

**Executive Director's Report
March 2022**

**Canadian Women's Foundation
Shock Proofing Communities Grant Application Content
January 2022**

We were successful in our application to the Canadian Women's Foundation in the amount of \$100,000. Thunder Bay Counselling (TBC) will provide counselling in a non-traditional way for women, girls, trans, Two Spirit and non-binary people under the age of 30 who have experienced gender-based violence.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen a 60% increase in the number of women under the age of 30 who are requesting our services. The pandemic has only increased their vulnerabilities and their needs. Many of these young people are living in chaos and have little or no income. They are marginalized, racialized, inadequately housed, gang involved, at risk of or are being trafficked, and experiencing significant intimate partner violence.

Services exist to ensure basic and immediate needs are addressed. However, as these young people start to stabilize and move towards beginning to address issues through counselling, there are few if any services available to them. Traditional, office-based, scheduled, structured counselling services do not meet their needs. We saw evidence of this during the pandemic. These young people need counselling services that allow for:

- Medium to long term counselling with a consistent counsellor with whom they can build rapport and trust;
- Counselling sessions outside of office (out in the community);
- More frequent access to their counsellor (outside of scheduled bi-weekly appointments) for crisis support;
- The ability to move from engaged to disengaged to engaged without fear of having services terminate;
- System and service navigation when needed.

After the initial response to the pandemic, there has been a return to providing services in more traditional ways for most organizations. This group of young people is facing more barriers in accessing counselling, including long wait times. This funding will allow us to invest in a .65FTE counsellor who will have the tools, resources, and supports available to provide counselling in a non-traditional way for 100 young people.

**Department of Justice
Victims and Survivors of Crime Week Funding
May 15 – 21, 2022**

TBC has successfully applied for \$10,000 for a project called *Can & You Hear Me Now?*. We applied in partnership with Faye Peterson House and the Sexual Assault Centre with the support of the Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse in Thunder Bay and District. COVID-19 has had a huge negative impact on victims and survivors of crime. The judicial system has struggled to operate during the pandemic and as a result, victims and

survivors are not "feeling heard". As our country and more specifically our province reopens, we want to raise the profile of survivors through the launch of a social media, photo voice during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. This will involve a media event at the beginning of the week to direct the public to social media outlets including Facebook, YouTube, SnapChat, Twitter, Instagram, etc. The events will positively affect victims/survivors by increasing community awareness of the impact of crime through the voices of survivors. Indirectly, it will affect service providers to enable their clients and for services to resume to pre-pandemic levels.

This project will build upon previous successful campaigns such as the Enhancing Awareness through Digital Engagement initiative that was funded in 2021 through the Department of Justice. Through initiatives such as these, we have worked in collaboration with community partners to ensure victims and survivors of crime are aware of local service providers, how to access their programs and services and to ensure that support is available for overcoming the trauma from crime. We believe it is extremely important to work in collaboration with our community partners to ensure the best possible outcomes.

COVID-19 has had a huge negative impact on victims and survivors of crime. There has been an increase in violence against women and gender-based violence because of the pandemic, with abusers being shut in and facing job loss and escalating stress and anxiety. While women's shelters have remained open in Thunder Bay and area, they have been required to reduce their number of beds and have had to use hotels to meet COVID-19 safety protocols and accommodate the increasing demand. Court processes have also faced delays. The judicial system has struggled to operate during the pandemic with service providers either moving to virtual service or not offering services at all. As a result, victims and survivors are not "feeling heard".

In recent discussions, local service providers have all identified the need for the voice of survivors to be amplified. As we recover from the pandemic and our province reopens, we want to raise the profile of survivors through the launch of a social media, "photo voice" during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. All of us have clients who have been impacted by the disruption of services, delay in judicial proceedings, and early release from custody. We will support victims and survivors to tell their story. The project will provide survivors with a "voice" that is not only empowering but also validates their circumstances. We believe everyone has the right to be validated by family, by friends and by the community.

