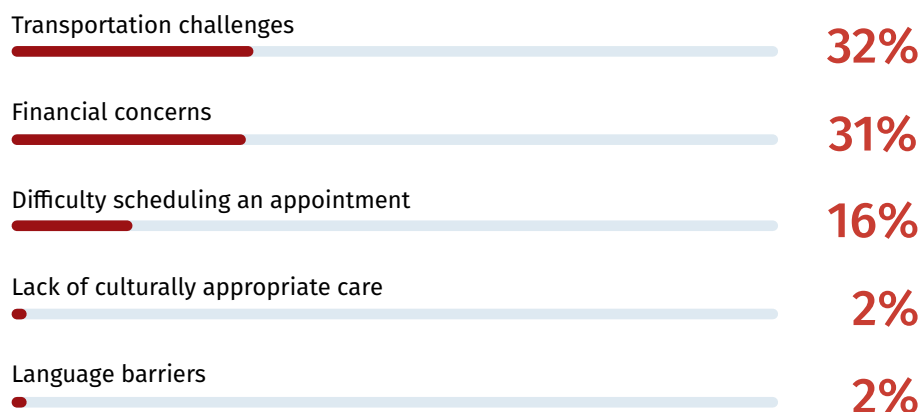


of patients reported DAHC respects Indigenous Peoples, Cultures and Traditions



of patients reported a positive overall experience at DAHC

Patients identified the following as barriers to access to care:





28,623
visits



6,366
registered clients



1,095
group programs hosted



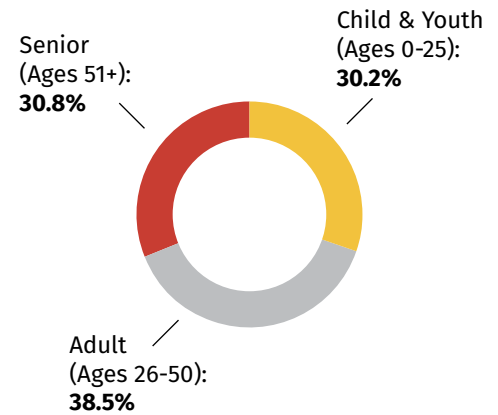
10,583
participants in our group programs

6,366 total registered clients

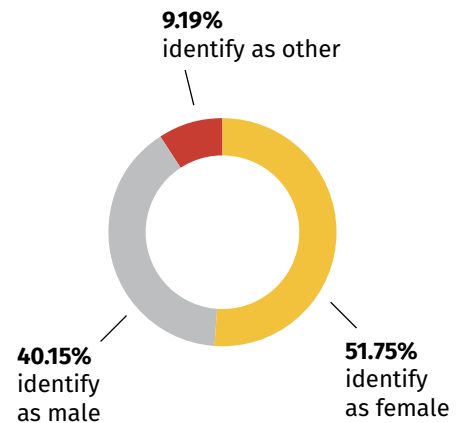
28,623 total client encounters

2,762 unique individuals served

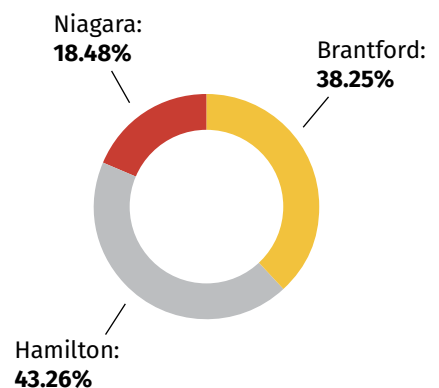
Age Groups



Gender



% of # of clients by location



October Moon Gala

We are grateful for the overwhelming support at the 2024 October Moon Gala. Thanks to the community's generosity, this year's Gala set new records, drawing 301 guests, the highest attendance so far, and presenting 64 unique Silent Auction items. Together, we raised an incredible \$41,213 in support of our capital projects.

The evening was a vibrant showcase of talent from Six Nations Members. Our emcees, Harvey Powless and Jace Martin, both respected Indigenous podcasters, comedians, and musicians, kept the energy and laughs flowing. The musical program featured powerful performances by Lacey Hill and two-time Juno Award winner Derek Miller, whose artistry brought the spirit of the community to life.

October Moon Gala Numbers

301 guests

64 unique silent auctions

\$41,213 raised



Artists are Lacey Hill and Derek Miller





Fred Bowering, Constable Jason Drobnych, and Tom Porter

Annual Awards

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of our annual community awards, recognizing those who go above and beyond to uplift Indigenous communities.