Addictions and Mental Health Ontario

AMHO had another successful Queens Park Day on March 2nd, 2022, and although they have a few more meetings scheduled in the days to come, once they've completed their meeting in total, they will have had 22 meetings with:

- 11 cabinet Ministers (including Minister Elliott and Minister Tibollo)
- 5 Parliamentary Assistants
- All four parties
- Critics from the NDP, OLP and the Green Party Leader

[There is No Time to Wait](#)

AMHO is also excited to announce their new permanent CEO, Alisha Tharani.

Alisha brings with her a wealth of healthcare leadership and experience in partnerships, advocacy, stakeholder, and government relations, both federally and provincially. Most recently, Alisha was the Executive Director for the Mental Health Partners, a partnership between Ontario's ten specialty mental health centres.

AMHO is confident Alisha brings with her the expertise, enthusiasm and focus on partnerships that members need to support the mental health addictions sector and the clients cared for. Under her leadership, AMHO will continue to be a leading voice and partner to government and health sector in the advancement of a stronger mental health and addictions system in Ontario.

Her first day will be March 28th, 2022.

STAFFING RECRUITMENT UPDATE - March 2022

In response to a human resources crisis being faced not only by Thunder Bay Counselling but also by other health and family serving organizations locally and, in the province, in December 2021, we launched a new recruitment strategy in the effort to fill five (5) positions that were vacant at the time.

Historically, our recruitment process involved a simple job ad that was posted on our website, social media platforms, and, in some situations, through Indeed. The postings were very job specific. With the understanding we were facing significant competition for the same qualified candidates, we needed a refreshed strategy. Instead of advertising for specific positions, we advertised we were looking for counsellors in a variety of areas, with full-time, part-time, and independent contractor opportunities available. At the same time, we issued a media release, promoting flexible career solutions at Thunder Bay Counselling.

We advertised through:

- Direct email
- TBC website
- Google Ads
- TBC social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Thunder Bay Source print ads
- Tbnewswatch digital banners
- Chronicle Journal digital ads
- Digital billboards
- The Walleye prints
- Lakehead Social Planning Council's eblast services
- AMHO and FSO websites

Through our recruitment strategy, we received applications from 19 qualified candidates. In comparison to previous recruitment efforts where we were receiving either none or just one or two, this campaign was very much a success.

To date, we have filled 6 staff positions (5 full-time; 1 part-time). We are meeting with three people who are interested in working with us as independent contractors. This campaign has heightened our awareness with job seekers in the field. As a result, we are piggy backing off of that campaign to recruit for a Youth-in-Transition Worker position and are hoping to fill this role by the beginning of April.

Equity, Anti-racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative

Organizations that promote and embed diversity, equity and inclusion in their service and strategic plans, at their physical site and throughout their organizational culture, provide a greater sense of safety, which in turn, helps protect the wellbeing of service users and staff.

Our community is seeing changing demographics and social and economic challenges that create unique pressures and disparity for many. The impact of a global pandemic and the call for anti-racist justice in response to racially motivated violence has underscored the urgent need to address inequity at all levels. It challenges individuals, agencies, communities, and governments to examine the role each has in both contributing to, and in fighting against, systems of oppression. It is evident that now, more than ever, agencies must act to uphold the principles of Equity and Social Justice to be community leaders and allies for change.

Thunder Bay Counselling has sought services to support the further advancement of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion within the organization. This is a short-term service, with a projected end date of April 30, 2022.

The deliverables will include:

- Review existing diversity policy and provide recommendations for revisions, if any.
- Provide an equity lens tool for the agency and provide an in-service for its application
- Develop a staff readiness survey that includes:
 - Agency demographics
 - Assessment of inclusion
 - Level of knowledge and understanding of equity
 - Openness to EDI
 - Identified areas for learning
- Provide and present a summary report of the findings from the readiness survey
- Review the Organizational assessment completed through AMHO
- Provide recommendations for implementation of priority areas
- Provide any resources that can assist with the implementation