STARFISH SPIRIT AWARD: FRED BOWERING

This year's Starfish Spirit Award went to Fred Bowering, a Fire Keeper and tireless advocate for the St. Catharines community. Fred's month-long sacred fires raise crucial awareness for Indigenous causes, while his hands-on work cleaning local parks and streets of hazardous materials keeps our neighbourhoods safe. He has also dedicated countless hours to reuniting lost or missing community members with their families. Fred's selflessness and commitment embody the very essence of the Starfish Spirit Award, and we are honoured to recognize his contributions.

WALTER COOKE WISDOM KEEPER AWARD: TOM PORTER

Tom Porter, a respected Elder and spiritual leader, received the Walter Cooke Wisdom Keeper Award for his lifelong dedication to preserving the Mohawk language, history, and traditions. For more than 60 years, Tom has educated, inspired, and empowered generations through workshops, lectures, and personal mentorship. His unwavering commitment to cultural preservation has strengthened

our community and deepened understanding of Indigenous heritage far beyond our borders.

COMMUNITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AWARD: CONSTABLE JASON DROBNICH

Constable Jason Drobnych of Hamilton Police Services was recognized with the Community Social Responsibility Award for his outstanding work with Indigenous youth. Through his Medicine of Peace program, Jason has built bridges of trust and understanding between Indigenous youth and the police, offering mentorship and creating space for healing and dialogue. His efforts to educate fellow officers on truth and reconciliation, along with his dedication to fostering inclusion and mutual respect, have made a profound impact on our community.

Miigwetch/nya:weh/thank you to everyone who made the October Moon Gala such a memorable experience. Your generosity and presence brought this event to life, and we are deeply grateful to all the individuals and organizations who donated. Every contribution goes directly toward supporting essential health services for Indigenous communities and their families. We can't wait to welcome you back at next year's Gala.



Client Experience: Melva Fenyves

Someone suggested that I come to the health centre back in 2003. This place has helped me connect with my culture, and the staff at De dwa da dehs nye>s are beautiful. If I come in and I'm not feeling well, they will send me to every specialist until they find the answer to what's ailing me. I really love De dwa da dehs nye>s.

Program Highlights



Land-based Camp

Stone Rose Rivers – My name is Stone Rivers, and I am a member of the Mattagami First Nation. I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for the incredible work of De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre. Over the years, the organization's various programs and initiatives have profoundly benefited me, consistently providing the utmost culturally relevant support to guide my healing journey. »



Members of the local community, Mattagami First Nation, guided pontoon boats and shared the history of the community and their traditional territory.

In July 2024, I was fortunate enough to attend the Minakwa Land-based Camp. It was an absolute life-changing experience, and it exemplified the De dwa da dehs nye>s invaluable support. This experience profoundly impacted my healing journey. Spending time on the water, harvesting natural medicines like sweetgrass and blueberries, participating in sunrise ceremonies with Elders, making shaker rattles, eating well, and getting much-needed rest were all essential elements that fostered my well-being. As a member of Mattagami First Nation, this camp provided me with the opportunity to go home for the first time, a truly indescribable feeling. There are no words to adequately describe the love, support, and cultural connection I felt while I was there. It was an experience that has touched my heart in ways I never thought possible.

Beyond the camp, I also want to acknowledge the thoughtful gifts provided, such as the comfortable sleeping bag and other amenities. These small but significant gestures contributed greatly to my comfort and sense of being cared for, enhancing the healing environment that De dwa da dehs nye>s consistently fosters.

My hope is to continue to carry on my healing journey with land-based programs, facilitated by De dwa da dehs nye>s. They are essential for healing and reconnecting with culture and traditions. They provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals to embark on self-discovery and healing, deeply rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing.

Chi miigwetch ~ nya:weh for your invaluable work supporting these programs and our community. Your efforts are changing individual lives, strengthening our collective well-being, and preserv-

ing our cultural heritage. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to be part of this healing journey, shaped so beautifully by the spirit and culturally relevant support of De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre.

In August of 2023, DAHC hosted our first Traditional Healing Program land-based camp, bringing together Indigenous youth and Elders. A small group of participants travelled to a privately owned camp in Treaty 9 Territory in Northern Ontario (100 kilometres south of Timmins).

The camp provided an inter-generational relationship-building opportunity between urban youth and Elders/Knowledge Keepers where they could share stories and teachings while connecting with the land, our natural world teachers.

In July 2024, we hosted a camp for women, creating a safe space for them to heal together, participate in ceremony and traditional teachings, and foster their relationship with each other, the land, and other living beings. The daily activities of the land-based camp are not pre-scheduled; the days flow in alignment with weather patterns and the spiritual, mental, and physical needs of the women, creating safe spaces and time for learning and self-reflection. The women received teachings about plant medicines, spent time in a field of sweetgrass, and collected birch bark, wild blueberries, and wild raspberries.

Members of the local community, Mattagami First Nation, guided pontoon boats and shared the history of the community and their traditional territory.

Mobile Health Clinic

In March 2021, DAHC received confirmation of funding from the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council to purchase a van and retrofit the interior to become a mobile health clinic. DAHC's Mobile Health Clinic provides primary health care to urban Indigenous community members who are unhoused, living in encampments, or between shelters and on the streets. In addition to our primary health care services, this team is grounded by a connection to Indigenous culture and helping clients learn about

teachings and practices that support physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Our services involve a nurse practitioner, registered nurse, and mobile outreach coordinator providing primary health care and cultural connections at locations in downtown Hamilton. Recognizing the many barriers to attending regular programs and activities, our team also facilitates special events throughout the year for clients who are unhoused.

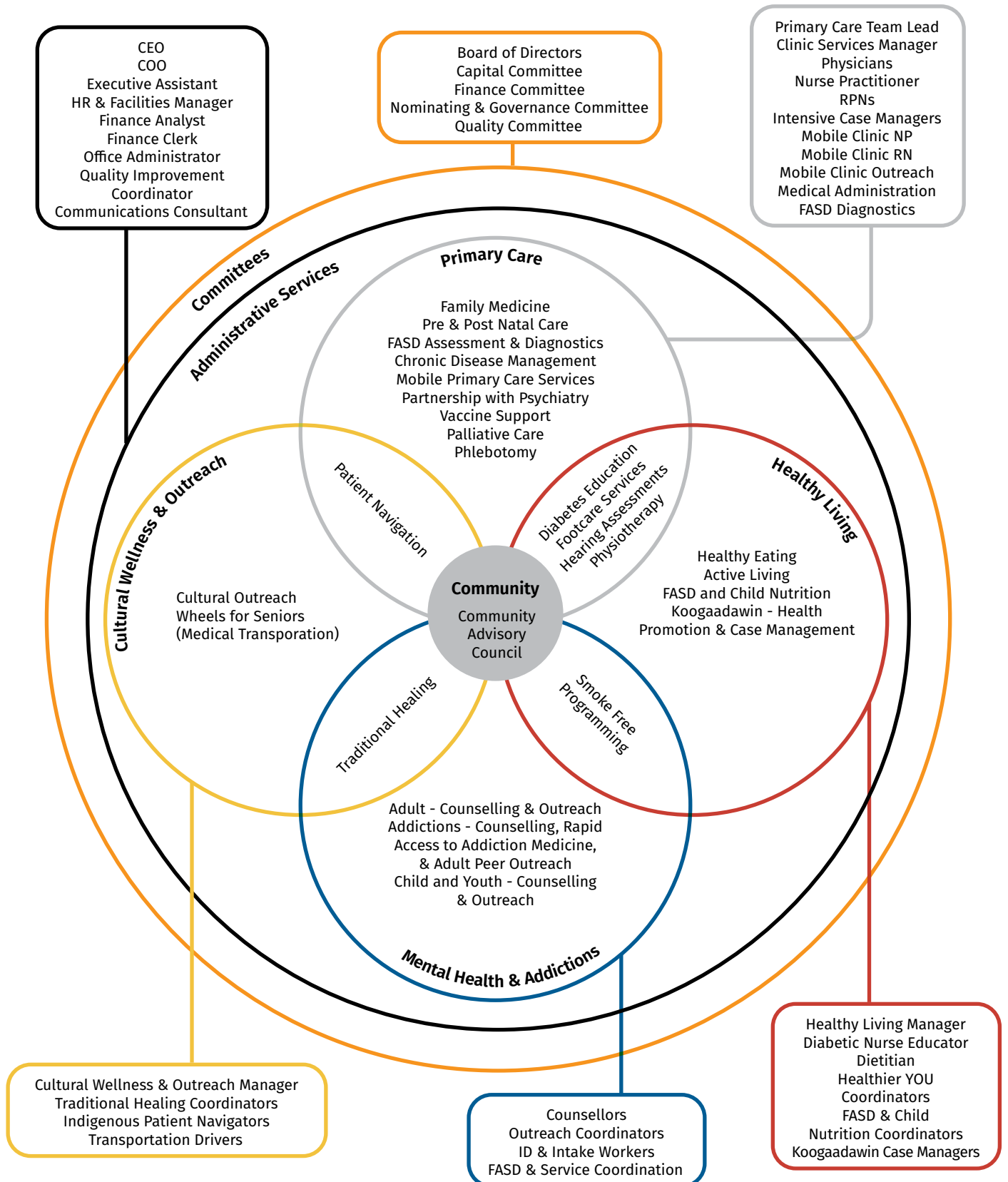


Joseph Pitawanakwat: Medicine Walk in the City

The Mobile Health Clinic welcomed Joseph Pitawanakwat to lead a plant-based medicine walk through the Hamilton Escarpment. Through this hands-on learning experience, Joseph shared his knowledge with clients and staff so that they could learn about the many benefits of native plants in the areas where we see our unhoused community living.

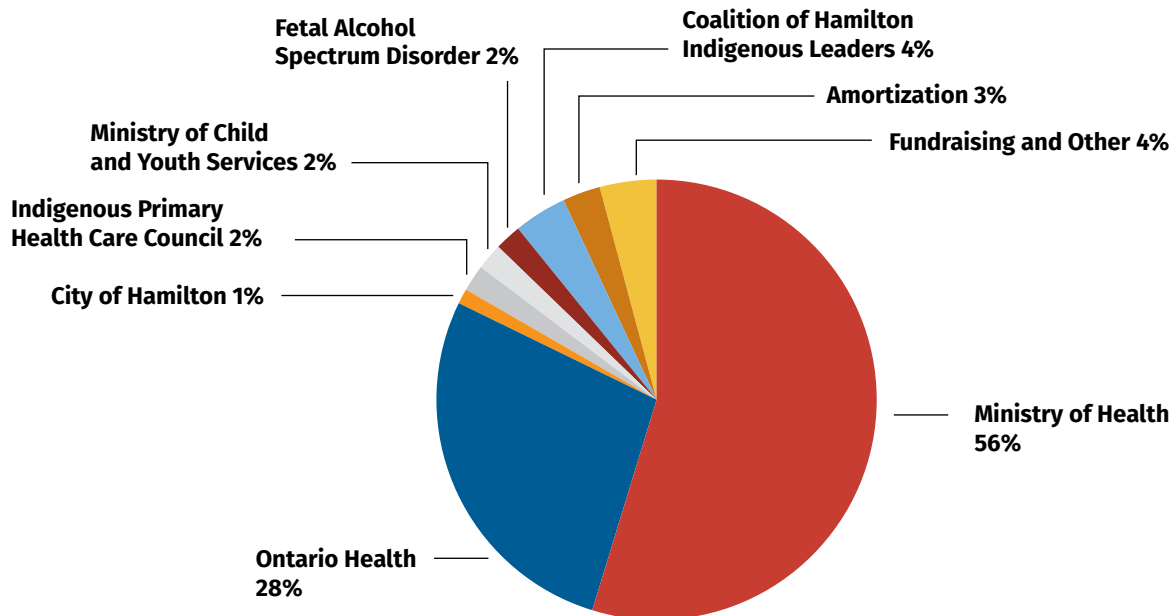


Organizational Chart



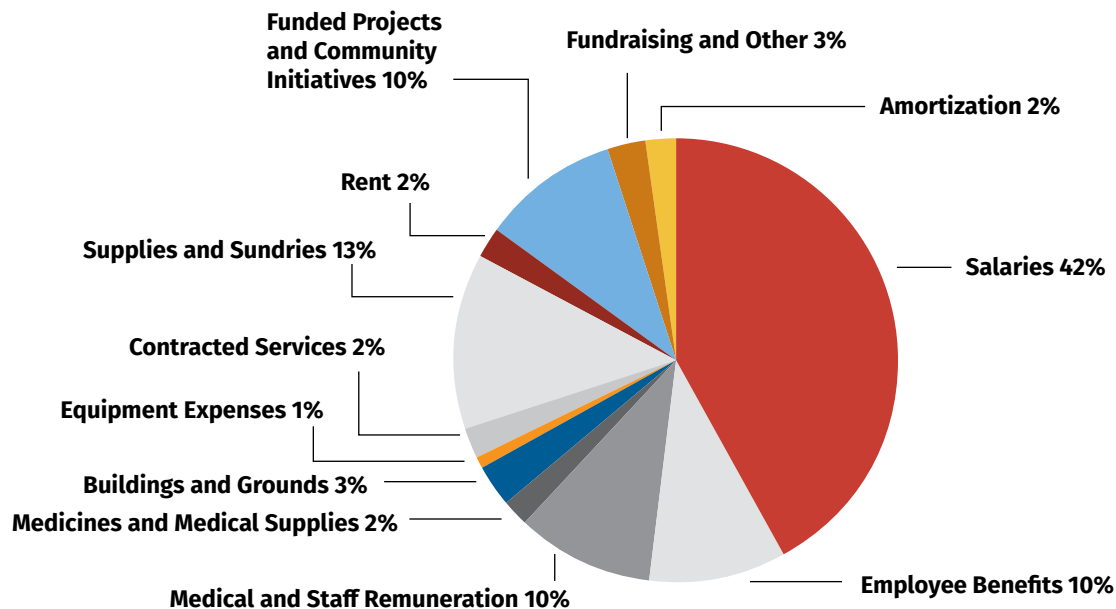
Financial Report

Total Revenue: \$ 10,141,383



Total Expenses: \$ 9,700,058

Surplus Repayable for the year: \$ 169,026.00



Recognition

Donors

The generosity of our donors makes our work possible. Whether you've given once or supported us for years, you are part of a circle that nurtures health, hope, and connection. Your contributions directly fund vital programs, cultural initiatives, and essential services for Indigenous families in Hamilton, Brantford, and Niagara. We see your support in every child who receives care, every Elder who finds community, and every family who feels heard and respected. Thank you for standing with us.

APTN	Elizabeth Creighton	Michael Schweitzer	Six Nations of the Grand River
Arielle Ross	Frances Roesch	Mini Tipi	Spirit Bear Coffee
Ashley Benoussan	Hamilton Community	Ministry of Children,	SpruceLab
Bastien	Foundation	Community and	St. Michael's Hospital
Benefaction Foundation	Health Nexus	Social Services	The Arkells
Brantford Native Housing	Hockey Hall of Fame	Niagara Ice Dogs	The Coalition of Hamilton
Brantford Twin Valley Zoo	Ian Steinberg	Niagara Parks	Indigenous Leadership
Canadian Online Giving	Innova Health Clinic	Niagara River Lions	The Corners Run Crew
Foundation	IPHCC	Nomz	The Government of Canada
Christine Patterson	Isabel Trueman	Ontario Health	The Other Bird
City of Hamilton	Jackie Labonte	Ontario Health West	The Province of Ontario
Colin Lok	Jane App	Parkin Design	Theatre Aquarius Incorporated
Compass Community Health	Janet Gasparelli	Pat Morden	Tyler Horman
Craig Nixon	Jo Ann Mattina	Paul LeBlanc	United Church
Cynthia Lokker	Kathy Nixon	Pebbles + Twiggs	Wesley Havill
Dairee Delite	Kim Hill	Rikki Singleton	York University
David T. Fortin Architect	Landwise	Ripley's Aquarium of Canada	Yurissa Varela
David Galbraith	McCallumSather	Royal Ontario Museum	
Devon Atherton	McMaster University	Sarah Brophy	

Staff Appreciation

IPHCC Award Winners

DAHC is proud to highlight five extraordinary members of our team who were honoured by the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC) for their unwavering commitment and impact. The work reminds us daily of what's possible when care, innovation, and community spirit come together.

Excellence in Integrated Primary Health Care Solutions:
Angela Naveau, Cultural and Wellness Manager

Merit – Nurse Practitioner:
Melissa Germann, NP

Indigenous Health and Outreach Advocate:
Tara Miller, Indigenous Patient Navigator

Outstanding Leader:
Anastasia Niro, Manager of Healthy Living

Innovative Healthcare Practices and Approaches:
Shannon Mitchell, Mobile Outreach Coordinator

Board of Directors

Bryanne Smart, Board Chair
Jeneka Gong, Vice Chair (March 2025)
Alex Jacobs-Blum, Vice Chair
(September 2024 to February 2025)
Frances Roesch, Treasurer

Peter Beiling, Member
Tristan Bomberly, Member
Loretta Hill, Member
Charlene McCue, Member (not pictured)
Kim Walker, Member

Max Wyatt-Stoffman, Member
Kristin Wythe, Member (not pictured)
Renée Thomas-Hill, Elder



Bryanne Smart
Board Chair



Jeneka Gong
Vice Chair (March 2025)



Alex Jacobs-Blum
Vice Chair (September 2024
to February 2025)



Frances Roesch
Treasurer



Peter Beiling
Member



Tristan Bomberry
Member



Loretta Hill
Member



Kim Walker
Member



Max Wyatt-Stoffman
Member



**Grandmother Renée
Thomas-Hill**
Elder



**De dwa da dehs nye>s
Aboriginal Health Centre
Brantford • Hamilton • Niagara**

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